



GOD SERVES / WE SERVE

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JUDGES

WICKED PEOPLE // GRACIOUS GOD

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SERIES BREAKUP

We're doing 2 series over the next few weeks – exploring how we serve the God who serves us, & then working our way through the book of Judges.

This is the breakup of both series:

DATE	BIBLE	DATE	BIBLE
29 Apr-3 May	The God who serves	3-7 Jun	Judges 6-8
6-10 May	The God we serve	10-14 Jun	Judges 9
13-17 May	The Church we serve	17-21 Jun	Judges 10-12
20-24 May	Judges 1-3	24-28 Jun	Judges 13-16
27-31 May	Choose your own (OR Judges 4-5)	1-5 Jul	Judges 17-21

GOD SERVES / WE SERVE

When disasters strike, humans help their neighbours. Just for a moment they share their stuff, open their homes & lend a hand to help out. Given that people are normally pretty selfish, where do moments like that come from? They're a glimpse of what God made us for. The God at the centre of the universe is a giving, serving God.

'Every good & perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights' (James 1:17)

'He himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else' (Acts 17:25)

'He's shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven & crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy' (Acts 14:17)

We see this so clearly in Jesus, *'Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant'* (Phil 2:6-7). And nowhere is Jesus' service better captured than in his own words: *'For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, & to give his life as a ransom for many'* (Mark 10:45)

Christians have a reason to serve: we've *been served*. God served and saved us *to serve him*, to gladly serve Jesus and others with everything we've got – our time, energy, money, all of it!

Yet so often this is the *last* reason we serve – we serve in church because someone asked, and we wish we said no but it's too awks now. Or there's a need and it's nice to feel needed. Or everyone at Church needs to do their bit or the wheels fall off. Or it gives us identity and value. Or we want to pay God back for the debt he's cleared. Or earn his blessings.

Not to mention our *joy* in serving – the joy you maybe once felt as you served God is easily squashed by painful duty, and now you want to do as little of it as possible. It's discouraging when people don't value what you do and all you cop is criticism. This all sounds like a recipe for burnout, not joy! Does it have to be this way?

In this 3 week series we'll rediscover the God who serves us so we can serve Him & others with everything we've got.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father — to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen. (Rev 1:5-6)

THE GOD WHO SERVES

• 29 APR - 3 MAY

DIRECTION: We're spending the next 3 weeks at Salt Church thinking about how & why we serve. This bible discussion takes us to the most important foundation for our serving – that God has served us.

LAUNCH: What do you think of when you hear the word 'serve'?

- Ask people where they'd put themselves on these scales:
 - A) *How do you feel about serving at Church at the moment?*
Bitter - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10 - **Joyful**
 - B) *How motivated are you to serve at Church at the moment?*
Not at All - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10 - **Pumped**
 - C) *How do you feel about the amount you serve at the moment?*
Guilty - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10 - **Content**
- Ask people to answer this: *The main reason I serve at Church is...*

PRAY TO START: Ask God to help us see how He's served us, & to teach, challenge & encourage us as we spend 3 weeks thinking about serving.

Read Mark 10:35-45

OBSERVE & MEANING: What's the problem with James & John's request?

- What do the rulers of the Gentiles do? What does Jesus want His people to do instead?
- What do you reckon being a 'servant' & a 'slave' looks like?
- Why does Christ serve us? What are we ransomed *from*? What are we ransomed *for*?

Read Daniel 7:13-14

- Jesus calls himself the 'Son of Man', who comes to serve not be served. How does reading Daniel 7 add even more power to Jesus' statement?

APPLY: How do these 2 passages challenge:

- How you feel about serving?
 - How motivated you are to serve?
 - The amount you serve?
 - Why you serve?
- What question/s do you have about serving that you hope this 3 week series will answer?
 - (If you still have time) – what do you think of this phrase:
The best way to live is always serving others instead of yourself.

PRAY TO END:

1. Praise God that Christ has served & ransomed us, when we should have served Him!
2. Ask God to help us serve Him in the right way & for the right reasons.

THE GOD WE SERVE

• 6-10 MAY

DIRECTION: God has served us by saving us from sin, death & judgement. But what has He saved us *for*? So we can now live to serve Him. Our lives are for Him, to serve & worship Him, with all that we are & all that we have.

PRAY TO START: Ask God to help us gladly serve Jesus & others with everything we've got – our time, energy, money, all of it.

LAUNCH: What do you think of when you hear the word 'worship'?

