

Uncivil War

Sunday Plan

SCRIPTURE

Judges 17–21

MEMORY VERSE

Judges 17:6

Judges 17–21 shows what happens when a nation abandons God as its moral center—everyone does whatever seems right to them, and the result is spiritual confusion, corrupt worship, violence, and societal collapse. These chapters reveal that without God’s kingship, even God’s people can drift into shocking darkness and lose their identity and unity.

Welcome & Introduction

Opening Questions:

Imagine a huge school where—for one week—the principal, teachers, and all rules disappear. At first, it feels exciting: everyone can do whatever they want. But very quickly, the hallways turn chaotic, people form their own little groups with their own “rules,” rumors spread, fights break out, and even good students start doing things they never would’ve imagined. By the end of the week, the school isn’t fun or free anymore—it’s scary, broken, and unsafe.

TRANSITION

Judges 17–21 is Israel’s version of that week. When everyone decided to make up their own truth and their own version of God, the nation unraveled from the inside out. In the end, rather than conquering the Canaanites the Israelites turned on one another in a Civil War.

Levite for Hire

Judges 17:5–13

NOTE

Teacher, please note that this lesson is highly sensitive and filled with violence and outrageous sexual immorality. However, it is contained in Scripture to demonstrate that when a people continually harden their hearts and reject God, their society unravels and their inhumanity knows no limits.

Teaching Points

- Micah creates a “customized” version of God instead of following God’s actual commands. Micah builds his own shrine, idols, and ephod, showing how easy it is to shape faith around personal preference rather than God’s truth.
- Spiritual sincerity doesn’t replace spiritual obedience. Micah is sincere and even excited about his religious setup, but sincerity without obedience leads to confusion, not blessing.
- Micah assumes God’s approval simply because things “feel right.” His statement, “Now I know the Lord will be good to me,” reveals a dangerous mindset: believing God endorses whatever we choose, even when it contradicts His Word.

DISCUSSION

1. Why do you think people today try to “customize” God or faith to fit what they want? Can you think of some examples in which people try to use religion to justify lifestyles clearly forbidden by God?
2. What’s the difference between being sincere about your faith and actually obeying God?
3. Have you ever assumed God was okay with something just because it felt right or worked out?

KEY TRUTH

The Levite’s willingness to compromise shows how spiritual leaders can drift when they crave comfort or status. Instead of serving where God assigned him, the Levite takes a job that offers convenience and personal benefit.

Dan Trades the True God for a Fake and Loses His Blessings

Judges 18:1–4, 8–20, 27–31

Teaching Points

- The tribe of Dan had not conquered a single inch of the divine coastal inheritance God had given them in Joshua 19:40–48. So, instead they are out in search of other lands.
- The Levite’s willingness to “upgrade” his position shows how easily leaders can be swayed by status. He abandons Micah’s house the moment a better offer appears, revealing a heart driven by opportunity rather than calling.
- The Danites confuse spiritual symbols with spiritual approval. They steal Micah’s idols and priest, assuming that having religious objects means having God’s blessing — a reminder that outward spirituality doesn’t equal inward faithfulness.
- The tribe of Dan builds a long-term system of false worship that shapes generations. Their choices don’t just affect them; they create a legacy of idolatry that lasts “until the day of the captivity,” showing how one compromise can ripple through an entire community.

DISCUSSION

1. Why do you think people today look for the “easy version” of following God instead of the real thing?
2. What makes status, popularity, or recognition so tempting — even for people who want to follow God?
3. How can we tell the difference between something that looks spiritual and something that is actually honoring to God?

KEY TRUTH

When people lack direction from God, they start looking for shortcuts. The Danites never fully trusted God for their original inheritance, so they went searching for an easier path — a pattern that mirrors how people drift when they avoid the hard work of obedience.

When Silence Feeds Violence

Judges 19:1–4, 9–15, 22–30

Teaching Points

- Judges 19 deliberately echoes Genesis 19 (Sodom and Gomorrah). The parallels are unmistakable: a traveler arrives in a town, receives hospitality from one person while the rest of the town is hostile, wicked men surround the house demanding sexual violence. The author of Judges wants readers to see that Israel has become Sodom. The people God sent to destroy Canaanite wickedness have now

adopted it. This is the theological bottom of the entire book. Unfortunately for the concubine, there are no angels present to intervene.

- When people drift from God, compassion and justice collapse. When God’s ways are ignored, people stop seeing others as image-bearers. The story is not about God approving the events—it’s about showing how far people fall when they reject Him.
- Silence and passivity in the face of evil cause real harm. Multiple characters in this chapter fail to protect the vulnerable. Their inaction becomes part of the tragedy. Scripture consistently teaches that God’s people are called to defend the oppressed, not stand by.
- God includes hard stories to show the need for a true, righteous King. This chapter is intentionally disturbing because it reveals the brokenness of a world without godly leadership. It points forward to God’s desire for justice, healing, and a kingdom where the vulnerable are safe.

DISCUSSION

1. What happens to a community—at school, online, or anywhere—when people stop seeing others as valuable and start treating them like objects? Can you think of any historical examples?
2. Where do you see examples today of people staying silent when someone is being mistreated? What does courage look like in those moments?
3. Judges 19 shows how broken things get when everyone “does what’s right in their own eyes.” What helps you stay grounded in God’s ways when the culture around you pushes in the opposite direction?
4. A part of this story echoes events at Sodom & Gomorrah. Other events in this episode seem even worse than Sodom & Gomorrah. (Verse 12 indicates they refused to stay in a foreign city but instead stay the night in a town with fellow Jews.) Where is Israel headed at this point? Where is any civilization headed when justice and compassion are absent?

