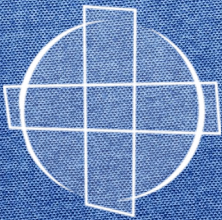


Donald J. Wills  
Senior Pastor

JUNE  
2018

**TRANS***f***ORMED**2018  
JUDGES 16-21  
IN OUR MORALS



ADULT CONNECT  
CLASS CURRICULUM

The purpose of First Baptist Church of Fort Worth is to **introduce** people into a loving relationship with Jesus, **instruct** them in spiritual growth through God's Word, **inspire** them to serve for God's kingdom, and **incorporate** them in authentic worship to glorify God.

## *A Note From Our Pastor*

Dear FBC family and friends,

As we come to the end of the study in the book of Judges, the key issue was “everyone did what was right in his own eyes,” (Judges 17:6). This is the same situation many find themselves in today. They are looking out for number one and they do whatever necessary to satisfy to achieve their satisfaction. However, living a transformed life takes on different reflection of one’s self where He, meaning Christ, must increase and I must decrease as declared by John (John 3:30). It is not in doing what pleases one’s self, but what is pleasing to God. Thus, we will “be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God,” (Romans 12:2b).

As a reminder, the layout of this Curriculum begins with a 7-day approach for both the teacher and the members to get the most from each study. We also acknowledge that teachers may have their own methods for preparing the lessons and we encourage them to prepare in the way that makes them most effective in presenting God’s Word and the weekly lesson. We also encourage each teacher and member to use the suggested 7-day approach for their own personal study and encouragement.

May we always strive to live our life leaning on Christ and walking in His way.

-Blessings  
Pastor Don



## *Suggested Plan for Using this Bible Study Guide Effectively*

### *Introduce*

**Day 1:** Read and meditate on the Scripture, asking God to guide you throughout the week as you study His Word and allowing Him to speak to you through the Spirit. Read the **INTRODUCE** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Instruct*

**Day 2:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and read the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary. Concentrate on memorizing the focal verse for that particular week.

**Day 3:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and answer the focal questions in the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Inspire*

**Day 4:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and begin thinking about tangible ways you can incorporate the principles you learned in your daily life. Read the **INSPIRE** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Incorporate*

**Day 5:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and apply the theological principle that you learned from this week in a tangible way. Use the **INCORPORATE** portion of the lesson commentary to guide you.

**Day 6:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and in the journal section describe how God allowed you to apply this passage in a real and tangible way this week.

**Day 7:** Review the Scripture and share with others in your Connect Class on Sunday morning at 9:30am. Be ready to share your experience about how God allowed you to apply the lesson for that week.

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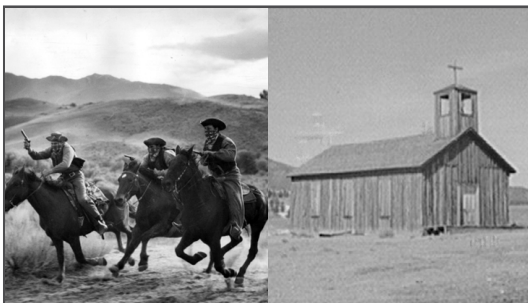
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<input type="checkbox"/> it is jealous and ego-centric	<input type="checkbox"/> it does not envy, it does not boast
<input type="checkbox"/> it is arrogant and rude	<input type="checkbox"/> it is not proud, it is not rude
<input type="checkbox"/> it is insistent on getting one's way	<input type="checkbox"/> it is not self-seeking
<input type="checkbox"/> it is irritable	<input type="checkbox"/> it is not easily angered
<input type="checkbox"/> it is resentful	<input type="checkbox"/> it keeps no record of wrongs
<input type="checkbox"/> Lust celebrates sin	<input type="checkbox"/> Love does not delight in evil,
<input type="checkbox"/> and mocks the truth	<input type="checkbox"/> but rejoices with the truth
<input type="checkbox"/> It is not concerned for others	<input type="checkbox"/> It always protects
<input type="checkbox"/> always skeptical	<input type="checkbox"/> always trusts
<input type="checkbox"/> always pessimistic	<input type="checkbox"/> always hopes
<input type="checkbox"/> it easily gives up	<input type="checkbox"/> always perseveres
<input type="checkbox"/> Lust always ends	<input type="checkbox"/> Love never fails

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The Attributes of Lust

- *Lust is impatient, lust is unkind*
- *it is jealous and ego-centric*
- *it is arrogant and rude*
- *it is insistent on getting one's way*
- *it is irritable*
- *it is resentful*
- *Lust celebrates sin*
- *and mocks the truth*
- *It is not concerned for others*
- *always skeptical*
- *always pessimistic*
- *it easily gives up*
- *Lust always ends*

The Attributes of Love

- *Love is patient, love is kind*
- *it does not envy, it does not boast*
- *it is not proud, it is not rude*
- *it is not self-seeking*
- *it is not easily angered*
- *it keeps no record of wrongs*
- *Love does not delight in evil,*
- *but rejoices with the truth*
- *It always protects*
- *always trusts*
- *always hopes*
- *always perseveres*
- *Love never fails*

# Be Transformed from Lust to Love

## Judges 16:1-31

Focal Verse:

"And she said, 'The Philistines are upon you, Samson!' So he awoke from his sleep, and said, 'I will go out as before, at other times, and shake myself free!' But he did not know that the Lord had departed from him."

Judges 16:20

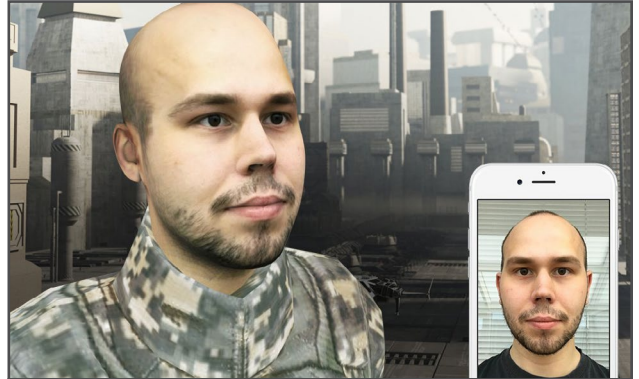
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## Introduction

Today, because of the influence of television, the Internet, and video gaming, we live in a world that has difficulty in distinguishing reality and truth from fantasy and fiction. For several years now, we've had video games that depict a virtual world in which normal boundaries have been abolished; someone can create an Avatar, a cartoon-like character of himself, who can do and say anything without consequence, including acts of violence, deception, sexual immorality, and all types of sinful degradation. To people in a virtual world that has spilled over into reality, lust may seem harmless and like a victimless action; many people even ascribe to the philosophy that looking or pretending is OK as long as they don't touch or pursue their actual fantasies in life. Although mankind has always had a problem with the sinfulness of lust, it has even become more difficult to differentiate lust from the admirable quality of love today because many people have blurred the line between reality and fantasy.

Therein, however, lies the problem because lust is deceptive and can lead to a whole host of problems when people inevitably and eventually succumb to their fantasies—just look at David with Bathsheba.

According to Jesus' teaching, lust constitutes a harmful problem which we must treat seriously. In the Sermon on the Mount, He equates lust with the sin of adultery to demonstrate its seriousness and goes on to



*This Avatar is not intended to bear actual physical likeness of any church member.*

warn: “If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell” (Matt 5:29). Lust in any form, whether a glance, a thought, or an enacted fantasy, is destructive and can cause devastating difficulties in our lives when we don’t intentionally guard our hearts, control our eyes, and purify our thoughts in Christ. Lust, unfortunately, has led to the downfall of many great men and women who have served the Lord—and, if we are not careful, it can cause our own as well!

From the beginning of our study of Samson, we have seen how the lust of his eyes have pulled on the proverbial strings of his heart with the women whom he saw. In [chapter 16](#), we further see this lust for women when he visits a prostitute and then falls “in love” with another woman named Delilah who attempts to deceive and entice him to reveal the source of his strength. Ultimately, his spiritual “blindness” caused by his lust leads to his physical downfall and destruction. Yet, even though Samson was destroyed through his own sinful choices, he eventually realized that the Lord alone was the source of his strength and the means of his deliverance. We ought not be like Samson who could not differentiate love from lust, but instead we must ask the Lord to transform us so the love He has lavished upon us might be evident to all through the love that we display to others.

Key  
Question

In what ways can we distinguish love from lust today in our society?



## Judges 16:1-20

### ***THE DECEPTIVENESS OF LUST:***

Just as he was with the woman from Timnah who eventually became his wife, Samson once again let his eyes guide him lustfully as he **saw** and visited **a harlot** in the city of **Gaza** (v. 1). We aren't told much about this incident, but can still see how it contributed to his downfall as he continues to ignore the Lord's call in favor of his own selfish interests. After hearing that Samson **had come**, some of the men **surrounded** the home which was likely near the **city gate** to **wait** for an opportunity the next **morning** at daybreak to **kill him** (v. 2). Rising at **midnight**, however, Samson snuck past the guards and ripped the massive **city gate** from the ground, including the **posts** to which they were attached, and **carried** them forty miles back to his homeland to **the top of the hill** facing **Hebron** (v. 3). Although the text doesn't mention the Spirit of the Lord coming upon him to empower him with miraculous strength as in the previous episodes, we know that God is still the source—but it serves to highlight how Samson misused this strength he had been given for his own personal exploits.



Samson had traveled far from his homeland into the heart of the Philistines' territory, showing where his true desires lie. He seems totally

## Instruct

unconcerned with his call to begin delivering Israel from this foreign nation based on his fraternizing with the enemy! Instead, he focuses wholly on his personal desires and sexual conquests, seeking enjoyment and fulfillment in his life. Although the Lord had endowed him with great personal strength and called him as a deliverer, Samson used his gift selfishly to this point, seeking revenge on his enemies and persecuting those who mocked him. Thus, the omission of the Spirit of the Lord in this case serves to make known explicitly what we already know: Samson is self-centered, driven by lust, and mostly oblivious to the work of the Lord in his life except only during the times he wanted something. Sin in our lives not only drives a wedge in our relationship with the Lord, but it causes us to tumble in a downward spiral as it grows out of control ([Isa 59:1-2, 12](#)). In some ways, as the Bible states, sin controls us by enslaving us and, like any kind of addiction, it never produces contentment, but it always requires more and more to satisfy us only temporarily ([John 8:34](#)); therefore, we must learn from Samson's mistakes and consciously surrender to the Spirit, allowing Him to guide us.

In what ways does sin push us further from the Lord?

Question  
# 1

Shortly after visiting the prostitute, another **woman** catches Samson's eye by the **name** of **Delilah** and once again he becomes sidetracked and misguided by the pursuit of another relationship (v. 4). Although the text states that **he loved Delilah**, we will soon observe how it was not a mutual bond which again serves to highlight Samson's confusion of lust and infatuation with **love**. As we will see, Samson failed to learn from the

fiasco with his first wife from Timnah who was persuaded by her fellow countrymen to find out the answer to the riddle. In much the same way, Delilah used Samson to ascertain the secret to his **strength**—this time leading to his ultimate downfall. Before we even know much about this relationship, we see **the Philistines** coming to her and bribing her with **eleven hundred pieces of silver** to find out where his great strength lies so that they may **overpower him** (v. 5). As a result, Delilah has an ulterior motive in pretending to love Samson so that he will reveal the information which will allow the Philistines to capture and subdue their chief enemy.



What are the characteristics which help us gauge whether love in a relationship is pure?

