

Lesson 9: Micah, the man with no substance.

Scripture: Judges 17-18

Theme: “Obedience to God’s commands in how to approach and worship him is not an optional extra, but a central principle. (page 172)

ICEBREAKER:

- Share a time when you did broke a rule of from your parents? What did you do? How did they respond?
- Have you ever stolen anything from your parents? If so, what was the consequence then they found out.

INTRODUCTION TO THE END: Adapted from *Judges For You* page 167

QUOTE: *In some ways, the end of Samson is the end of the Judges story. We leave with a dead judge, and a very incomplete rescue. But there are five more chapters at the end of Judges! These last chapters of Judges are a departure from the earlier narrative structure and give us a ground-level, detailed view of what life was like in Israel during those times. Here we are given two case studies of the kind of spiritual condition he rescued them from. That is why these final chapters barely mention the LORD. They are showing us what life was like when Israel was left to their own resources. This view of humanity without God is so bleak that these passages are almost never preached upon or even studied.*

- How does the Samson story leave us empty, wondering what God is up to in the people of Israel?
- Why do you think God leaves us with this bleak ending?
- How might it set the stage for Jesus?

MEET MICAH:

Read Judges 17:1-5

- What is your initial impression of Micah and his mother?
- Why does Micah return the silver he stole from his mother?
- What does his mother do with the returned silver?
- What does this say about her understanding of God?

Read **No Substance**, pages 167-168, and **Keeping Something Back**, page 171, from *Judges For You*.

- What does Keller mean when he suggests that Micah is a person of no substance?
- Keller says that Micah is neither good, nor bad. Can you relate to that? How so?
- Keller suggests that Micah’s mom does not put God first. What are some examples on that?
- What does this story say about how the people were practicing their religion at that time?
- What are some ways that we might appear religious, but do not put God first in our lives as well?

QUOTE: *This is religion on Israel’s terms, according to each person’s personal preference. It is a religion that is not about God and his truth and will, but about me and my ideas and preferences. It is a religion which seeks to control and tame God, to remake him in an image we are comfortable with. It is an easy, or an exciting, religion—but it is not a religion which will bring blessing or rescue. (page 172)*

SERMON DISCUSSION: The story of Micah, his mom, and the Levite, show us how our religion has been corrupted to meet our personal preferences.

- What are some things you learned through this week’s sermon?
- What are some questions you have or items you were confused about?
- What is your impression of Micah, his mom, and the Levite based on the sermon?
- How did this week’s sermon help you understand the cycle of sin and redemption in the people of Israel?
- What did you learn about the cycle of sin and redemption in your life?

THE LEVITE:

Read Judges 17:7-13

- What is your initial impression of this Levite?
- What is the job that Micah hires the Levite for?
- Do you think the Levite should have taken this position? Why or why not?

Read **Now I Know...**, pages 174-175, in *Judges For You*.

- Keller suggests that both Micah and the Levite gain something from this business proposal. What are benefits for Micah? What are the benefits for the Levite? Why might this be a detriment to the Lord?
- What is the contrast between religious effort and true faith as seen in this story, and in our own lives?
- Why is reducing faith to religious practice is dangerous?

A QUICK SUMMARY – Judges 18:1-17

A small group from the tribe of Dan are sent out to find land for their tribe to inhabit. Along the way they meet Micah's Levite, now private priest. They ask him to ask God if their journey will be successful, and he says yes. Then they find a people group, living in an area called Laish. These people are at peace, with no real threat around them. The Danites see them as a prime target to attack and take over their land. So, they gather up an army to overthrow these people and along the way there they discover that Micah's people. They decide they want to acquire Micah's idol, ephod, and priest for their own use.

A TEMPTING OFFER: Read Judges 18:18-20 and the final paragraph of **Desperate Dan**, page 176, in *Judges for You*.

- What is the job offer that the Danites give to Micah's priest? What is so tempting about it?
- Why do you think the priest accepts their offer?
- How is the Levite/Priest motivated by self-promotion?
- Why is that dangerous?
- How do we see damaging effect of self-promotion and self interest in the church and in our lives?
- This story speaks to the fallacy that bigger is always better. What is the common motivation in the Bigger is better fallacy? Why is that a dangerous motivation?
- How do Churches fall into this trap and how can that be damaging to the gospel?

LEFT WITH NOTHING: Read Judges 18:22-26

After pursuing the Danites, Micah confronts them, hoping to retake his priest and idol, but to no avail. Micah says if they take this idol and priest, that he has nothing left.

- What does he mean by that?
- How does the pursuit of idols leave us empty and meaningless?
- What have you pursued in your life that, and when it was gone, made you feel empty and alone?

PERSONAL REFLECTION:

Read **What Else Do I Have**, pages 176-177, in *Judges For You*.

- "In the end, self-made religion will disappoint." How is this statement lived out in the life of Micah?
- How have you seen it lived out in your life or in the lives of others? What have you found yourself worshiping other than Jesus?
- "There is only one God that will never be taken away from us." If Jesus is consistently with us, why do we turn to so many false Gods?

TRUE RELIGION:

James 1: 26-27 says, *Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.*

- How is “pure and faultless” religion different than all the false religious worship we find ourselves in today?
- What does James say are the two basic requirements of religion and how can we put this into practice better as individuals, a small group, and a church?

Share ways that the group can pray for each other so that you can discover that Jesus is all that you need.

Close in prayer.