Read Romans 12:1-2

OBSERVE & MEANING: What do you think 'in view of God's mercy' means?

- What is a 'living sacrifice'?
- What might it look like to 'offer our bodies' to God?
- What does Paul say about 'worship'? Is that similar or different to what you thought at the start?
- What do you think the 'pattern of this world' is?
- How are we transformed? What does that lead to?

Read Revelation 1:5-6 (start at 'To him who loves us...')

- What have we been made into?
- How has that come about?
- What might it practically look like to 'serve God' (v6)?

APPLY: By God's merciful love & through the blood of Jesus Christ, we've been saved to serve & worship God, with all of our lives.

- How could you serve & worship God more:
 - In your workplace?
 - In your family?
 - In your rest time?
 - When you watch TV?
- If worship is an all-of-life thing, what parts of your life might you be holding back from God at the moment?
- Why do you think you're holding them back? How can you change that?
- Does serving God feel like a joy/privilege or a duty/burden to you?

PRAY TO END:

1. Praise God that we *get* to worship & serve Him.
2. Ask God to help us gladly serve Him with our *whole* lives.

THE CHURCH WE SERVE

• 13-17 MAY

DIRECTION: One place Christ saves us to serve Him is His body the Church. God's given us gifts to serve His people & build His Church. Yet one of the biggest causes of division in the church in the last 50 years has been about gifts. That's sad & ironic since the reason God gives us these gifts is *'so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ'* (1 Pet 4:11). Every member of Christ's church has gifts. They're not to be used for us – to give us identity or help us to feel needed. They're for the church, to build it & to see God's people grown & more people saved, to the praise of God.

As you chat in your groups there's bound to be different opinions, since we come from such different backgrounds to Salt Church. You also can't talk about everything since you're scanning 3 different passages. So try to get the big picture of what these passages say about gifts & the church, & try to show people the common ground the whole group can agree on.

PRAY TO START: Ask God would make us eager to serve Christ's church.

LAUNCH: What do you think of when you hear the word 'spiritual gifts'?

Read Romans 12:3-8 & 1 Corinthians 12:4-14 & 1 Pet 4:10-11

OBSERVE & MEANING: These are 3 key parts of the bible that talk about gifts & the Church. What's the same across them? What's different?

- Where do gifts come from? Who has them? What do we do with them? How does God want us to use them?
- How is this similar or different to what you thought at the start?
- What do these passages say about the Church?

APPLY: Just so that we can land this, let's define a gift as *'anything I have or anything I can do'*. If you run with that definition, what gifts do you have?

- God has placed us all in Salt Church, He's given us all gifts, & we need everyone to be serving so that we can grow.

One way we can do that is by joining formal teams & ministries. What formal teams & ministries are you part of at Salt?

- There's also heaps of everyday simple & informal ways we can serve Salt Church. What can you think of?

E.g. speak to someone you don't know in the break, pray on your drive to church, fill in connection cards so new people don't feel awkward, & plenty more!

PRAY TO END:

1. Praise God that He's made us members of His church & we belong to each other.
2. Pray we'd use whatever gifts He has given us to serve His church, not serve ourselves.

WICKED PEOPLE. GRACIOUS GOD

The News makes the world look like an awful place, full of murder, adultery, evil & sin. **The book of Judges makes the News look good.** Judges plots the descent of Israel into a spiralling cycle of idolatry, sin & disregard for the God who redeemed them from Egypt.

Israel is intent on doing what is right in their own eyes, which includes refusing to clear the other nations from the Promised Land, as God had commanded them in His covenant. This leads to intermarriage with the Canaanite inhabitants & the inevitable occurs when Israel starts to worship their false gods. **Judges shows us the wickedness of God's people.**

At the same time, we're confronted by a long-suffering & gracious God. In spite of Israel's rebellion & covenant-breaking, God raises up judges to save Israel. They lead Israel to defeat their enemies & bring peace. This cycle of peace, sin/rebellion, judgement, a saviour & peace plays out several times across the book, all while things spiral ever downwards.

A whisper running through it all is the need for a more permanent Saviour. A leader like God who will rule for longer than a generation & keep Israel from sin. This of course points us to our need & the permanent solution found in Jesus Christ, the eternal King, the leader who *is* God. Christ saves us from our enemies & even our sins through His death & resurrection.

While we are just as wicked, God is just as gracious. Judges will challenge us on what we believe about God's character, How he responds to evil & how even evil fits into His purposes. We'll see that God is good, sin is evil & gives birth to more sin, judgement is a right response to evil, & God is abundantly gracious & merciful in the midst of evil. His great response to evil is Jesus Christ & the new hearts He has given us to trust & obey Him.