Question  
# 2

Immediately, Delilah attempted to seduce Samson in order to convince him to reveal the source of his **great strength** and **what** object by which he **can be bound** to immobilize him (v. 6). Without even thinking about the consequences for the dangerous game which he is about to play, Samson flirts with her and suggests that if they **bind** him **with seven fresh bowstrings** then he will **become weak** as any **other** ordinary man (v. 7). After receiving **seven fresh bowstrings** from **the Philistines**, she **bound him** and alerted him that they had come to seize him; however, because

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he had not divulged the source of **his strength**, he **broke** them easily just like **strands of yarn** that snap when burned (v. 9). Though Samson escaped harm, he was figuratively playing with fire because he had placed himself in a tempting situation because of his craving for lust and did not have the proper perspective to reason clearly. He had become consumed with his own desires and had lost all common sense and rationality!

How does placing ourselves in tempting situations cloud our judgment and reasoning?

Question  
# 3

### In-Depth Information



*The word translated **bowstrings** actually refers to an animal's tendon or muscle. Once again, just as he had done with the lion earlier, Samson knowingly mocks his Nazirite vow and calling from the Lord by potentially placing himself near objects from corpse. Samson, therefore, had no respect for the boundaries that God had given him at birth and he saw his self-gratification with many women as his primary conquest—for he did not honor God's ideal boundaries for a sexual union either.*

Unbelievably, Samson doesn't learn from his mistake and he ignorantly allows his lust for Delilah to continue deceiving him and guiding his thoughts. Consequently, she came and shamed him for **mocking** her and **telling** her **lies** so she demanded to know how he **may be bound** (v. 10). Continuing this sordid game, Samson declared that **new ropes** that have

**never been used** were the key (v. 11); we already know that this will not work because the men of Judah had previously tried this method and failed ([Judg 15:13](#)). Indeed, Delilah tied him securely, but he broke them like string or thread when the Philistines came to attack (v. 12).

Why is it sometimes difficult to learn from our mistakes?

Question  
# 4

For a third time, Delilah berated Samson and tried to coax the secret out of him, but this time his answer became even more ludicrous and stupefying. He asserted that weaving the **seven locks of his hair into the web of a loom** would immobilize him (v. 13). Once again, the same result occurred when the Philistines tried to overpower him (v. 14). So finally, Delilah puts more pressure on him by claiming that he did not truly love her because he had mocked and lied to her (v. 15). As a result, she resorted to the tactics used by his first wife and began to **pester** and **press** him **daily** until he relented and told her the truth (v. 16). Finally, Samson grew so weary that **he told her all his heart**, revealing the truth: from birth, he was to live as **a Nazirite** devoted to God, so **no razor** has ever touched **his head**. If his hair were **shaven**, then **his strength** would **leave** him and he would **become weak** (v. 17).



When we have intimate relationships and spend much time with people doing the wrong things, why do we often find ourselves participating in that same evil and destroying our lives?

Question  
# 5

## Instruct

Flirting with danger this entire time, the lust that blinded him for Delilah has now led to his utter destruction and downfall. Delilah knew that Samson had now told her the truth, so she **called** for **the Philistines** to come so she could receive her reward when they overpowered him (v. 18). **Lulling** Samson to **sleep on her lap**, she **shaved his seven locks** and began to **torment** him to rouse him from his slumber (v. 19). Figuring that he would meet **the Philistines** and defeat them just as he had before, Samson was unaware that **the Lord had departed from him** (v. 20). Although the Lord loves us and disciplines us, sometimes the greatest discipline comes in the form of allowing one to go down a path of self-destruction and learn a lesson the hard way. Sometimes people are so stubborn that they will never learn a lesson until they hit rock bottom and have nowhere else in which to turn. Even though God loves Samson, He abandoned him to his own lustful and sinful desires—helping Samson to realize from whence his power had come and in Whom he must trust.

## Judges 16:21-27

### **THE DESTRUCTIVENESS OF LUST:**

Lust had completely brought Samson to his knees and destroyed his life. Because **the Lord had left** Samson and he had no more supernatural strength, the Philistines seized him, **put out his eyes**, and imprisoned him in **Gaza** where they forced him to grind grain (v. 21). The once mighty man who could not be contained was now at the end of his road, but even so there was hope! Somewhat oddly, the narrator notes that his hair began to grow again (v. 22). We may skip over this verse without

giving it much thought, but it is significant because it reveals that no matter how badly we have erred or how far we have fallen we still have hope in the Lord.

Why can we have hope in the Lord despite our mistakes? What does the Bible tell us to do when we sin?

Question  
# 6

While Samson suffered in prison, the Philistine leaders (i.e. **lords**) **gathered** to praise their god **Dagon** and celebrate their victory over Samson their **enemy** (v. 23). As customary at the time, the Philistines believed that they and their **god** had defeated Samson and his God; therefore, they **praised Dagon** and composed a song about how he had **delivered** their enemy who had **destroyed** their **land** and killed many of their citizens **into** their **hands** (v. 24). To further mock Samson, they **called** for him **from prison** so that he might **perform for them** (v. 25). We aren't told how they envisioned his performance, but this was merely another way of mocking and humiliating him without his strength to retaliate against them. To see this spectacle, **the temple** teemed with about **three thousand** people, including many **watching on the roof**, as they positioned him between **two pillars** with his hands resting on each for support (vv. 26-27). Samson, now physically blind, had been spiritually blind to the presence of the Lord most of his life. Instead of depending upon the strength of the Lord and submitting to His



leadership, Samson was now led by the Philistines as they mocked him.

How do our sinful actions reflect upon the Lord, especially with the unbelieving world around us?

Question  
# 7

Because Samson had been blinded by lust, he failed to point others to the Lord and acted as bad or worse than the world around him. Instead of fulfilling his God-given duty and vocation as a deliverer, Samson sought lustful relationships and vengeance upon his enemies. Rather than seeing a Spirit-filled man strengthened by the Lord supernaturally, the Philistines see a weak man whom they had conquered and now mock along with his God. When we live a life apart from the righteous transformation that Christ provides, the world will wrongly mock our Savior and regard Him as weak and ineffective. We know that God is not to be implicated or blamed for our sinful choices, but when we live a lifestyle of sin we repel others rather than pointing them to a relationship with Christ. We ought to ask this question: why would someone want a relationship with the Lord if we act like or even worse than the world around us does? Although both our obedient and sinful actions cause people to assess the character of our heavenly Father, people tend to focus on the poor choices and mistakes that we make; therefore, we must be intentional in our actions so that they reflect positively upon our Lord. Our actions, attitudes, and words must reflect the transformation of the Lord and the presence of the Spirit in our lives so that we point others into a relationship with Him rather than repelling them.

In what ways can we represent the transformed love of Christ to those around us?

Question  
# 8



**THE DELIVERANCE BY THE LORD:**

Standing with his **hands** on the **two** main **pillars which supported the temple**, Samson began to **pray** for strength just one more time to **take vengeance** upon **the Philistines** for poking out his **two eyes** (vv. 28-29). Often, people think of Samson's prayer in the temple as noble and heroic, and even sacrificial because he gave his life for a greater cause, but upon closer examination we see a self-centered man seeking revenge. Samson's prayer is not that the **Lord God** may be glorified and revealed to the Philistines, but that he might seek revenge for his blindness. This prayer is as selfish and self-centered as the one where he asks for water to quench his thirst (see [Judg 15:18-20](#)). Even with this humiliating experience, Samson remained self-centered and failed to learn from his previous mistakes; however, he finally did recognize, or at least admit, that his strength came from the Lord and he must wholly depend upon Him.

To put Samson's self-centeredness into perspective, we see that he begins his prayer by asking, "**Remember me.**" Certainly, we can call out to the Lord in times of trouble and ask Him for help, but Samson never admits his sin nor recognizes his role in the precarious predicament in which he had found himself. Instead of acknowledging the holiness and greatness of the Lord, Samson never praises Him or requests forgiveness, but his prayer is filled with first-person commands: **remember me,**



## Instruct

**strengthen me, I may with one blow take vengeance, and for my two eyes.** Certainly, God had called Samson as a deliverer from birth and He worked miraculously through his life despite all his moral failures. Yet, Samson never lived up to his full potential because he never surrendered to the Lord and had a self-centered perspective throughout his life.

When you pray, how do you ensure that your prayers are not self-centered?

Question  
# 9

Next month, we will begin studying the book of Matthew and we will eventually examine Jesus' teaching on prayer and the model prayer He gives us ([Matt 6:9-13](#)). When we put Samson's prayer side-by-side with this model prayer, we will see how off-base he truly is. First the model prayer opens with praise and worship directed to the Lord—"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name." Samson's prayer, on the contrary, is a curt plea that God will **remember** him. Second, Jesus teaches us to seek the will of the Father—"Your kingdom come; Your will be done." Samson, however, never asks the Lord to reveal His will or even to participate in His will, but he makes bold demands to enact revenge upon his enemies. Third, Jesus teaches us to ask for forgiveness from the Lord and extend forgiveness to others: "And forgive our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Samson, on the other hand, has no concept of forgiveness in his prayer; he neither asks for forgiveness for the sin of lust in his life nor does he forgive **the Philistines**, but he merely wants to **take vengeance** on them.

How do your prayers reflect the principles that Jesus taught us in the model prayer?

Question  
# 10

Taking **hold of the middle two pillars** that **supported** the weight of the roof, Samson **braced himself** and **pushed with all his strength** until the entire structure collapsed and killed everyone—including him (vv. 29-30). On that day, more people died than he **had killed** throughout **his** entire **life**. In a fitting end to his life, Samson's family, **his brothers and all his father's household**, came to claim his body and bury him in his homeland between **Zorah** and **Eshtaol** (v. 31). In all, Samson **judged Israel twenty years**, but in reality the Lord was truly the Deliverer. Given Samson's amazing strength and exploits from killing a lion to slaughtering a thousand men with a jawbone from a donkey, we tend to forget that God continued to graciously deliver Israel despite their sin just as he continued to work miraculously through Samson despite his character flaws.

If left to his own devices, Samson would have never even begun to deliver Israel because he would have been too busy chasing women to fulfill his lustful desires. Yet, despite Samson's self-centeredness, uncontrolled anger, and lustfulness, the Lord still fulfilled His promise by beginning to deliver Israel. Samson was a deeply flawed individual, but in the story of his life we can see the Lord at work through His grace and mercy providing hope where there was indeed none. Therefore, the Lord should be exalted as the Deliverer alone—not Samson; in Him alone we have the hope of transformation so that He can rid our lives of lust and help us to walk according to His love regardless of what we have done or how we have failed. If God can work through Samson, He can change you too and make you into a much greater vessel who accomplishes extraordinary things for His name when you surrender to Him!

Perhaps the word that best describes the problems our world faces is lust. Lust comes in the form of many sinful activities; it certainly includes sexual immorality, but it is not limited to it. People lust for power and control, wealth and material possessions, fame and attention, contentment and pleasure, and a whole host of other desires. Lust, however, never leads to contentment, but instead drives us down a path of destruction and despair. In John 2:17, the Apostle writes, “And the world is passing away, and the lust of it.” Left to our own desires, we have no hope and will face a bleak future apart from Christ.

