

The Book of Judges: Micah

If humans filter God through their cultural lens, they make God in their own image and think they're following Him when they are actually dishonoring Him.

Judges 17-18

May 12, 2019/ May 22, 2019

TODAY'S TEXT

Text: **Judges 17:1-13**

Now a man named Micah from the hill country of Ephraim² said to his mother, "The eleven hundred shekels of silver that were taken from you and about which I heard you utter a curse—I have that silver with me; I took it." Then his mother said, "The Lord bless you, my son!"³ When he returned the eleven hundred shekels of silver to his mother, she said, "I solemnly consecrate my silver to the Lord for my son to make an image overlaid with silver. I will give it back to you."⁴ So after he returned the silver to his mother, she took two hundred shekels of silver and gave them to a silversmith, who used them to make the idol. And it was put in Micah's house.⁵ Now this man Micah had a shrine, and he made an ephod and some household gods and installed one of his sons as his priest.⁶ In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit.⁷ A young Levite from Bethlehem in Judah, who had been living within the clan of Judah,⁸ left that town in search of some other place to stay. On his way he came to Micah's house in the hill country of Ephraim.⁹ Micah asked him, "Where are you from?" "I'm a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah," he said, "and I'm looking for a place to stay."¹⁰ Then Micah said to him, "Live with me and be my father and priest, and I'll give you ten shekels of silver a year, your clothes and your food."¹¹ So the Levite agreed to live with him, and the young man became like one of his sons to him.¹² Then Micah installed the Levite, and the young man became his priest and lived in his house.¹³ And Micah said, "Now I know that the Lord will be good to me, since this Levite has become my priest."

18:27-31

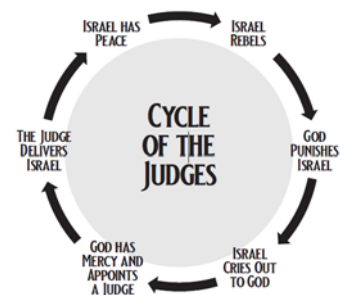
Then they took what Micah had made, and his priest, and went on to Laish, against a people at peace and secure. They attacked them with the sword and burned down their city.²⁸ There was no one to rescue them because they lived a long way from Sidon and had no relationship with anyone else. The city was in a valley near Beth Rehob. The Danites rebuilt the city and settled there.²⁹ They named it Dan after their ancestor Dan, who was born to Israel—though the city used to be called Laish.³⁰ There the Danites set up for themselves the idol, and Jonathan son of Gershom, the son of Moses, and his sons were priests for the tribe of Dan until the time of the captivity of the land.³¹ They continued to use the idol Micah had made, all the time the house of God was in Shiloh.

FIRST THOUGHTS

- No matter our faith background, we all have opinions about God or a "higher power". What are some of strange or false things you have heard unbelievers say about God? What about believers?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

These final two sessions in Judges show how far Israel has drifted away from God. They've become just as bad, if not worse, than the surrounding nations. The first installment of the story shines a light on the ways Israel is religiously far from God. The second section shows the social and political consequences of being spiritually far from God. We begin in Judges 17 where Micah's mother commissions idols with the money Micah stole from her. With the money he gives him, Micah creates a carved image and a metal image. The Hebrew word for the metal image is masekah, which is the same word used in Exodus 32:4 to describe the golden calf. Micah is in direct violation of the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:4-6) by creating these images. The Levite, who should have known the Law better than anyone, condones and joins in Micah's disobedience instead of condemning it. The author of Judges uses this story to show how Israel has become as idolatrous as the surrounding nations and has forgotten the ways of God.



WATCH THE VIDEO

As you watch, pay attention for the answers to the following questions:

- What is the definition of a "Christian Atheist"? What are the two things they do?
- What's the difference between seeing God as useful versus seeing Him as beautiful?

EXPLORE THE TEXT

> Read Judges 17:1-6

- What have Micah and his mother done to redefine God?
- What are some ways our society redefines God into someone He is not?

> Read Judges 17:7-13

- What does Micah's decision to take a Levite as his personal priest tell us about his attitude toward God?
- Micah thought he could manipulate God so that God would prosper him. In what kinds of situations is it tempting to think we can manipulate God to do our will?
- What are examples from your own life of thinking you could do certain things to get God's blessings?
- What are some examples from your life of things that are useful to you? What about things that are beautiful to you?
- Turn to your neighbor and answer these questions: Would you say you see God as useful or beautiful? Why do you think that is?
- What about the "useful" mentality could be harmful to someone's walk with God? (Think back to J.D.'s example of thinking of your loved ones as useful vs. beautiful.)
- What might it look like to see God as beautiful? What actions or attitudes would change as a result of adopting that perspective?

> Read Judges 18:1-10

- What are some things in our lives that can tempt us to turn our backs on God?

> Read Judges 18:27-31

- Verse 28 says there was no deliverer for Laish. Thinking back over the book of Judges, what's ironic about that statement?
- What does this final scene tell us about how the tribe of Dan viewed God? Did they truly honor and obey him? Why not?
- What are some factors in your life—whether it be your past, the culture, relationships, or something else—that affect your view of God? Would you say those things have a positive or negative effect on the way you think of God? Why?
- What are some attributes of God that are particularly hard for you to embrace? Why are they difficult? What would happen if God didn't have those attributes?
- What about your view of God might need to change? What are characteristics of God that you feel you understand well?
- What are some ways we might be dishonoring God? What does it look like to honor him in all the areas of our lives? What could you do to treasure God this week?

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

PRAY: Pray for God to refresh your view of Him this week. Thank Him for the ways He has revealed His character to you.

JOURNAL: List out as many characteristics of God as you can think of. Add to our list throughout the week and at the end, review the list and praise God for who He is.

REFLECT: Take a few minutes to consider the ways you might be viewing God through a cultural lens. Think about what it might mean to view God as He is, and not as you'd like Him to be.

PREPARING FOR NEXT WEEK

- We will conclude our series on Judges next week. Read Judges 20:1-48 and Judges 21:1-25 to prepare for our final lesson.

READ THROUGH THE BIBLE

12th – 2 Samuel 21-23; 1 Thessalonians 1 | **13th** – 2 Samuel 24; 1 Chronicles 21; Psalm 30; 1 Thessalonians 2 | **14th** – 1 Chronicles 22-24; 1 Thessalonians 3 | **15th** – 1 Chronicles 25-27; 1 Thessalonians 4 | **16th** – 1 Kings 1; 1 Chronicles 28; Psalm 91; 1 Thessalonians 5 | **17th** – 1 Kings 2; 1 Chronicles 29; Psalm 95; 2 Thessalonians 1 | **18th** – 1 Kings 3; 2 Chronicles 1; Psalm 78; 2 Thessalonians 2