Judges: It's dark, it's uncomfortable, it's humanity at its worst. But God's light shines in the darkness & our gracious God is on display.

'The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord... The anger of the Lord burned against Israel... But when they cried out to the Lord, He raised up for them a deliverer...' (Judges 3:7-9)

EXTRA INFO TO HELP

Often the OT is less familiar to us, so here's some extra info about Judges to help you as you work through the book in your Small Group.

We're taking 7 weeks to unpack the key players & big moments of the book. The book of Judges covers 21 chapters, so...

- If you read a chapter a day you'll be done in three weeks
- If you read 3 chaps. a week you'll have read the book during the series

THE CONTEXT

Abram is promised that the land of Canaan will be given to his offspring:

Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. The Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." (Genesis 12:6-7)

Hundreds of years pass before this promise is fulfilled, when Israel enter the Promised Land under Joshua's leadership. Just before they enter the land though, God commands this about the Canaanite inhabitants:

When the Lord your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations—the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you—and when the Lord your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally.

Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy. Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, for they will turn your children away from following me to serve other gods, and the Lord's anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you. This is what you are to do to them: Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones, cut down their Asherah poles and burn their idols in the fire.

For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. (Deut 7:1-5)

Israel don't drive out *all* the nations of the land though & many inhabitants remain. After the death of Joshua things go rapidly downhill:

Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at the age of 110. And they buried him in the land of his inheritance, at Timnath Heres in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.

After that whole generation had been gathered to their ancestors, another generation grew up who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel.

Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord and served the Baals. They forsook the Lord, the God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed and worshiped various gods of the peoples around them (Judges 2:8-12)

This is where Judges begins, with a nation who time & time again turn their backs on God, embrace foreign gods & follow the ways of the Canaanites.

How will God respond to their wickedness? Who will save them?

THE CYCLE OF THE BOOK

There's a cycle that's played out again & again across the book.

1. *Israel did evil in the eyes of the Lord*
2. *The Lord hands them over to an oppressor*
3. *Israel serves the oppressor for 'X' amount of years*
4. *Israel cries out to the Lord*
5. *The Lord raises up a deliverer/judge & places His Spirit on the judge*
6. *The Lord gives the judge victory over the oppressor*
7. *The land & people have rest for 'Y' years*

Or another way to put it is:

1. *Previous Judge dies*
2. *Israel rebels against the Lord*
3. *The Lord sends a nation to punish Israel*
4. *Israel cries out to the Lord*
5. *The Lord sends another judge to lead Israel to victory over her enemies*
6. *Israel follows the Lord while the judge lives*

CANAANITE RELIGIOUS TERMS

- **Baal** – means ‘ruler, master, lord, owner’. Baal was the god of storms & weather, & thus of fertility.
- **Asherah** – depicted as a tree or pole which stood near Canaanite gods. Both Baal and Asherah were thought to mate, & their mating was thought to be responsible for the life-giving rain & fertile soil that overcame the ever-present threat of death.

JUDGES & THE NT

There aren't many *references* to the book of judges in the NT. Usually it's just that there are NT events or people who are similar. But that's not to say the NT has little to say *about* Judges! The saviour Judges makes us long for is the saviour we meet on the first pages of the NT: *'The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God...'* (Mark 1:1)

RESOURCES FOR JUDGES

- For a quick overview, check out *'Read Scripture: Judges'* on YouTube. Although be mindful that these videos don't have a solid & biblical understanding of sin (check out the article *'The Bible Project: brilliant but flawed'* on The Gospel Coalition Australia website to find out more. <https://au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/review-bible-project-brilliant-flawed>)
- A good overview of the book is in *'An Introduction to the Old Testament; Judges'* by Longman III & Dillard, p. 133-143. You can borrow this book from the bookshelves upstairs at 275 Kiera Street.
- A hefty commentary is in *'Judges, Ruth: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture'* by Daniel I Block. This book is available online to read for free on Google Books.

JUDGES 1-3 • 20-24 MAY

DIRECTION: We're kicking off our series in Judges by jumping straight in. Very helpfully, Judges starts by explaining the cycle that takes place several times in the book, & tells us why it's happening – God's people are wicked & idolatrous & failed to drive out the nations in the Promised Land like God commanded them to. So God hands them over to these other nations to oppress them. But God's so merciful that when He hears their groaning, He raises up Judges to save them. This same God has been & continues to be so merciful to us, in spite of our wickedness, idolatry & failure to obey.