Praise be to the Lord, however, that we have hope in Christ who will help us overcome the lust of the flesh and transform us into one who can be used by Him to accomplish His will. Although overcoming lustful desires can be difficult at times, the Lord gives us several guidelines to help us. First, read, comprehend, and apply Scripture so that we can recognize and avoid sin ([Psalm 119:111](#)). Second, be in an attitude of prayer at all times—even before facing the possibility of a tempting situation ([Matt 6:13](#); [1 Thess 5:17](#)). Third, recognize that God has placed us in a body of believers so that mature believers can help each other and be accountable to one another ([Matt 18:15-17](#); [Gal 6:1-5](#)). Fourth, we should avoid intentionally putting ourselves in situations which could tempt us and cause us to sin; sometimes we cannot avoid these situations because they occur without warning, but when we can plan and avoid them we should ([1 Cor 10:13](#)). Just as the old children’s song teaches: Be careful . . . what you see, what you hear, what you do, and where you go! When we seek the Lord first and His righteousness, He will help us to overcome lustful desires and will transform us from lust to love in Christ so that the whole world may see our character that reflects His love and holiness.

## *Incorporate*

What are the greatest temptations in your life that have the ability to distract you from your relationship with the Lord?

What are some ways that you can overcome these temptations through the help of the Lord so that you don't derail your life as Samson did?

How has the Lord delivered you from some temptations you have previously faced? How can you encourage or help others who may be facing these same temptations?

*June 10, 2018*



*Be Transformed from  
Lawlessness to Righteousness*  
*Judges 17:1-18:31*

Focal Verse:

"In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes."

Judges 17:6

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## Introduce

With the proliferation of the production of Western movies and television shows, the lawlessness of the American West has been romanticized and greatly exaggerated; we don't usually remember upstanding families like the Cartwrights, but tough and merciless sharpshooters like Clint Eastwood in *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*. Even so, lawlessness was still rampant in burgeoning frontier communities. With its motto "Where the West Begins," Fort Worth certainly was no stranger to the bawdy atmosphere

of bars, the violent outburst of ill-tempered men and women, the degradation of prostitution, and the contentious sport of gambling. Because of the movies, we typically view the West as having daily shootouts in the street at high noon,



drunken brawls in ornate saloons, patrons frequently visiting prostitutes like Miss Kitty, and gangs of tough men robbing trains and stagecoaches. Therefore, we tend to see the West as overrun with lawlessness whereas we view our own culture as one highly advanced and civilized.

Lawlessness certainly existed in the West—just as it does today—just not to the degree in which we see it portrayed on film. In fact, a Dallas lawyer once mocked that Fort Worth was so quiet that a panther could sleep in the middle of the street. Although we see ourselves as advanced and cultured, in many ways the lawless "Wild West" can't hold a candle to the sin and perversion that occurs today. People have rejected the boundaries that the Lord has given in Scripture and they live according

## Introduce

to their own fleshly desire. Consequently, we live in a society which views both morality and truth as dependent upon the circumstance and the personal outlook of the individual; therefore, people act upon their own philosophies and feelings often irrespective of the law which they see as outdated, oppressive, and unjust. In many ways, the outcome of this belief will cause much more destruction than the perceived lawlessness of the West because “everyone [does] what [is] right in his own eyes.”

As we come to the end of our study of Judges, we see how thoroughly secular Israel had become; they didn’t look to the Lord for their source of morality, but they looked within themselves for their sense of right and wrong; therefore, they followed their own desires. Because they had rejected the Law of the Lord, “everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judg 17:6). Without a perfect standard which to follow along with the moral relativism of their own desires, Israel had become corrupt in her reverence (worship), religion, reasoning, and relationships. This sounds very much like our own culture today! Instead, we need to have the perspective of Christ and see things through His eyes so that He can transform us from lawlessness to righteousness.

Key  
Question

In what ways do you see lawlessness rampant in our culture today?



#### **LAWLESSNESS LEADS TO CORRUPT REVERENCE:**

With the opening of [chapter 17](#), we enter a period in which the Lord sends no more deliverers to rescue Israel because the nation had become thoroughly secular and sinful—completely rejecting and abandoning their covenant with the Lord. No longer does the narrator announce that the people “did evil in the sight of the Lord,” but their overwhelmingly sinful actions speak volumes. Ironically, the chapter opens by introducing us to **a man from the mountains of Ephraim** named **Micah**—whose **name** means who is like Yahweh (v. 1)? As we read further in the story, however, we quickly see that his character bears no resemblance to Yahweh at all. In just five verses, we observe **Micah** and his **mother** breaking at least four of the Ten Commandments. After he heard his **mother put a curse** upon the person who stole **eleven hundred shekels of silver** from her, **Micah** quickly confessed to the crime and promptly returned the money (v. 2). This deplorable and reprehensible action demonstrated how thoroughly corrupt the nation had become. In a single action, this **man** broke the fifth commandment by dishonoring his **mother** along with the eighth commandment by stealing the **silver** (see [Exod 20:12, 15](#)). Yet, their lawlessness didn’t end there. Oddly, this **mother** praised her **son** and **blessed him by the Lord**, but then reveals the purpose of this **silver** by explaining that she had **wholly dedicated** it for the construction of a **carved** and **molded image** (v. 3) She even returned the money to **Micah** to make an idol—showing how both of them ignored the first two commandments which prohibit

## Instruct

worshiping any god beside the Lord and the carving of any graven image or idol (see [Exod 20:3-6](#)). Out of the money, she gave only **two hundred shekels** to a **silversmith** to construct the **image** which was then placed in Micah's **house** (v. 4). Although we aren't told what she did with the other nine hundred shekels, it appears that they weren't **wholly dedicated** to the construction of this idol as she had said; therefore, it appears that she lied about the entire purpose of the money—again breaking another commandment (see [Exod 20:16](#)). **Micah** placed the **idol** in his home where he **had a shrine** with an **ephod** (see [Judg 8:27](#)) along with **idols** to other gods, even having designated **one of his sons** as the **priest** (v. 5). The nation of Israel had thoroughly become secular, abandoning the Law altogether! Through their disregard for the Law, we see how lawlessness and disobedience lead to corrupt reverence or worship. Although the **mother** invoked **the Lord** in a blessing, her actions reveal the heart of the problem—*syncretism*—they worshiped the Lord along with many other gods and goddesses. They didn't have a personal, intimate relationship with Him, but He was just one of their many gods. Unfortunately, many people today hold syncretistic beliefs which mix both the Bible and the culture, distorting the truth and perverting the gospel message. There are too many syncretistic beliefs to mention them all, but here we will list three of the primary. First, many believe that we serve the same “god”



regardless of one's religious name for him—whether Allah, Buddha, or even “Mother Nature.” The Bible, however, clearly states only one God in three distinct persons exists. Only through Jesus the Christ, that is God who became flesh and dwelt among us, can we have a relationship with God the Father who raised Him from the dead and subsequently sent His Holy Spirit to dwell in the lives of believers to seal and designate us as His children and guide us in how we ought to live. Any religion, philosophy, or denomination that denies this Triune (three-in-one) designation of the Lord is false and leads only to destruction.

What are the false beliefs that some religions or denominations have about Jesus? How can we help them see the truth about Him?

Question  
# 1

Second, people practice various religious rituals which obscure the method of salvation; therefore, they claim that we have many different paths to obtain eternal life or get to heaven. Today, this is probably the single-most damaging deception that the enemy has devised to lead people astray. Salvation comes in no one else other than Jesus ([Acts 4:12](#)) and through no other method than His crucifixion and resurrection which God offers freely according to His grace; our faith then leads us to confess and repent of our sins, completely surrendering our lives to Him ([Eph 2:8-10](#); [1 John 1:9](#)). Any other requirement for salvation, whether good works, baptism, church membership, participation in rituals, or recitation of prayers, denies the truthfulness of the Bible and once again leads only to destruction.

Third, people mix different secular beliefs which conflict with biblical values so that they can justify their sin. They claim the Bible is not inerrant or inspired, they believe that “old-fashioned” values like marriage and the

## Instruct

right to life of the unborn don't apply to our modern culture, and they even dismiss Hell as a literal place—to name a few! As believers, we are called to know the truth and apply it in our lives by being transformed and having renewed minds ([Rom 12:1-2](#)). We can't apply the truth, however, if we

### THE MORALITY OF SELF-FULFILLMENT

(Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.)

% "completely" + "somewhat" agree	% all U.S. adults	% practicing Christians
The best way to find yourself is by looking within yourself	91	76
People should not criticize someone else's life choices	89	76
To be fulfilled in life, you should pursue the things you desire most	86	72
The highest goal of life is to enjoy it as much as possible	84	67
People can believe whatever they want, as long as those beliefs don't affect society	79	61
Any kind of sexual expression between two consenting adults is acceptable	69	40

Barna OmniPoll | August 2015 | N=1,000

don't know what it is because we don't study God's Word or we simply dismiss it as culturally irrelevant and mix whatever beliefs and preferences that we want irrespective of what the Bible says.

In what ways have many churches or religions mixed erroneous beliefs about the method of salvation or secular moral values with the culture today? How should we respond?

Question  
# 2

Verse six is perhaps the most-significant in the entire book, for it reveals the source of their problem: **everyone did what was right in his own eyes**. The verse begins, however, with an ominous declaration that **in those days there was no king in Israel**. In truth, Israel had no human **king**, but they did have the Lord God as their perfect and just ruler if they would only submit to Him; however, they rejected Him and the boundaries that He had set in favor of following their own desires and living according to their own standards. Perhaps out of any statement

in the Old Testament, this verse best describes our culture today—which regards truth as in the eye of the beholder. People justify their sinful choices by rejecting absolute truth and asserting that it depends upon the validation of a person according to their opinion—only the individual can determine what is true or what is right and wrong for them. We see this perspective in beliefs such as: what’s right for me may not be right for you, if it feels good then do it, and you only live once. People ignore social and moral boundaries because they feel liberated and empowered to set their own standards and defend their actions according to their own perspective. As believers, however, we have the supreme standard in the Lord to follow because He has established absolute truth in His Word and has given us boundaries by which we ought to live.

In what ways has our culture rejected absolute truth? How has this affected the church?

Question  
# 3

### ***Judges 17:7-13***

#### ***LAWLESSNESS LEADS TO CORRUPT RELIGION:***

In a second incident with Micah, we learn how lawlessness leads to corrupt religion when he attempts to bribe **a Levite** to serve as his personal **priest** in his home so that he may find favor with the Lord. Although we don’t learn his name is **Jonathan** until [18:30](#), here we meet **a young man from Bethlehem** who was **a Levite** staying among **the family of Judah** (v. 7). After leaving **Bethlehem**, presumably in hope of finding a better **place to stay**, he met Micah **in the mountains of Ephraim** who then began to question him about his heritage and

## Instruct

purpose (vv. 8-9). Upon learning he was a **Levite**, Micah proposed an incredible offer to retain his services; if he would live with him, the Levite would be highly respected as a **father and priest** and he would receive a salary of **ten shekels per year, a suit of clothes**, and room and board (i.e. **sustenance**). This incentive package was too great for the **Levite** to pass, so he agreed to the terms (v. 10).

