



How Did We Get Here?

RECAP

This week's focus: "Redefining God, based on our preferences rather than His Word, distorts our relationship with Him."

Samson, the last judge, has died. Chapter 17 opens with the story of a man in Israel named Micah, who overhears his mother uttering a curse on whoever stole her silver. Turns out Micah was the thief. Fearful of his mother's curse, he confesses to stealing her silver. Then he returns it, and she dedicates it to the Lord and uses part of the silver to make a carved idol and a metal image. Micah sets up a shrine in his house, fills it with household gods, and even makes one of his sons a priest.

One day, a wandering Levite from Bethlehem arrives at Micah's home, and Micah offers him a place to stay, along with food, clothing, and a small salary, making him his personal priest. Micah believes that having a Levite as a priest will secure God's blessing, reflecting his distorted view of God and how to worship Him.

In Judges 18, the tribe of Dan is still seeking territory. They send five scouts to explore the area and find the peaceful town of Laish, which seems like an ideal place to conquer. On their way, the scouts stop at Micah's house, where they recognize the accent of a Levite priest. The Levite tells them about Micah's shrine, and the Danites realize they could take advantage of the situation.

The scouts later return with six hundred Danite warriors and set out to capture the town, stopping first at Micah's house. They steal the idols and convince the Levite to join them as their priest, offering him a greater role in leading their entire tribe. When Micah confronts them, demanding his idols back, the Danites threaten him, and he is forced to return home disappointed and in deep despair.

The Danites continue their journey, attack the unsuspecting town of Laish, and kill its inhabitants. They rebuild the town, rename it Dan, and set up the idols stolen from Micah as part of their religious practices. The chapter ends by highlighting how the tribe of Dan continues in idolatry for generations, far removed from God's covenant with Israel.

Judges 17:6 says, **"In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit."** That means that God's Word was no longer their guide to what was right and wrong. Everybody followed their own hearts. Micah and the Danites redefined God according to their desires and preferences by creating an image, distorting their view of God and morality. The result was disappointment, destruction, and despair.

In many ways, this is the primary sin of our culture today. We don't completely reject God; we just redefine Him. Like Micah, we begin to create our own homemade religion, redefining God and morality, based on personal preference and conforming to the culture around us. The result is that we end up worshipping a deified version of ourselves and calling that God. If God is a tool to be used, we can easily assume that God exists to serve us and that if we do the right things, He is obligated to bless us. God then becomes a useful tool to get what we want rather than an awesome God to be worshipped and served.

When you shrink God down to a size that you can manipulate and control, you will live in constant fear and worry. But, when you've surrendered to the true God, trusting Jesus with your life, you never have to fear that He will be taken from you or that he will leave you.

So, what about you? How would you characterize your approach to God? Are you trying to use Him, or have you laid down your life in worship and surrender to Him?

How Did We Get Here?

SHARE (5-10 min)

1. Icebreaker Question: What's the strangest thing you've heard Christians and non-Christians say about God?

STUDY (about 30 min) Read Judges 17-18

2. How did God speak to you through the scripture and the sermon this week? Is there anything that was unclear, or that you have questions about?
3. Read 17:1-6. What about Micah and his mother's actions dishonor God? What commandments are they specifically breaking (Exodus 20:4-6)? What have Micah and his mother done to redefine God?
4. 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? What about the priest's activities in Judges 17 and 18 violate the law for Levites (Num. 8:14-19, 35:2-3, 6-8.)?
5. Read 18:1-26. What was motivating the tribe of Dan to attack a peaceful people? Read Joshua 19:40-48. What happened to their original allotted territory? Read Genesis 49:16-18. How did Dan fulfill this prophecy?
6. What does this final scene in 18:27-31 tell us about how the tribe of Dan viewed God? Did they truly honor and obey him? Why or why not?
7. What are some of the ways our society redefines God into someone He's not? What ways do we as Christians ignore or add to some of God's attributes for our own purposes?
8. 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 positively or negatively affect the way you think of God? Why?
9. What examples from your own life led you to think that you could earn God's blessings? In what ways are you making God into someone He's not? What about your view of God might need to change?

SUPPORT (15 min)

List as many characteristics of God that come to mind. Pray that God will reveal to you how you might be viewing His character through a cultural lens. Ask God to refresh your view of him this week and thank him for the ways He's revealed his character to you.