PRAY TO START: Ask God to help us learn more about Him in Judges.

LAUNCH: If Salt didn't have any leaders, how do you think that'd affect us?

CONTEXT: Tell me everything you know about the book of Judges. Go!

Read Deuteronomy 7:1-6 & Judges 1:27-2:5

OBSERVE & MEANING: What were Israel meant to do?

- Why did God ask them to do this?
- What did they actually do? Why do you think they failed?

Read Judges 2:8-19

- What's the cycle of the book of Judges that's described here?
See Judges 3:7-11 for an example of it.
- How does God punish Israel? Why does God punish Israel?
- What does v19 show us about humanity?
- What does v18 show us about God's character?

APPLY: We're calling this series *Judges: Wicked People, Gracious God*. How has this intro to the book shown you those 2 truths?

- How do you feel about those 2 truths?
- How has God been gracious to you in your life?
- Israel only partly obeyed God in driving out the Canaanites. What places in your life are you only partly obeying God?
- Today Christians might not worship other gods by bowing down to pieces of wood or gold, but idolatry is still an issue in our hearts.

What might be some of the idols in your life?

How can you get rid of them & worship God alone?

PRAY TO END:

1. Praise God that He is so gracious to us in spite of our sin.
2. Ask God to forgive us for our sin & idolatry, & help us to obey him whole-heartedly.

CHOOSE YOUR OWN • 27-31 MAY

This week in your Small Group, choose your own adventure. We'll still look at Judges 4-5 on Sunday. Quick reminder of why we're doing this...

In Small Groups we normally discuss part of the bible before it's preached on, so we don't just 'let the expert' tell us what to believe but wrestle with God's word for ourselves.

One downside though is we move quick! You might have started a great chat in your group 1 week, but by the next we've moved on. This week is a chance to choose your own adventure – continue 1 of those discussions, or look at another topic / question / part of the bible your group wants to.

SOCIAL FUN TIMES:

If you haven't done a social / fun thing for a while you could use this week to do that. See chap 5 & 6 of [Getting Started as a Group Leader](#) for tips on how to use these to grow your group, so you get more bang for your buck.

A BIBLE DISCUSSION:

Alternatively, if you want to continue a previous discussion or dig into another topic / question / part of the bible here's how you could do that.

Getting Ideas:

A week or so before this, let your group know there's a 'choose your own' week coming up. Collect ideas, like a topic / question / part of the bible they want to explore. Vote to find the most popular 1 & get prepping.

Getting Prepped:

Brainstorm where in the bible the topic / question comes up. Or for a part of the bible, read it a bunch of times to work out what it means. Ask your coach & other leaders if they know good places / what the passage means.

If you feel more confident you can read up on the topic in a systematic theology / commentary (there's a bunch upstairs at 275 Keira St to borrow). If you're keen to learn more about the skill of creating studies, check out the book *Writing a Small Group Study* by Richard Sweatman.

Packaging a Discussion:

1. Use the COMA method: we use it in these notes; it stands for: Context-Observation-Meaning-Application.
2. Use the 'Swedish Method', where you read the passage together & ask:
 - a. What stands out to you?
 - b. What's a question you have?
 - c. What do you think the big point is?
 - d. What's one thing you want to do in response?
3. Or just read the passage & ask 'what do you reckon?' & see where your discussion takes you.

NEED HELP?

You don't have to have all the answers or be the expert to be a Small Group Leader, so don't stress for this week. Just get people into God's word & let Him teach & transform us by His Spirit.

This choose your own week can be a great way for your group to dig into something that's puzzling, troubling or exciting them.

Your Small Group Coach is always available & ready to give you advice too.

JUDGES 6-8 • 3-7 JUN

GIDEON: A WEAKLING SAVIOUR

DIRECTION: Gideon is not a good candidate for Israel's saviour. The weakest member of the weakest clan, with a weak faith full of fear. But yet God uses him & just 300 soldiers to defeat an entire army. Why does God do this? 'God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong... so that no-one may boast before Him' (1 Cor 1:27-29). God uses weak Gideon to show that the 'all-surpassing power is from God & not from us' (2 Cor 4:7).

PRAY TO START: Pray we'd lift our eyes to God for 'my help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth' (Psalm 121:2).

LAUNCH: When have you exceeded expectations & proven people wrong?