### In-Depth Information



*At the onset of the conquest, God revealed that the Levites as the priestly class wouldn't receive an allotment of land as all the other tribes would ([Deut 10:9](#)).*

*However, He did instruct the other tribes to provide for them ([Num 35:2-3](#)). For this reason, the Levite in this text travels in search of **a place** to live. Although we are not told why he decided to move from **Bethlehem** and pass through **the mountains of Ephraim**, it doesn't appear that he sought a better opportunity to serve the Lord because he moved further from Shiloh where the Lord was worshiped. Moreover, the quickness with which he accepts the proposition by Micah probably indicates that he sought more steady income or better living conditions as the reason for his move rather than direction from the Lord; thus, the priesthood had become just as corrupt as the rest of the nation!*

In this brief section, we see three ways in which the religious practices of Israel had become corrupted. First, rather than representing the Lord and correcting Micah's theology and condemning his idolatry, the **priest** becomes his personal servant! Three times the text reveals

that he **went in, dwelt with**, and served as the **priest** for Micah (vv. 10-12). Therefore, he operated much like an employee; not wanting to risk being fired and forfeiting his cushy gig, the **priest** merely did what Micah wanted and never warned him about the consequences of his sin. Thus, he only wanted to profit from his situation rather than speak the truth. Second, Micah promised to treat him like **a father**, but in reality he treated him like **one of his sons** (v. 11). To us, this may seem loving and indicate a close relationship, but it actually indicates that Micah viewed the **priest** as one who could be commanded and manipulated for his own pleasure. As **a father**, the **priest** would have given advice and directed Micah accordingly, but as **a son** he would be required to listen to the directives of his superior. In order to gain a following today, many religious organizations tell the people what they want to hear rather than the truth about sin and the need for a relationship with the Messiah. Consequently, they have a psychological message designed to manipulate people in such a way that they feel empowered to control their own destiny rather than submitting to the authority of the Lord and the guidance of His Spirit.

In what ways has "religion" become corrupted in our society today?

Question  
# 4

Third, Micah thought he could manipulate the Lord by maintaining a personal **priest** to plead on his behalf (v. 13). In fact, he exclaims that **the Lord will be good to** him because he employed **a Levite as a priest**. Instead of being concerned about having a relationship with the Lord and being in right standing, Micah simply wanted to hire a priestly pawn to influence the Lord's decisions and increase the chances of receiving

## Instruct

**good** favor. Today, some people treat their tithes in this manner; rather than giving what God has required and even beyond, people view their tithes as dues or payments through which they can manipulate or control the direction of the church and seek favor with the Lord. In addition, others in the church may see their offerings as their right to access certain “services” which benefit them without serving in any way themselves. Still others don’t want to risk losing finances so they fail to proclaim the truth in order to maintain the status quo. As the body of Christ, we are to give generously and abundantly even beyond what the Lord requires and serve willingly rather than seeking to be served. Certainly, we ought to practice good stewardship just as any business would, but the church isn’t a business! It is the ever-expanding body of Christ which should proclaim the gospel so that the world may know how to have a relationship with Him that leads to life.



What is the danger of viewing a church like a business? Why should we not view our tithes and offerings as if we had stock in a company?

Question  
# 5

## Judges 18:1-20

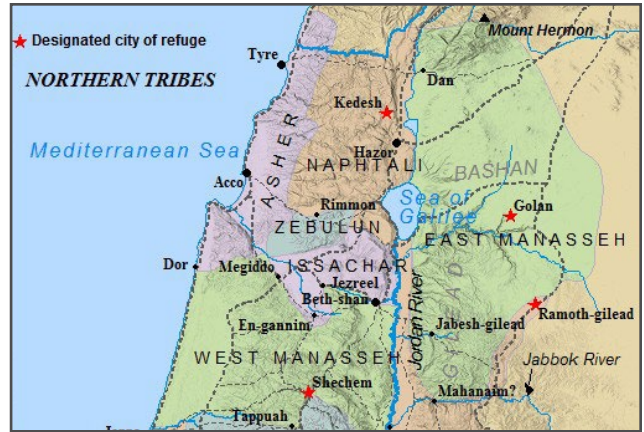
### ***LAWLESSNESS LEADS TO CORRUPT REASONING:***

In [chapter 18](#), we continue to see how secular the nation of Israel had



become and the way her lawlessness corrupted her reasoning. Since the end of the conquest, the tribe of Dan had not yet finished conquering the allotted land that the Lord had given them as their **inheritance** (v.

1). Being confined to a small area near the coast, the tribe didn't have enough natural resources to provide sufficiently for the people, so **they sent five men** to scout the nearby land to find a suitable place to conquer and possess as their own (v. 2). Rather



than driving the foreign nations from the land during the time that God had specified, the tribe of Dan now acted impatiently and impetuously on its own apart from the direction of the Lord; now, they went to a fertile region in the allotment of land for the tribe of **Ephraim**, near where Micah lived. Instead of seeking the Lord and His direction, the tribe now sought to take matters into its own hands and make provision in whatever way they could manage in their own strength.

When they arrived at Micah's **house**, they recognized **the young Levite** who had been hired to serve as his **priest** (v. 3). With a series of three rapid-fire questions, they wanted to know why he had come to **Ephraim**, what his purpose was there, and what resources he had. To each of these questions, the Levite *should* have been able to answer that the Lord had **brought** him, the Lord had called him to minister to Micah, and the Lord had provided for him. The **Levite**, however, cannot answer in this manner because he *never* consulted the Lord; he merely seized the opportunity to enrich himself. In fact, he even admits, "**Thus and so**

**Micah did for me. He has hired me, and I have become his priest**" (v. 4). Ironically, neither this **priest** nor the tribe of Dan sought the will of the Lord, but they still wanted Him to bless their endeavors. The five men ask him to find out from **God** if they will have success on their **journey** (v. 5). Without even taking time to consult the Lord, the priest reassures them that they may **go in peace** and then pronounces a blessing upon them in the name of **the Lord** (v. 6). Yet, nowhere in the text does it indicate that **the Lord** sanctioned any of this nor was He with them in the manner the priest specified—they acted wholly on their own!

Unfortunately, many people today have this same faulty reasoning; they act on their own desires according to their own strength without consulting the Lord and then ask Him to bless them. Doing something according to our own desires in the name of the Lord without first seeking Him constitutes sin. Although we may have success humanly speaking as the tribe of Dan did here in Judges, when we attribute something to the Lord without seeking Him and act on our own we lie and misrepresent Him. This is not to say that we must ask the Lord about things which He has clearly directed us in His Word to do; conversely, this intends to help us recognize His will and be able to differentiate it from our own fleshly desires. The tribe of Dan acted contrary to God's will by attacking and seizing land given to Ephraim / Judah rather than conquering their own territory they had been given. People today act in this same way; they do things contrary to Scripture and then ask the Lord to bless them or they fail to see where the Lord is working, wait upon Him, and seek to be equipped by Him so that He might receive the glory. They act according to their own timetable and on their own power,

merely hoping things will turn out in their favor.

In what ways have you seen people acting on their own and then asking God to bless what they have done?

Question  
# 6

After **they departed**, they came to the city of **Laish** where they found an easy victim to drive from the land. Because the people of **Laish** perceived they **dwelt** in safety, they had let their guard down and weren't prepared to defend themselves; moreover, they didn't have any alliances near them in the region to come to their aid, so it would be easy for Dan to defeat them (v. 7, see also [18:28](#)). When **the spies** returned to their tribe, they gave a glowing report of a fertile **land** that would be easy to

overtake, so they suggested that they attack without hesitation (vv. 8-9). Having assembled **six hundred men** to wage war in **Judah**, they once again passed through Micah's home, but became sidetracked (vv. 10-13).



Remembering Micah's household

full of idols, the warriors talked amongst themselves about what they **should do** (v. 14). The armed men from Dan decided to go to **the house of Micah** and take his **carved image, ephod, household idols,** and **molded image** by force (vv. 15-17). Whether they wanted further assurance they would be victorious or they wanted to rob Micah of some of his riches—the text doesn't give us a clear motive for their theft of these items.

## Instruct

Nonetheless, the priest momentarily attempts to stop the **five spies** from removing the objects, but he doesn't put up much of a fight (vv. 17b-18). Bribing him to **be quiet**, the **five men** from Dan offer him an even better job than that which he held for Micah. If he would come and serve them as **a father and priest**—the very same thing which Micah previously offered—he would have authority over an entire tribe and not just a single **family** (v. 19). This **priest** was no servant of the Lord; he was a self-serving man who sold himself to the highest bidder! Given this new and greater opportunity, the **priest** gladly turned against Micah, stole his idols, and went with these men to serve them (v. 20). Many people may give lip service to the Lord by claiming to follow Him or even call themselves a “Christian,” but their actions demonstrate otherwise because they don't bear any fruit in their lives. When a new or greater opportunity arises, some lack commitment and abandon the Lord—and even though they live contrary to His Word, they still expect to be blessed by Him. Although God rejects this type of hypocritical reasoning, many fail to comprehend their errors and see themselves in right standing with Him.

In what ways do we see people label themselves as “Christian” in our society, but their impure motives and actions reveal the true nature of their heart?

Question  
# 7

## Judges 18:21-31

### **LAWLESSNESS LEADS TO CORRUPT RELATIONSHIPS:**

In the end, the priest who would supposedly bring Micah **good** favor

with the Lord actually brought him misery and ruination. In addition, the interaction between the priest, Micah, and the men of Dan reveal that lawlessness leads to corrupt relationships. Even though they were all Israelites and fellow countrymen, they all acted selfishly, seeking their own best interests by profiting at the expense of others. As the men of Dan **departed**, they sent ahead their women and children (i.e. **little ones**), their **livestock**, and their possessions in order to protect them (v. 21). After these thieves had gone a considerable distance from Ephraim, Micah finally realizes what they have done and assembles some **men** to go and confront them (v. 22).

When Micah catches them, the people of Dan mock and insult him, asking in today's language: "What's your problem" (v. 23)? Offended, Micah retorts that they have taken the **gods** he has **made** and **the priest** he had acquired



and they have the nerve to ask what his problem is (v. 24). Being morally bankrupt and doing what was right in their own eyes, no one in this story acts with integrity or honesty—they seek only to justify their behavior through brute force.

The children of Dan responded with violence and commanded Micah to be quiet lest they kill him or his family (v. 25). Being much stronger than Micah, the people of Dan simply continued on their journey and he returned home defeated and dejected (v. 26). Meanwhile, arriving at **Laish**, they found the people unaware and unprepared for battle, so they easily slaughtered them and **burned the city** with no foreign power

or ally coming to their aid (vv. 27-28a). They then **rebuild the city** and **name** it after their ancestor **Dan** (v. 28c). Ironically, the name **Dan** means “to judge,” but this tribe lacked proper judgment and discernment—for the **city** became a center for **idol** worship **until the day of captivity** (vv. 29-30). In **the city**, they set up all the idols from Micah’s household and **Jonathan**, his former priest, and **his sons** continued to lead the tribe astray by practicing idolatry and refusing to worship the Lord alone (v. 31).

### In-Depth Information



*The day of captivity refers to the fall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel to the Assyrians around 721 BC during the time of the prophet Isaiah.*

Throughout this chapter, we have seen how lawlessness directly leads to corrupt relationships. When everyone does what is right in his own eyes, every relationship will suffer because the self-centeredness of individuals will cause them to weigh whether they will benefit from it or not; thus, relationships that cost too much time and effort with little benefit will be casually cast aside. Rather than understanding the need to invest and give in a relationship, the lawless will always take. Moreover, these defunct relationships highlight four other significant problems—which are prevalent in our own culture. First, both the men of Dan and the priest lack integrity by failing to consult the Lord and stealing from Micah. Second, the priest lacks commitment and loyalty both in following his God-given duty to correct sinfulness and his propensity to seize any better opportunity that comes along without hesitation. Third, these relationships focus on manipulation and threats rather than love; Micah tries to manipulate the

Lord and the priest whereas Dan manipulates the priest in the same way that Micah did through bribery. Fourth, they use bullying and coercion to get their way—Dan by brute force steals from Micah.

We see these same problems today whether a lack of integrity in the workplace, unfaithfulness in marriage, or the sheer number of relationships based on what one can get rather than give, seemingly making them disposable if they do not satisfy their needs. As believers, however, we are called to be transformed from the world because we have the law of Christ written on our hearts as the Holy Spirit resides within us; therefore, we need to live consistently according to His righteous standards. Rather than doing what is right in our own eyes, we need to do that which is right in the eyes of the Lord so that we represent Him well as His children.