KEY TRUTH

Sin always spreads outward—it never stays private. The Levite’s selfishness, the townsmen’s violence, and the community’s moral decay all ripple outward until an entire nation is affected. Judges 19 is a warning that personal choices shape communities.

Breaking Benjamin

Judges 20:1–10, 13–14, 36–44

Teaching Points

- All Israel gathers “as one” to deal with the evil in Gibeah. Unity is good—but unity without God’s wisdom can still lead to destructive decisions. Being united doesn’t automatically mean being right.
- Israel wants justice for the horrific wrong done in Judges 19, but their approach becomes fueled by rage, not righteousness. The result is excessive retaliation and unnecessary loss. Scripture warns that human anger cannot produce God’s justice.
- Ignoring sin always harms more people than expected. Benjamin refuses to hand over the guilty men, and that choice pulls an entire tribe into conflict. Sin that is protected, excused, or hidden spreads outward and damages whole communities.

DISCUSSION

1. Why is it dangerous when a group—even a large one—makes decisions based only on emotion or pressure instead of wisdom and truth?
2. Where do you see examples today of people protecting wrongdoing because they don't want to confront someone close to them? What does healthy accountability look like?
3. Judges 20 shows how quickly conflict can escalate when no one slows down to seek God. What helps you pause and think before reacting in anger or frustration?

KEY TRUTH

This chapter shows why Israel desperately needed godly leadership. Judges 20 is not a model for how to handle conflict—it's a picture of what happens when people rely on their own judgment. The chaos points forward to God's desire for a righteous King who brings true justice and peace.

Broken People Seek Broken Solutions

Judges 21:15–25

Teaching Points

- The other tribes had slaughtered the tribe of Benjamin to near extinction. Only 600 men remained of the tribe and their future survival was in jeopardy since all of their people, including the women, had been killed.
- Israel had sworn not to give their daughters to Benjamin in marriage. Instead of repenting of their rash vow, they created a loophole:
 - The Benjamites would “seize” wives from the festival dancers.
 - Israel would claim they technically didn't “give” their daughters away.
- This is not presented as righteous behavior. Judges ends by showing how far Israel had fallen: “Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”
- The story is descriptive, not prescriptive—it shows the brokenness of a nation without godly leadership.
- These women were unmarried young women (“virgins”). The text emphasizes this because the tribe of Benjamin needed wives to survive. The narrative highlights their vulnerability, which makes the Benjamites' actions even more tragic and morally wrong.
- They were innocent bystanders caught in Israel's brokenness. The book ends with Israel in this sorry state.

DISCUSSION

1. When the Israelites realized how their choices had hurt others, they were filled with regret. Why is it important to slow down and think through decisions before acting, especially when emotions are high?
2. Israel tried to “fix” a problem they created by making more complicated plans instead of admitting their mistake. Why do you think it's hard for people to own their failures, and what does healthy repentance look like?
3. Judges 21 shows a community trying to rebuild after deep division and hurt. What helps a group — a family, a team, a youth group — heal and move forward when trust has been damaged?

KEY TRUTH

Israel's rash vow led to a "loophole" solution that only compounded the harm. Judges ends with the refrain "Everyone did what was right in his own eyes"—descriptive, not prescriptive. The book closes showing the brokenness of a nation without godly leadership.

Where the Story Goes from Here

Teaching Points

- The refrain "Everyone did what was right in his own eyes" is not just a warning about moral relativism. The author of Judges writes from the perspective of the monarchy and wants readers to long for faithful leadership. Israel needs a king. Christians know how this story ends: the king Israel ultimately needs is Jesus, who "does not do what is right in his own eyes but delights to do the will of his Father in heaven" (John 6:38–40).
- Joshua opened with God keeping His promises and Israel entering the land. Judges closes with Israel tearing itself apart. The distance between those two points is a single generation. What changed? Leadership died, memory faded, and the covenant was abandoned. The remedy isn't better self-discipline; it's a better covenant with a better mediator, which is exactly what Jesus provides (Hebrews 8:6). The whole 13-week journey we've taken together, from Joshua's covenant renewal to the civil war in Benjamin, is a story about why the world needed Christ.

DISCUSSION

1. Looking back over this whole series, what has changed about the way you understand why Jesus matters?
2. Israel kept failing even though they had good intentions. How does knowing that we have a better covenant through Christ change the way you approach your own failures?

KEY TRUTH

The book of Judges doesn't end with a solution. It ends with a question: who will be king? The rest of the Bible answers that question. Every judge was a preview of the Deliverer to come. Every failure proved why a perfect one was needed. That perfect one is Jesus.

Memory Verses & Closing

Memory Verses

- Judges 17:6

Challenge for the Week:

This week, apply these steps for a five-day challenge:

Day 1 — Notice Where Things Feel Broken

Pay attention to one place in your life where there's tension, distance, or something unresolved. Write it down. No fixing yet—just noticing.

Day 2 — Own Your Part (Even If It's Small)

Ask yourself: "*Is there anything I contributed—an attitude, a reaction, a silence?*" Be honest with yourself. God works with honesty.

Day 3 — Pray for Wisdom Before Action

Israel rushed into decisions without seeking God's heart. Take 3 minutes today to pray: "God, show me the wise and loving way to respond."

Day 4 — Take One Gentle Step Toward Repair

This could be:

- sending a kind message
- apologizing for something small
- choosing patience
- offering encouragement
- letting go of a grudge
- asking someone how they're really doing

Choose one step that builds peace instead of pressure.

Day 5 — Celebrate the Progress, Not Perfection

End the week by thanking God for any movement—no matter how small. Healing is slow, but every step matters.

Close in prayer.