Read Judges 6:1-6, 11-16, 36-40

OBSERVE & MEANING: Does Gideon seem like a good candidate to save Israel? Would you describe him as weak or strong? Why?

- Why do you think Gideon does that thing with the fleece?

Read Judges 7:1-8, 19-22

- Why did the Lord reduce the amount of people in the army?
- What does the victory God won over Midian teach us about God?

Read 1 Corinthians 1:23-31

- What does the victory God won at the cross teach us about God?
- *Why* does God use human weaknesses? *How* does he use us?

APPLY: What are you more tempted to trust & boast in: your strength & abilities, or your weaknesses & God's power?

- How is God merciful to Israel in spite of their wickedness in these chapters? How does that make you feel about the way God treats you?
- How does God guide us now? Should we use fleeces? Why, why not?
- God worked in ways Gideon didn't expect. How has God worked in unexpected ways in your life that have left you speechless?

PRAY TO END:

1. Praise God that He uses us not just *in* our weaknesses but *because* of our weaknesses, to bring glory to Him.
2. Ask God to help us trust Him for the strength to serve.

JUDGES 9 • 10-14 JUN

ABIMELEK: A FALSE SAVIOUR

DIRECTION: God is sovereign & we are responsible for the choices we make. It's hard to hold these 2 truths together, in large part because we're small puny humans & God is the glorious all-powerful creator. These 2 truths come together so clearly at the cross, where Jesus dies at the hands of wicked people according to God's plan from before the creation of the world. There'll probably be lots of questions as you explore these 2 ideas. That's ok though! Wrestle with that tension together.

PRAY TO START: Ask God to help us see His massiveness & worship.

LAUNCH: Have you ever stood by & watched something evil happen without getting involved to fix it?

Read Judges 9:1-57

OBSERVE & MEANING: What's your impression of Abimelek? What is his sin?

- Does God approve of what Abimelek does? How do you know?
- What do you think of v23-24 & v56-57? Would you say God *allowed* this to happen to judge Abimelek, or that God *caused* this to happen to judge Abimelek?
- Can God control all things that happen & yet we still be held responsible for our choices?

Read Acts 2:22-24 & 4:24-28

- How do these 2 realities (that God is totally sovereign & we are totally responsible for our actions) come together with Christ at the cross?

APPLY: How would you respond to this statement:

If God knew I was going to sin & even allowed me to sin, how come I still get judged as if it's my fault?

Read Romans 8:28-30

- If God was in control of all things & was *evil*, that'd be terrifying! What do these verses show us about how God treats us?
- What do we need to remember about God, so we can trust him in all circumstances?

PRAY TO END:

1. Thank God for showing mercy to us, a sinful & rebellious people.
2. Ask God to help us learn to love that He is in control of all things, even when He uses difficult situations & other people's evil to grow us.

JUDGES 10-12 • 17-21 JUN

JAPHETH: A FOOLISH SAVIOUR

DIRECTION: We forget what God's like & do stupid things. Sin is stupid because it forgets our God is good & trustworthy. Japheth makes a stupid promise because he didn't trust God to bring victory & forgot what God loves. He (devastatingly!) sacrifices his daughter to God – a practise God hates. Yet Japheth's folly points to our victory – the Son of God was willingly sacrificed for all our sins & the stupid things we've done, to save us.

PRAY TO START: 'Lead & guide us for the sake of your name' (Psalm 31:3)

LAUNCH: Have you ever made a stupid promise?

Read Judges 11:1-40

OBSERVE & MEANING: Why does Japheth fight – what's motivating him?

- What does his message to the Ammonite King (v14-27) show us about how he pictures God?
- How does he try to win the war? What's the vow he made? Why does he make this vow? How does his vow show his *lack* of trust in God?
- How do you feel about v35 when he says 'I have made a vow to the Lord that I *cannot break?*'
- What does God think of child-sacrifice?

On one hand God hates it. Child sacrifice was the common practise of Canaanites who lived in the Promised Land. Judgement of that & other sins was the very reason God used Israel to destroy them & remove them from the Promised Land.

But on the other hand, the Son of God was sacrificed for all our sin & the stupid things we've done to save us.

APPLY: What do you think of this phrase: *'sin is stupid'*?

- How has the sacrifice of the Son of God for us freed us from doing stupid things?
- What stupid choices are you making at the moment that you want to repent of & change?
- When do you find it hard to trust God? How do you compensate for your lack of trust in Him, e.g. over-planning, procrastinating, etc.
- What would help you trust God more?