In what ways does lawlessness affect relationships?

Question  
# 8

## *Inspire*

Corruption abounds in our world not only because people disregard and even reject human law, but even more that they have rejected God's Law. God doesn't arbitrarily make rules to rob us of joy and kill our fun, but He gives them for our benefit and protection. By following His Law, we would have order and peace in our society instead of the chaos and confusion that has resulted because of lawless individuals. Although we claim to be an educated and advanced society, many people hold the belief that truth is relative and morality depends upon the perspective of the individual. Not only can this statement be proven false, it is a very dangerous concept because it leads people to attempt to justify their

irrational and immoral decisions in order to make them seem normal and acceptable. Truth is truth whether we believe it or not; it doesn't depend upon society's stamp of approval, but rather is based on God's perfect standard that He has revealed to us!

When we have a relationship with Christ, He transforms us according to His righteousness. Left to our own devices, we may change perchance momentarily, but we will usually revert to our former lifestyle choices very quickly; in Christ, however, we are changed permanently. This world may be at a loss to explain the senseless violence that occurs almost daily, corruption in the government and workplace, the sexual immorality that pervades almost every aspect of our society, and rampant addiction to sinful practices—and it has even more trouble identifying a solution. In fact, the only solution is One that they have rejected—Jesus Christ. Only in Christ, can this world be transformed from lawlessness and corruption to righteousness. Even though we may look at our world and think that there is no hope, we can have hope in Christ who offers this transformation through His death and resurrection. Just as Paul states, “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” Let us walk in that newness of life by allowing Him to transform us into His image and righteousness.



## ***Incorporate***

What does true worship of the Lord look like?

When we have a relationship with Christ, how does it affect the way we reason or think?

When we have a relationship with Christ, how does it affect our other human relationships

June 17, 2018



# *Be Transformed from Lewdness to Purity*

## *Judges 19:1-20:7*

Focal Verse:

“But the man, the master of the house, went out to them and said to them,  
“No, my brethren! I beg you, do not act so wickedly! Seeing this man has  
come into my house, do not commit this outrage.”

Judges 19:23

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## Introduce

Because we live in a fallen world, people often make sinful choices which in many instances have a profound impact upon others. In recent days, lewd conduct and sexual immorality have dominated the news. These types of sinful actions have plagued mankind from the fall and show the depths of our depravity as humans. Although it may be an uncomfortable subject that we may just want to sweep under



the rug, we must have a biblical discussion about this profound problem and see it from the Lord's perspective how he created us to have intimacy only in marriage. Almost every day, we hear news about television personalities, government leaders, business executives, educators, religious workers, and other "respected" individuals who have committed grievous misconduct. Even though we could talk about a number of examples, one particular example can serve to highlight the fundamental problem of lewdness on multiple levels.

Most of us probably have some familiarity with the case against former Olympic gymnastics doctor Larry Nassar who unconscionably abused over 156 women—many of whom were then underage. The Bible strongly condemns such actions and we cannot tolerate abuse in any form in our society ([Deut 22:25-27](#)). As horrendous and unscrupulous as Nassar's actions were, the systematic abuse over twenty plus years exposes a larger problem in our society since evidence reveals that he could have been

## Introduce

stopped much earlier when reports began surfacing in 1997. Instead, these lewd and utterly sinful acts were brushed aside by other team doctors, coaches, university officials, and even parents—who were either in denial or desired gold medals more than moral truth and responsibility. Certainly, parents and others don't share the same level of blame that Dr. Nassar does, but in reality they too have responsibility to supervise and protect their children from a society which seeks to exploit them in many ways.

Such abuse can cause mental anguish and often skewed thinking in the victims. Although it can be overcome through Christ, the scars remain. Even though the abuse that occurred to Aly Raisman was completely wrong and shameful, so was her lewd response because of her skewed thinking. Recently Miss Riasman posed bare for *Sports Illustrated*, having the phrase “women don't have to be modest to be respected” scrawled down the side of her body. Again, what happened to her was wrong and unspeakable, but she has made the situation worse by making herself an object. The Bible teaches that we ought to dress modestly, representing the Lord ([1 Tim 2:9](#)). We are created in the image of the God to represent Him; and we are to respect all people because they too have been created in His image! Yet, Miss Raisman's response, whether she wants it or even knows it, has objectified her instead of liberating her in Christ.

At the end of Judges, the children of Israel fared no better than our own society and, in fact, rivaled and exceeded the degradation we have in our own. In [chapters 19 and 20](#), we meet a series of unnamed people, who each have a problem with sinful misconduct. The wife of the Levite committed adultery and left her husband; the Levite had taken the concubine on as

a second wife. Even after they reconciled and were returning home, the people in the place where they stayed committed unspeakable acts of sexual misconduct which eventually led to manslaughter. The people of God who had the Law and should have known better had now become as immoral and even more so than the society around them! Therefore, we must allow the Lord to transform us from lewdness to purity in Christ and help us to see the value of people whom He has created in His image.

Key  
Question

What can we do to guard ourselves against lewdness?

## *Instruct*

### *Judges 19:1-15*

#### ***THE ALLURE OF LEWDNESS:***

With a reminder that Israel had rejected the Lord and His Law and that they **had no human king in those days**, the narrator transitions into an even more scandalous and perverse story that would rock the nation to its core. Because of their pervasive lawlessness, Israel had no concept of how to engage in proper relationships; therefore, lewdness in the form of rampant sexual immorality dominates Israel's culture at the close of the book of Judges. The chapter opens with an introduction of two main people, **a Levite** and his **concubine**, but neither are named throughout the entire story. In fact, none of the participants in these events are named, which shows how dehumanizing and devaluing sexual immorality truly is. At this time during Judges and even in our own day, humans created in the Lord's image have merely become sexual objects

## Instruct

to be used to gratify one's personal desires. From the beginning, God intended intimacy to be expressed only in marriage between one man and one woman for life as an expression of their unity as one flesh and to procreate to populate the earth ([Gen 1:28; 2:24](#)).

In what ways does sexual immorality and impropriety dehumanize people?

Question  
# 1

In this brief introduction, we meet an unnamed **Levite** who takes a **concubine from Bethlehem** as a secondary wife (v. 1). Unfaithful to her husband, she cheated on him (i.e. **played the harlot**) and left him to return to her **father's house** (v. 2). Despite her unfaithfulness, the Levite still loved her and attempted to reconcile his marriage, so after **four months** he journeyed to **Bethlehem to speak kindly to her and bring her back** (v. 3). When the Levite arrived, his **concubine** received him into the **house** and introduced him to **her father who was glad to meet him**. The **Levite** tried to do the right thing by forgiving his wife and attempting to be reconciled with her. Although she made the mistake and sinned against him, her husband acted graciously and mercifully toward her with a heart of unconditional love. Not flying into a fit of rage or becoming despondent with depression, the Levite waited for an opportune time to assess the situation and respond appropriately with a calm, rational



discussion and plea. He didn't berate the woman, speak harsh words of condemnation, or hurl insults at her, but he spoke **kindly** and patiently. Just as Christ has exercised patience with us, graciously forgiven us, and loved us unconditionally, we also ought to extend the same to others. We must take time to ponder the situation, evaluate our choice of words, speak with wisdom, and demonstrate love through our actions.

When we seek reconciliation, why should we take time to seek God's wisdom and plan our approach accordingly?

Question  
# 2

This woman's unfaithfulness to her husband is symptomatic of a larger problem in Israel. As we read further in this chapter, the sexual perversion will become worse and eventually engulf an entire town and tribe—nearly causing the downfall of an entire nation. In our own society, many, including Christians, have become desensitized to lewdness and sexual immorality so much that they don't see the danger in dirty jokes, an unbridled discussion of personal activities, and graphic images nearly everywhere we turn. Moreover, many advertisements contain provocative slogans or suggestive sexual images to entice customers to buy their products or frequent their business. At some restaurants, their names are sexually suggestive and the clothes their employees wear show a lack of decorum and modesty.

Movies and television shows have suggestive dialogue and innuendo or include characters who are confused about their sexuality or gender. In older shows, like *M.A.S.H.*, *Seinfeld*, and *Friends*, characters talked openly about their desires and had multiple partners outside and even during marriage. Newer shows, like *The Big Bang Theory*, glorify promiscuity,

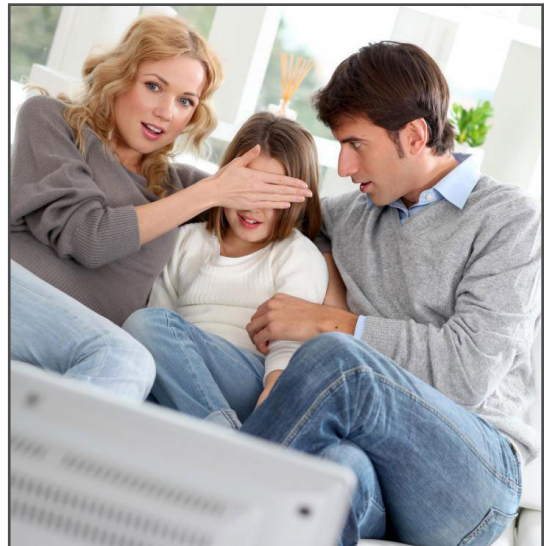
having one character who has had relations with approximately forty people. Yet, modern shows have become even more perverse, such as *Madame Secretary*, which has a character who claims to be pansexual; she bases her gender identity and sexual desires on a whim depending upon how she feels at the time. Totally against both the Bible and scientific evidence, she claims not to have a gender that's constant which results in her having intimate relationships with both men and women equally.

How have we seen moral values erode in our society over the years?

Question  
# 3

This type of lifestyle is wicked and sinful in God's eyes, but has come to define and even be accepted in our society. Many Christians, unfortunately, have also become desensitized to this type of perversion and have opened themselves to the attack of the enemy because they have not "renewed [their] minds" ([Rom 12:1](#)). Some believers have

consumed the culture over time, just like Israel, and no longer have a moral compass to evaluate right from wrong concerning sinfulness as clearly defined in God's Word ([Isa 5:20](#)). When we don't exercise caution and filter what we consume (i.e. what we watch, hear, or experience), then we become more susceptible to participating in these sinful activities ourselves—no matter how strong we think our faith and resolve may be. In [Ephesians](#)





[4:27](#), Paul tells them, “Neither give place to the devil.” If the enemy can desensitize us to any immorality, he can distract our purpose and derail our lives. Because we live in a perverse generation, bombarded with graphic images which pervert our understanding of how to have a right relationship with other human beings, we must protect ourselves from the allure of sexual immorality lest we too succumb to the temptation!

Why should we be extremely careful about what we see, hear, and experience from the culture around us?

Question  
# 4

Despite the infidelity of his daughter to her husband, the **father-in-law** extended extraordinary hospitality to the Levite, inviting him to stay for **three days** which they spent eating and drinking together (v. 4). As a typical **father** who didn't want to let his **daughter** go, he once again begged the Levite to stay yet another day when he rose to leave on the **fourth day**; he suggested that he refresh himself and enjoy more food and merriment before they went on their way (vv. 5-6). At this time in Israel, a guest would typically wait until he received permission to leave along with a blessing for his journey before departing; therefore, the Levite shows the utmost respect and honor for his **father-in-law**. On the fifth day, however, he began to recognize his father-in-law's tactic to delay them indefinitely, so he spent the morning there but was determined to leave by the afternoon (vv. 7-8). Because it was late in the day and the couple would have little time to travel and find lodging, the **father-in-law** pleaded with them to spend the night, but ultimately the Levite refused (vv. 9-10).

Having left suddenly without much preparation late in the day, they

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traveled until it became late and they began looking for a place to lodge for the night (v. 11). When they came near the city of Jebus, which was later renamed Jerusalem, the Levite's servant suggested that they stay there. Because Judah never drove out the Jebusites from the city, it remained occupied by a foreign nation at this time, so the Levite did not feel safe in spending the night there. Instead, he desired to press on to **Gibeah** where they would undoubtedly find safety and hospitality among their own countrymen (v. 12). As they approached **Gibeah** in the territory of **Benjamin**, the sun had set and



no one had offered them a place to stay for the night (vv. 13-15). Because no one extended them any hospitality, they began to camp in the center of the city in the **square**. Ironically, the hope the Levite had of finding help and safety among his fellow countrymen had almost completely dwindled. As we will see in the coming verses, Israel had become just as bad and even worse than the secular foreign nations around them. A journey that started with optimism would soon turn tragic!

## Judges 19:16-21

### AN ALTERNATIVE TO LEWDNESS:

While staying in **the square**, the travelers once again found hope as **an old man came** home from working **in the field** (v. 16). Like the Levite and his group, this **man**, although an Israelite **from the mountains**

**of Ephraim**, was a foreigner in **Gibeah** living among the **Benjamites**; unlike the Levite, however, he had experienced the moral depravity and sinfulness of the citizens of that city first-hand. Because he knows the wickedness of the city well, he extends hospitality to the group and urges them **not to spend the night in the square**. Beginning as any ordinary conversation would, **the old man** asks **where** they were **going** and **from where** they had **come** (v. 17). The Levite then couches his answer in the form of a complaint and levies charges of inhospitality against the people. He too is from **Ephraim**, but has since moved to **Bethlehem of Judah**, so they are returning to their adopted home; however, no one has offered to assist them for the night (v. 18). Therefore, he stresses how inhospitable the people of **Gibeah** were because he had only asked for a place to sleep—he had all the supplies to care for his own group (v. 19).

Knowing the wicked hearts of the people, **the old man** promptly invited them to spend the night in his home. Taking **responsibility** for his guests so they didn't have to **spend the night in the open square**, he provides them with even more than

which they had asked: he feeds their **donkeys**, washes **their dusty feet**, and gives them **food and drink** (vv. 20-21). At this point, it looks like a happy ending to this story after all; however, as we will soon see, even



though this man was noble in his intentions he ultimately could not take care of his guests and provide the safety that they truly needed. Instead of being selfish in his desires like the people of Gibeah, **the man** sought

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to meet the needs of his guests beyond even what they sought. He saw them not as strangers or even as objects of gratification, but he saw them as people who needed assistance.

In order for us to be transformed from lewdness to purity, we must see the value of our fellow human beings through the eyes of Christ. We cannot be selfish or self-serving by always taking from a relationship, but we must see what we can contribute or how we can invest based upon what God has given us. When we see the value of others, they don't become pawns that we use to get what we want in life, but they are men and women created in the image of God who need a relationship with the Savior. God has placed us in families and communities so that we can honor and worship Him by working together to meet needs; in order to work together, we must rely on Him fully. In our world, however, individualism has overpowered our sense of community and the motto "every man for himself" abounds because we have omitted the Lord from the equation. For our families and communities to function properly, we must first have a relationship with Christ and second we must make Him the priority of our lives.

Why should we see others through the eyes of Christ? What happens when we don't?

Question  
# 5

## Judges 19:22-28

### **THE AGGRESSIVENESS OF THE LEWD:**

While in the figurative safety of the old man's house, the situation turns grave and violent—reminiscent of Sodom and Gomorrah (see [Gen 19](#)).

The aggressively lewd **men** of the town had **surrounded the house** and began beating upon **the door**, demanding access to the Levite so that they might have homosexual relations with him (v. 22). As in the story of Lot in Sodom, the host attempts to placate the **men** and **begs** them not to do such an evil act (v. 23). So in his own ignorant wisdom, he offers the mob his **virgin**



**daughter** and the Levite's **concubine** as a concession, giving them the freedom to do with them as they please (v. 24). However, the mob refused and continued to demand the Levite, so in a last-ditch effort, **the man** forced the **concubine** from the house into the mob where they **abused her** carnally **all night** long and left her for dead (v. 25).

After being released from the horrendous and despicable mob, the **concubine** struggled to return to their place of lodging, but she could only manage to make it to **the door of the house** where she **fell** in her weakness and perished (v. 26). That next morning, the Levite found his wife at the door, and callously calls for her to **get up** so they can be on their way before realizing that she had died. Realizing that she had died, he then secured her to a **donkey** and carried her back to their home in Bethlehem. Israel, whom God set apart to be His people, had become thoroughly corrupted; a nation that had the Law and was supposed to represent the Lord to secular nations had now become worse than Sodom and Gomorrah! Every participant in this story had sinned grievously: the men of the city committed adultery, rape, and

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manslaughter on top of the fact that they wanted to have homosexual relations with the Levite; the Levite failed to protect his wife; and the host proposed a sinful alternative by offering both his daughter and the concubine as pieces of property to be abused as one pleases.

Unfortunately, our own society is no stranger to these dastardly deeds and we see these horrendous acts far too often wrecking lives and families. Almost every day we hear these atrocities on the news, so why should we come to church only to hear about them more? We need to be reminded from Whom our transformation comes and how only He can



remedy the depravity of mankind that has existed from the very first act of disobedience. In addition, we also need to protect, prepare, and equip our families to be pure in a lewd world, teaching our children to respect all life and practice intimacy only in marriage. First, as parents we need to be consistent role models; if we wouldn't allow our children to watch certain movies, say certain words, and correct their discussions, should we be watching these movies or talking about these subjects in a nonchalant way?

Second, the world teaches us that we should experiment to find who we really are; choice of gender identity, sexual preference, and other unbiblical ideas are pressed upon children at an early age. We need to monitor what our children watch on television or access online, we need

to know their friends and their families, and we need to know what curriculum they are taught at school. This takes time and commitment, but it must be a priority because God has given parents the responsibility of raising and educating their children according to His Law. The world has a distorted view of love and a perverted view of sexual intimacy, so we need to help our children understand God's design for marriage from the very beginning of the universe. The purpose and function of marriage is the same today as it was for Adam and Eve many millennia ago. We don't need to experiment to find who we truly are and what we know to be right according to the Bible; the Bible gives us an accurate picture of who we are (and should be) in Christ!

How can we teach our children to respect the value of life and the boundaries for relationships that God has given us?

Question  
# 6

### Judges 19:29-20:7

#### **THE ALIENATION CAUSED BY LEWDNESS:**

After arriving home, the Levite **divided** the corpse of his **concubine** into **twelve pieces** and **sent** them to each of the twelve tribes in Israel (v. 29). With this symbolic act, he hoped to elicit a reaction from the other tribes that would show pity toward him and rage in the form of a call to war against **Gibeah**. In fact, the act does cause Israel to show outrage and acknowledge the depravity or wickedness of the sin. Although they are appalled at the sin and lament that **no such deed** had occurred in **Israel** since they had come **from Egypt**, the people still did not acknowledge their own sin or repent of their rebellion against the Lord—they merely focused their anger on someone who acted even worse than they did (v.

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30). The men of **Gibeah** became the scapegoat for the sin of the entire nation; those who were defiled in sin as well stood there and point their finger in condemnation. In **Gibeah**, now they had someone to whom they could point that was “worse” than they were and deflect attention away from their own sin.

How do people try to justify their sin by pointing to those whom they consider to have acted worse than they do?

Question  
# 7

Without consulting the Lord, all the children assembled as one nation in Mizpah to enact justice and wage war against the tribe of Benjamin for this horrendous act (20:1). In preparation for war, the nation had assembled about **400,000 soldiers** to enact revenge. Although the text does mention that they **gathered together before the Lord**, the phrase has the sense that He is merely watching what they are doing. Nowhere in these chapters do we see the Lord at work among His people and sanctioning anything that they are doing; instead, they are doing what is right in their own eyes and God is left out completely. Because of the people’s wickedness, the Lord is allowing them to destroy themselves from within. In fact, their wickedness, as we will see in the coming week, alienated an entire tribe from the rest of Israel and nearly led to their annihilation.





Instead of directing their anger toward the individuals from **Gibeah** who performed this terrible act, the people of Israel blamed an entire tribe and sought to take out their frustration on them as a whole. With all the leaders of Israel assembled at **Mizpah**, they conducted an impromptu trial to hear the accusations levied against **the children of Benjamin** (v. 3). **Although the children of Benjamin** had **heard** about this assembly, they had no one there to represent them; therefore, it ultimately became a witch-hunt. Having been asked to give an account of **how this wicked deed happened**, **the Levite** begins by explaining how he had gone with his **concubine** to **Gibeah** in order **to spend the night** when suddenly the **men** of the city **surrounded the house** to have their way with him—not only sexually, but he reveals the fact that they also **intended to kill** him (v. 5). When the host wouldn't give access to **the Levite**, **the men of Gibeah ravished his concubine instead** until **she died**. In an outburst of anger because of their **lewdness**, he recounts how he **cut** his concubine **in pieces** and **sent** her body to all the tribes in Israel (v. 6). Now, he has come to seek **advice** and **counsel** from the leaders in Israel—not the Lord (v. 7)!

Through this trial, we can see how sexual immorality has the potential to alienate us from others. First, it can alienate us from the Lord if we allow it. The Levite who should have known to seek wisdom and **counsel** from the Lord instead turned to the people of Israel who were wicked themselves. Often, people wrongly blame God for such wickedness and wonder how He can allow such detestable acts to occur. If left unresolved, the scars from sexually immoral acts can create bitterness and resentment not only toward the offender, but also toward God; only He can help us overcome these scars in our lives. Nowhere in this story

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does any of the people pray to the Lord and ask for His guidance, but each one immediately goes down a path of destruction by dealing with this from a human perspective. In every circumstance, we must seek God first and allow Him to help us heal as well as to pronounce judgment on the offenders through due process legally in our society; we should never take matters into our own hands.

Second, sexual immorality can alienate us from family and friends.

Whether viewing pornography or entering into illicit relationships either before or outside of marriage, anything practiced outside of marriage will always create issues with trust and intimacy. Once trust has been broken, it is often hard to restore—and impossible to restore without Christ. We can see this in the Levite's nonchalant attitude with cutting up the body of his concubine who had cheated on him previously; he does it matter-of-factly as if she were a piece of property to be used to obtain what he wished. He doesn't show compassion, but merely seeks justice for himself! In addition to creating issues with trust, it creates issues with intimacy because it leaves baggage. Wounds created by these unspeakable acts can cause people to pull away from other family members because they feel as if they must hide these things. This lack of communication and struggle to relate can create hardships which leave a person feeling like they have no other option but to continue to isolate themselves.

In what ways does sexual immorality alienate us from both God and others?

Question  
# 8

The Bible clearly states that intimacy should be practiced only in marriage between one man and one woman for a lifetime. Unfortunately, the lewdness of our society through adultery, homosexuality, pre-marital relations, pornography, divorce, and lustful thoughts has skewed the boundaries which God has given us. In [Isaiah 55:8-9](#), the prophet writes, “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.” God has given us a perfect plan to express intimacy through marriage by maintaining our purity so that we have healthy, God-honoring relationships. Mankind, however, has distorted and destroyed that plan because of their wickedness. Any expression of sexuality other than that which the Bible permits will always lead to problems and will ultimately destroy our lives; therefore, we must exercise caution in order to maintain purity in our relationship by focusing on the Lord and seeking Him first.