PRAY TO END:

1. Praise God for the sacrifice of His Son, to free us from the power of sin
2. Ask God to help us trust Him & flee the stupidity of sinning against Him

JUDGES 13-16 • 24-28 JUN

SAMSON: A SEX-ADDICTED SAVIOUR

DIRECTION: Samson is famous for his strength. Yet the Samson we meet in Judges is also brutal & a sex-addict. Nevertheless, God uses Samson to save His people & to judge the Philistines; God uses all sorts of people to fulfil His plans. Unlike Samson, we've been cleansed by God so can flee sexual immorality as we serve God.

PRAY TO START: Ask God to help us obey Him in & with all of our lives.

OBSERVATION: Samson's story takes place across 4 chapters of Judges. So split into 4 groups & **Read a chapter each: 13, 14, 15 or 16.**

- Share with the whole group a quick summary of what happened in your chapter.

MEANING: What impression do you get of Samson? Describe him?

- What things did you notice keep happening to Samson?
- What do you think was Samson's greatest achievement in his life? Why?
- Why do you think God chose Samson to be one of the Judges? What does this show us about God?

APPLY: How does it feel to know God used even someone as morally corrupt as Samson in His plans & purposes?

Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

- What are some differences between us & Samson?
- How are we called to live as the people of God now? What does that look like for our sexual purity? How can you do that this week?

PRAY TO END: Praise God for washing, sanctifying & justifying us. Ask Him to help us flee sexual immortality & serve Him with our *whole* lives.

JUDGES 17-21 • 1-5 JUL

DIRECTION: We'll finish our time in the book of Judges with an odd little story about a man named Micah who makes an idol & employs a priest. It gives a snapshot into the religious climate of Israel.

Even after all God's long-suffering & grace poured on wicked Israel, even after the many times God's rescued them from their enemies, *still* they're busy worshipping false gods & not Him. What hope is there?

There's a phrase that comes up several times in chapters 17-21: 'in those days Israel had no King, everyone did as they saw fit'. Is a King the solution? Is that where their hope will come from? Yes & no. A King is just another human leader, just as capable of being wicked like the people & the judges.

What they really need is a saviour like God – a saviour who *is* God.

PRAY TO START: Ask God to help us worship Him alone.

Read Judges 17:1-12

OBSERVE & MEANING: Who are the people in this story? What do they do?

- What seems to be motivating Micah's mum – why was she so quick to forgive him for stealing her silver? Why did she make an idol for him?
- What seems to be motivating Micah – why does he accept the idol, why does he have many household gods, why does he employ the Levite?
- What seems to be motivating the Levite – why do you think he agreed to be Micah's priest?

They're all trusting someone other than God to get ahead & be blessed. Micah's mum helped her son perform idolatry by commissioning the idol's construction. Her unusually quick forgiveness suggests she's invested in benefitting from her son's 'devotion' to his gods.

Micah wants to secure God's blessings, so he worships several gods at once just in case, & thinks with a Levite as priest he's guaranteed God's blessings.

The Levite was supposed to serve the Lord at the temple. But he's willing to relax his convictions on the promise of food, clothes, cash & being like a son to Micah. Instead of working for his heavenly Father, he was eager to work for an earthly Father & to be 'better paid' for his services.

- What does this snapshot show us about Israel's religious climate?

Read Judges 17:6, 18:1, 19:1 & 21:25

- What do you think this repeated statement means? Would a King fix Israel's problem, or add to their problem? What do Israel really need?

APPLY: What are some big things you've seen across the book of Judges: About people? About God?

- Think back across the whole book of Judges & try to sum up the big message of the book in 1-2 sentences.
- All of us have the same bent as the people in this story, to worship other gods alongside the one true God (though we'd never say 'our gods' because we don't admit we're tempted to worship other things!)

Here's some questions to help you check where your heart is at:

- Where do you turn to feel security?
- What do you spend \$ on without even thinking about it?
- What's your biggest fear in life?

PRAY TO END:

1. Praise God for what we've seen about His character & purposes across the book of Judges.
2. We're often tempted to worship God alongside our other 'gods', like our interests, hobbies, desires, etc. Ask God to help us adore Him & worship Him alone.



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*For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve,
and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:45)*

*‘The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord... The anger of the Lord burned
against Israel... But when they cried out to the Lord, He raised up for them
a deliverer...’ (Judges 3:7-9)*

For more Small Group Leader resources:
www.saltchurch.info/resources/small-group-leaders