Despite, the wickedness that pervades our society, we still have hope in the Lord. We are valuable in the Lord’s eyes; He sees us as individuals, not objects, whom He loves unconditionally even when we err. God loves us so much, that He not only gave His Son to redeem us from sin, but He also sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in us and guide us. Although we can’t be comprehensive on this subject in the treatment that it deserves, we can offer a few practical pieces of advice that can help us not to succumb to the lewdness of our society.

First, seek God through prayer and by reading Scripture daily; we must be grounded and prepared for the attacks of the enemy lest we too fall.

Second, we must be careful what we consume so that we don't become desensitized to lewdness. Watch wholesome movies and television shows, be careful on what you click on the Internet, and guard your ears from hearing filthy lyrics in music or bawdy jokes. Third, be careful where you go. Don't put yourself in tempting situations. Fourth, be accountable to the Lord, but also to others. Share your struggles with someone and ask them to pray, but also be willing to call them when you are facing temptation so that they can provide advice or offer an alternative. Because sexual immorality dominates our world and is one of the primary vices the enemy uses to derail our lives, we need to have a battle plan prepared and turn to the Lord to help us be transformed from lewdness to purity in Him.

## ***Incorporate***

How can we as a church help our members to avoid practicing lewdness and imitating the society around us?

If we have been involved in some sort of immoral situation in the past, how can God restore us and help us to overcome the scars and emotional baggage?

June 24, 2018



*Be Transformed from  
Licentiousness to Repentance  
Judges 20:8-21:25*

Focal Verse:

"Now therefore, deliver up the men, the perverted men who are in Gibeah, that we may put them to death and remove the evil from Israel!"

Judges 20:13

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## Introduce

Now that computers have become commonplace in almost every home and office, we feel confident that we possess the knowledge to open any program without using the tutorial or reading the instructions and will be able to use it properly and successfully. After all, computers today are user friendly and we can figure out anything if we can click enough buttons! Reading instructions or asking someone qualified for assistance is a waste of time—or at least we think until we spend hours trying to undo the mistakes that caused our computer to crash or the program to operate incorrectly. If we had spent the time seeking advice and learning from someone who knew before we ventured on our own, we would have saved ourselves from frustration and even failure.

After purchasing the video game *American Truck Simulator*, I was eager to get started and I asked myself: how hard could it be to drive an eighteen-wheeler on a video game? Without watching any tutorial or taking time to read the operating instructions, I created an account and then immediately began to play. Having selected to haul a load from Los Angeles to Barstow, California, I “virtually” jumped into my new rig and began to pull out of the parking lot, recognizing that I would need to make wide right turns to avoid striking any objects. Although I successfully pulled onto the street, I had not yet figured out how to look left or right to see whether there was traffic. So, after hitting a few vehicles, I had to turn right to merge onto the freeway. Without being able



## Introduce

to see, I began to turn right as widely as possible, but I ran my semi over a bushy median and became stuck. Half an hour later, I still could not get my truck to go in reverse after having pushed all of the buttons and watching the tutorial for help. Consequently, I tried to restart the program, but it wouldn't allow me to do so on my first trip; therefore, I ended up deleting the profile and starting again—this time hopefully with better success.

Undoubtedly, almost every one of us has done something similar to this in our lives—not just with computer programs. We try things on our own without consulting the Lord and only come to Him either to tell him what we *have done* or to ask for guidance when we have failed. In the last chapter and a half in the book of Judges, Israel acts and then asks the Lord to bless their actions. Failing to consult God first, the children of Israel sought to punish the evil that had occurred in Gibeah to the Levite's concubine, but it ultimately leads to a civil war which nearly destroys the entire nation. Because the people do what is right in their own eyes, they have come up with their own solution to the problem and God allows them to venture down a path of self-destruction. When we act according to our own wisdom and strength, we will often fail; however, when we act according to the wisdom and strength of the Lord, we will never fail. Therefore, we must seek God first and allow Him to transform us from being licentious (immoral) to repentance.

Key  
Question

What are some instances that you have attempted to do things without consulting the Lord? How did they turn out?



### **ISRAEL'S PLAN TO OVERCOME LICENTIOUSNESS:**

Immediately after hearing the evidence against the men from **Gibeah**, which we studied last week, Israel declared a plan of action to punish this evil deed. In unison, they decided that none of them would **go back** to his **tent** or **house** before settling this matter, but they would cast **lots** to determine who would fight against **Gibeah** and enact judgment upon them (vv. 8-9). Further, they resolve to take ten percent of **all** the men from every **tribe in Israel** to wage war against **Gibeah in Benjamin** to **repay all the vileness they had done** (v. 10). Despite gathering **together as one man** to confront this injustice, they made one crucial error: they completely left God out of the equation! Without first consulting the Lord, Israel had already determined their course of action and even foolishly used a game of chance (i.e. **lot**) to guide their decision-making process. Israel, not God, had designed a plan to overcome this licentiousness (immorality) and their plan would nearly end in disaster for the entire nation!

How does Israel make the situation worse by not consulting the Lord first before they determine their course of action?

Question  
# 1

As part of their plan, the tribes of **Israel sent men** throughout the territory of **Benjamin** to levy the charges against them in a form of a question: **What is this wickedness that has occurred among you** (v. 12)? Then, they demanded that they hand over **the perverted men** that

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had done this deed so that they could be **put to death** (v. 13). However, the people from **Benjamin** refused and even **gathered** their own men from their tribe and **sent** them **to Gibeah** to wage war against the other tribes **in Israel** (v. 14). With their lack of morality and everyone doing what was right in his own eyes, total anarchy and war had now resulted! In all, they assembled **26,000** troops with **700** specialized, **left-handed** warriors **from Gibeah** to defend themselves (vv. 15-16). Israel, on the other hand, had **400,000** trained soldiers which would seemingly be able to defeat the tribe of Benjamin with ease—or so they thought (v. 17).

### In-Depth Information



*We saw this specialized class of warrior when we studied the deliverer Ehud—also a Benjamite (see [Judg 3:15](#) and [Feb 25, 2018's curriculum](#)). Left-handed warriors had a distinct advantage in battle, but these warriors were even more highly skilled. They could hit a small target—**the breadth of a hair**—and **not miss**. They were both accurate and deadly. Israel would have a tough fight on her hands.*

In verses 8-17, neither the tribe of Benjamin nor any of the other tribes of Israel sought the Lord in any of this, but they merely reacted to the situation from a human perspective. Certainly, what happened to the Levite's concubine was a despicable and horrendous thing, but there is a right way and a wrong way to deal with sin and degradation. God had given Israel the Law, but they had abandoned it and lived according to their own standards and desires; the Lord also served as Israel's leader, but they also abandoned their covenant relationship with Him and called

upon Him only when they needed something or when they wanted to receive a blessing for something they have already decided to do. Four times in the last five chapters of Judges, the narrator notes, “In those days there was no king in Israel” ([Judg 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; and 21:25](#)). Herein lies Israel’s problem: they



didn’t have a relationship with the Lord nor did they seek Him daily to guide their lives and guard their hearts. In the following section, we will further observe the outcome of Israel’s failure to consult the Lord first before enacting judgment on Gibeah and Benjamin by extension.

### *Judges 20:18-21:15*

#### ***THE PROBLEM WITH THEIR PLAN:***

As we have already learned, the primary problem with Israel’s plan was that it omitted the Lord. The sin committed by the men of Gibeah was never in dispute, for the Bible clearly condemns adultery ([Exod 20:14](#)), rape ([Deut 22:25-27](#)), homosexuality ([Lev 18:22](#)), and murder ([Exod 20:13](#)). Moreover, Israel did initially act in accordance with the Law in seeking to **put to death** the perpetrators of the crime, but as we will see they went beyond the bounds of the Law when they issued judgment on their fellow countrymen who protected them. At this point, both the tribe of Benjamin sinned because they protected the sinful men and fought against their kinsmen and Israel erred because they acted hastily on their own to issue condemnation to the entire tribe of Benjamin (see

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v. 18 below). In the New Testament, the Lord gives explicit instructions for the church to deal with the sin of its members: those who are led by the Holy Spirit should go and restore them gently ([Gal 6:1](#)), this should be done in private with a small group ([Matt 18:15-16](#)), and if they fail to cease their sin and repent it should be told to the church and they should be excluded from fellowship in hope that they might realize their sin and be restored fully in their relationship with the Lord ([Matt 18:17](#); [1 Cor 5:5](#); [1 Tim 1:20](#)). As we will see in the following verses, Israel was not led by the Spirit of the Lord, but the people merely told the Lord what they were going to do after they had already decided to do it.

How has the Lord instructed the church today to deal with the sin of its members?

Question  
# 2

### vv. 20:18-48

#### **FAILURE TO CONSULT THE LORD:**

For the first time, the leaders of Israel go to Bethel (i.e. **the house of God**) **to inquire** of Him who should lead them into **battle against Benjamin** to which **the Lord** responds “**Judah**” (v. 18). At first, this may seem like a pious or even appropriate question, but in reality it shows how Israel already had her mind set on a solution and merely sought to inform God and ask Him to sanction it. Instead of asking how they should proceed or what they should do with an unrepentant tribe, they inform God about what they have already purposed in their hearts. Moreover, they never sought forgiveness for their own sin, but demanded retribution and punishment for the tribe of Benjamin. Remarkably, the Lord answers

them, but He is simply allowing the nation to destroy itself from within because of their wickedness which has led them to abandon Him as their leader.

Too often, we see people or have even been that person who has done something without

consulting the Lord first, but then we come to Him and expect Him to bless it. People tend to live in a way that they exercise control and make decisions that seem beneficial and productive at the time, but they never consult the Lord. This can occur in almost every area of our lives whether in our relationships, our finances, our careers, our education, and even in areas of service at church. Our prayers may often sound like this: “Father, the new boat I bought is high-maintenance—which I didn’t anticipate; where am I going to get the money to pay for fuel and upkeep? I need a raise at my job to afford it.” Never having asked the Lord if we should have bought the boat in the first place, we come to Him with a whole list of problems that we ourselves have created because we didn’t seek Him or wait upon Him. Although we may have never gotten in financial straits by buying a boat, we tend to act first, inform God through our prayers, and then seek Him only we have trouble. However, we need to seek the Lord first, wait upon His answer, and then abide by or accept His answer to us. When we seek God first and allow Him to guide us, we will find



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ourselves having much less self-inflicted problems.

What are some examples in which you or others you know have made a decision and then asked God to sanction or bless it? How did it ultimately turn out?

Question  
# 3

After informing God what they would do, the men of Israel **rose** early the next **morning**, put on their armament, and **went out to fight** against the Benjamites **at Gibeah** (vv. 19-20). Although numbering only **26,000**, the much smaller force of Benjamites slaughtered **22,000** of the **400,000** men from Israel—almost a one-to-one ration for every one of their soldiers (v. 21). What had gone wrong? God had indeed given the wicked Israelites what they had wished, but the defeat demonstrates that this was not ultimately His plan. The nation that He had chosen to represent Him now does not seek Him and their wickedness is destroying them from within. After this demoralizing defeat, **the children of Israel** sought **counsel** from the Lord a second time, but this time they ask if they should go into **battle** once again with the tribe of **Benjamin** to which **the Lord** responds with a yes (v. 23). This time it seems that they have learned, but still we don't see any repentance or remorse on their part; they only **wept** because they had been defeated.

Why is it important to prepare ourselves spiritually before we confront sin (see Gal 6:1)?

Question  
# 4

On that second day, they once again came out to fight and experienced the same results, losing **18,000** men in battle (vv. 24-25). So, **the children**

**of Israel went** to Bethel yet again to seek the Lord, but this time they **fasted** and **offered burnt offerings** and **peace offerings** to curry his favor (v. 26). They even used **the ark of the covenant** as a sort of good luck charm in seeking a response from the Lord when the **priest Phineas** asks if they should go to battle against **Benjamin** for yet a third time (vv. 27-28). This time the Lord tells them to **go**, but He also acknowledges He will give them success and **deliver them into their hand**. Even though the Lord grants them success, the nation still hadn't repented and turned to Him; they were merely practicing religious ritual and going through the motions rather than maintaining a personal relationship with the One who created them.

Numerous times throughout the Old Testament, the Lord decries how He hates sacrifice without obedience: "For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart—These, O God, You will not despise" ([Psalm 51:16-17](#); see also [Isa 1:11](#)). Religious rituals are meaningless unless accompanied by heart-felt repentance and a pure relationship with the Lord. We can come to church, serve, give an offering, and even pray, but if we only want to seek a blessing or favor from the Lord and aren't sincere about what we say or do, these activities are worthless to Him. In fact, the Lord chastises Israel in Isaiah 1:15-16 for this very thing: "When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil." Conversely, we ought to have a relationship with the Lord in which we genuinely seek Him—not just giving Him lip service or the courtesy of

informing Him about what we are doing as if He doesn't already know.

What are some ways in which people go through religious "ritual" so that the Lord will bless them? How can we avoid becoming trapped by this type of thinking?

Question  
# 5

During this battle, Israel decided to use trickery to lure the Benjamites from the city of Gibeah and **ambush** their troops by surrounding them from all sides (v. 29). To draw them from the city, Israel pretended to fight as they had the previous two times by sending men dressed in their armament, but now they fled on foot to make the Benjamites think they had defeated them so that they could surprise them on the **highways** away from the city (vv. 30-31). As Israel feigned defeat and drew the soldiers from Benjamin out, **10,000** soldiers from Israel sprang into action behind them on **the plain of Geba** and hemmed them in (vv. 32-34). Unaware of the trap, Benjamin suffered a major defeat, losing **25,100** soldiers—nearly all their fighting force (v. 35). Just as the Lord had promised, He delivered Benjamin into their hands and **defeated** them **before Israel** that day.

At this point, the story uses flashback to explain what happened after the **ambush**, but before the Benjamites realized they had been defeated. While the remnant of Benjamites fought not yet realizing they had been defeated, they killed about **thirty men from Israel** (v. 39). Meanwhile, some of the soldiers from Israel who had laid wait in the **ambush** doubled back to the city of Gibeah and utterly destroyed it, setting it ablaze (vv. 37-38a). The **smoke** rising from the ruins would be a signal to Israel of victory, but it also made the warriors from Benjamin **panicked** because they now



knew that **disaster** had befallen them and they had been defeated (vv. 38b, 40-41). The Benjamites began to retreat, but Israel **easily** caught these soldiers (**men of valor**) and some **18,000** fell that day (vv. 43-44). After the battle, Israel began systematically to exterminate the tribe of Benjamin—once again going beyond the boundaries that God had given them. They killed every **animal** and person and **set fire** to every city in their path (v. 48). Throughout this battle, the Lord never told Israel to use trickery or to raze an entire tribe, destroying everything in their path; instead, Israel acted on her own and figuratively became both the judge and jury. Although we ought to differentiate between good and evil and God has given human governments the power to maintain law and order, we should let God be the final arbiter who issues both the judgment and the sentence; He alone has the authority to sentence or vindicate.

### ***In-Depth Information***



*The **18,000** men mentioned in verse 44 are part of the **25,100** mentioned in verse 35. Some soldiers had likely stayed in Gibeah to defend the city and were killed there, others were killed in ambush on the highway, and still another contingent fled to Rimmon where they waged war for four months, but apparently weren't killed (see vv. 45-47).*

Why should we allow God to issue the judgment and do the sentencing? What biblical evidence is there to support this?

Question  
# 6

***vv. 21:1-15***

### ***FAILURE TO CALCULATE THE CONSEQUENCES:***

Israel had not calculated the consequences of her actions, so when

the people stopped to consider the ramifications they realized their terrible blunder and began to weep **bitterly**: they had destroyed an entire tribe and the 600 men who remained barricaded at Rimmon have no women whom they can marry (21:1-2). Earlier at **Mizpah**, they had decided that **none** of them would **give** their **daughters** to men from **Benjamin** in marriage and then they went on a systematic campaign to destroy every town in the territory of Benjamin as if they were a foreign nation whom they were called to dispossess from the land. Even more strikingly, they passively-aggressively blame the Lord, asking Him **why one tribe in Israel should be missing**. With the construction of this Hebrew phrase, they seem to blame God for failing to protect them and for allowing this to happen rather than taking the responsibility for themselves (v. 3)! This time, however, the Lord doesn't answer them at all, but lets them venture further down a path of self-destruction. Through their meaningless rituals, they **build an altar** and offer sacrifices to the Lord; God, however, remains silent because the people seek Him in name only and they have no relationship with Him. With no answer from the Lord, the people once again set out on their own to rectify this problem according to human logic (v. 5). Because they felt sorry for destroying the tribe of Benjamin, they try to devise a plan **at Mizpah** to save those who remain. In their own wisdom before they assembled **at**



*Possible location of the rock of Rimmon where the men from Benjamin hid.*

**Mizpah**, they declared that anyone who did not come to the meeting would be **put to death**—again something which the Lord did not command them to do. When they **counted**, no one from the town of **Jabesh Gilead** had come (vv. 8-9). Therefore, they reasoned that they would kill all the **men and women** from this region, but allow any **virgin** among them to live because she could be given in marriage to prevent the tribe of Benjamin from being totally cut off (vv. 6-7, 10-12). In all, after dispatching **12,000** troops, they slaughtered their own kinsmen and retained **400 virgins**.

To make **peace** with the remnant of 600 men from Benjamin at Rimmon, the children of Israel came to the rock and announced their plan to provide wives for the men—even though they had not yet found women for every man (vv. 13-14). That day,

**the people grieved for Benjamin because the Lord had made a void in Israel** (v. 15).

The people still had the wrong perspective by blaming the Lord. Their own choices and their own wickedness had gotten them to this point! Here, Israel acts like petty little children when one child gets in trouble and tries to deflect blame. For example, a child who gets in trouble for punching another child will often

interject: “but . . . he did such and such first” or “he started it” or “it’s not fair because he bothered me first.” They don’t take responsibility for their own actions, but they seek to blame someone else—even though both may be at fault and both may deserve punishment. Similarly, Israel was accusing the Lord instead of accepting the blame for their own wicked



and foolish actions. Israel was responsible for her plight! In order for us to repent and turn to the Lord, we first must recognize that we are responsible for our sinful actions and need forgiveness—something which Israel had not yet done.

How would you respond to someone who says that they haven't sinned? How would you help them to see the need for repentance?

Question  
# 7

### Judges 21:16-25

#### **PRESERVATION ATTEMPTED THROUGH HUMAN MEANS:**

Even though they had a temporary fix, the problem that Israel had created still was not fully resolved. **The elders** continued to meet to decide what they would do for 200 more women to provide wives for these men (v. 16). Once again, they are stuck between a rock and a hard place: the **survivors** need wives so the tribe wouldn't **be destroyed**, but they can't give their daughters because they had taken **an oath** (vv. 17-18). Remembering a scheduled **feast of the Lord at Shiloh**, the **elders** devised a plan where the remaining 200 men could basically abduct a woman for **a wife** among the virgins who would be in attendance (v. 19). They instructed the Benjamites to hide in **the vineyards** and when **the daughters of Shiloh** came dancing each one could take **a wife** and return home (vv. 20-21). Even anticipating the response from their **fathers** and **brothers**, they had a rebuttal already crafted when they came **to complain**; the Benjamites were to tell them to **be kind** to them because they didn't take their daughters in war nor did they cause them to break their **oath** by giving them in marriage (v. 22). The chapter

ends with a simple summary that the Benjamites **returned to their inheritance** and **rebuilt their cities** and lives—and all Israel simply went back to business as usual—doing **what was right in their own eyes** and forsaking the righteousness of the Lord (vv. 23-25).

Without consulting the Lord in any of this, Israel once again attempted to devise a plan to deliver herself and save one of her tribes from being cut off; the nation did **what was right in her own eyes** (v. 25). No human solution, however, can deliver us from the destruction that we face apart from Jesus Christ. We may try to do good deeds to merit salvation, but they won't amount to anything—all the good works that one may do can't divert the destructive penalty for our sin. We may rationalize that we can avert disaster by our own human skill, logic, and reasoning, but our wisdom is foolishness in the sight of the Lord. Rituals can't save us, human relationships can't deliver us, and rational "thinking" (apart from Christ) can't help us. The Bible is clear on the prescription for deliverance: the penalty was paid by the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross who then offers us eternal life as a gift with no-strings attached when we confess our sins and repent or turn to Him in complete surrender of our lives. We can't preserve or deliver ourselves, but preservation and deliverance comes through Christ; in turn, the preservation and salvation is accompanied by a life change whereby we are transformed from licentiousness (immorality) to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

How do humans try to save themselves through their own wisdom—even today?

Question  
# 8

On July 1, 1940, the Tacoma Narrows Bridge opened with much fanfare over Puget Sound southwest of Seattle, Washington. Like many other bridges before it, structural engineers and architects approved the design of the cable bridge while contractors and construction workers implemented the plan flawlessly—or at least they thought. With the wind hitting the solid structure of the road deck, it had nowhere to disperse so it caused the entire bridge to sway on the cables. The bridge began to twist and sway so violently in the wind that it was eventually closed to

vehicular traffic.

Less than five months later, on November 7, 1940 a windstorm with gusts to forty-two miles-per-hour caused



the bridge to rock and begin to crumble. That day, much of the road deck collapsed and fell into the water of Puget Sound below, destroying the bridge that had been carefully and ascetically planned. Regardless of how much we plan as humans, the high potential for failure exists—just as in this case with the Tacoma Narrows Bridge.

If humans have the potential to fail and that failure can lead to catastrophic results, we should learn to trust in the One who never fails and whose path always leads to life. If human plans fail and fall short, why do so many people still trust in them as if we could improve our lives

by trial and error? As we have seen through Israel's example in Judges, trusting in our own judgment and wisdom will always lead to failure. Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and did what was right according to their own perspective—leaving God out of the equation! Although many in our society attempt to follow human wisdom as a prescription for contentment and salvation, we can't make that same mistake—as even Israel did by following the culture around them. Instead, we must allow the Lord to change our perspectives, actions, focus, attitudes, and morals. We must fully surrender to Him, repenting of our sins and listening to His guidance. When we surrender to Him, He will transform us to be conformed to His image and we will live according to His righteousness rather than immorality. As we continue our study of transformation this year through the teaching of Christ in the Gospel of Matthew, we will learn what that ideal standard of living looks like and how our lives will be transformed when we follow Him daily and apply His teaching consistently.

## ***Incorporate***

Looking back over our study of the book of Judges, how is its message relevant for our world today?

With what judge or deliverer do you identify most? How has God transformed you or is in the process of transforming you from some of their faults?



Despite the sinful degradation we see throughout Judges, why can we still have hope?

# ***Journal: Document God's Work***



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