

**Everyone Did What Was Right In Their Own Eyes: Part I
I Did It My Way...**

After finishing the cycles section of Judges, we leave the portion of the book which records the oppression by Israel's physical enemies and enter into another - one exemplifying the heart of the nation. Even without a physical enemy, Israel was on its way to destroying itself. Why? In chapters 17-21, we see the people of Israel doing "what was right in their own eyes." While they continued to claim his Name, they had long forgotten his Words, choosing to act instead as it suited them in each set of circumstances. Let's see where such paths lead when they do not line up with the loving, protective Word of God.

Note: Many commentators agree, and cross references support, that these last five chapters of Judges following Samson do not fall in chronological order, but instead characterize the moral condition of the whole period of Judges.

Stop and Pray - God, show me if I am doing what is right in my own eyes rather than living in line with Your instruction and will.

"...everyone did what was right in their own eyes." (Judges 17:6b)

1. What rationales do people use to alleviate guilt when they choose to sin repeatedly?
2. Let's examine what the word "right" in Judges 17:6 and 21:25 means. Read Proverbs 12:15, Proverbs 14:12, and Proverbs 21:2. How would you characterize the heart and mind of a person who does "right in their own eyes"?
3. There are those who think that because they know and fully understand the Word, they do not need to live by it. According to James 1:22, what happens when people live this way? *Note:* The Greek word for "deceiving" (*paralogizomai*) in James 1:22 means to deceive by false reasoning.

Read Judges 17-18 - Micah and His Mother. Mark your text as instructed.

4. The characters in Judges 17 -18 were extensively engaging in idolatry while thinking they were doing right in their actions. Look up the following verses and then contrast God's standards regarding worship with the worship practiced in these chapters. (Exodus 25:20-22; Deuteronomy 5:8-10; Deuteronomy 13:6-11; Deuteronomy 12:2-6; Joshua 18:1, 8-10 and Exodus 29:8-10)

God's standards for worship

Worship practiced in Judges 17-18

5. Micah was not anti-Jehovah. He was trying to serve Jehovah. So what was the problem?

Let's notice what happened when Micah's mother, her son, the Levite, and tribe did what was right in their own eyes instead of living according to God's Word. This week we will look at the lives of Micah and his mother and next week we will tackle the others. (Because these characters are so intertwined throughout both chapters, to answer these questions thoroughly, you will have to observe the whole of both chapters.)

6. In what ways did Micah's mother disregard God's Word? List what actions she took (or did not take) and, therefore, what lessons she might have taught her son.

Action taken by mom

Lesson learned by son

7. In what ways do we train the younger generation that it is okay to mix the worship of God with idols or personal worldly pursuits?

8. How could Micah have justified stealing from his mother?

9. Why do you think Micah returned the money?

10. When given the opportunity to have his own idol, what more did Micah do that was against God's Word? *Note:* Household gods are small idols used for discerning the will of the larger idol.

11. How is Judges 17:6 a commentary on the first five verses of this chapter?

12. Compare the wage Micah offered to the Levite with the amount Micah stole and comment on how the difference was a symptom of the larger problem. (See Numbers 18:21 for how the Levites were supposed to be supported.)

13.
 - a. What did Micah assume in Judges 17:13?

 - b. Was his assumption valid or not?

 - c. Have you ever made a similar assumption? Elaborate.

14. What lessons can we learn for our own lives from the reasoning and choices of Micah and his mother?

15.
 - a. How would you describe the religious atmosphere of Micah's day?

 - b. How is the religious atmosphere of America today similar or different from Micah's day?

16.
 - a. What do you think is the significance of Judges 18:31?

 - b. How do John 14:6 and Acts 4:11-12 correlate with Judges 18:31 for our lives?

Heart Check: Evaluate your religion. Are you trying to get to God your way or are you approaching Him through the one way He has provided? Are you a Christian who is letting God be Lord or are you religious, while being your own lord?

17. Review your text and your completed lesson.

What would you like to remember?

How will you apply those lessons?

Final Thoughts: In those days there was no King in Israel. Yes, there was no physical king, but more importantly, there was no Spiritual King. Israel was not allowing God to be their LORD.

Do you value your God and all He has done to save you to the point that you will let Him command you without compromise? Considering this story and all of the life stories we have witnessed in Judges, don't we all desperately need our Holy Commander? Without Him we become so hopelessly deceived and lost.

Pray - Lord, teach me what it means to let You command me. Show me what it means for You to truly be my LORD and not just my Savior. Help me to live out Your instructions rather than just know them.

Kyna Ritchie (original 2002; revised 2013)

Lesson 21 — Everyone Did What Was Right In Their Own Eyes — Judges 17-18

Observe your text.

Mark your text. Put a box around all time words (e.g. now, in those days, then). Put a circle around all conditional words (e.g. therefore, thus, but, so). Put a brown jagged line under all locations (including “there”, etc.). Underline all references, including pronouns (e.g. he, you, I, his, they):

- Micah in purple (& his town’s people)
- Micah’s mother in pink
- Tribe of Dan in blue (note how many above)
- idols in black with a jagged line
- Levite in green
- God in red

Judges 17-18 – Micah and His Mother

1 Now there was a man of the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Micah. 2 He said to his mother, "The eleven hundred pieces of silver which were taken from you, about which you uttered a curse in my hearing, behold, the silver is with me; I took it." And his mother said, "Blessed be my son by the LORD." 3 He then returned the eleven hundred pieces of silver to his mother, and his mother said, "I wholly dedicate the silver from my hand to the LORD for my son to make a graven image and a molten image; now therefore, I will return them to you." 4 So when he returned the silver to his mother, his mother took two hundred pieces of silver and gave them to the silversmith who made them into a graven image and a molten image, and they were in the house of Micah. 5 And the man Micah had a shrine and he made an ephod and household idols and consecrated one of his sons, that he might become his priest. 6 In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes. 7 Now there was a young man from Bethlehem in Judah, of the family of Judah, who was a Levite; and he was staying there. 8 Then the man departed from the city, from Bethlehem in Judah, to stay wherever he might find a place; and as he made his journey, he came to the hill country of Ephraim to the house of Micah. 9 Micah said to him, "Where do you come from?" And he said to him, "I am a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah, and I am going to stay wherever I may find a place." 10 Micah then said to him, "Dwell with me and be a father and a priest to me, and I will give you ten pieces of silver a year, a suit of clothes, and your maintenance." So the Levite went in. 11 The Levite agreed to live with the man, and the young man became to him like one of his sons. 12 So Micah consecrated the Levite, and the young man became his priest and lived in the house of Micah. 13 Then Micah said, "Now I know that the LORD will prosper me, seeing I have a Levite as priest."

Chapter 18

1 In those days there was no king of Israel; and in those days the tribe of the Danites was seeking an inheritance for themselves to live in, for until that day an inheritance had not been allotted to them as a possession among the tribes of Israel. 2 So the sons of Dan sent from their family five men out of their whole number, valiant men from Zorah and Eshtaol, to spy out the land and to search it; and they said to them, "Go, search the land." And they came to the hill country of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, and lodged there. 3 When they were near the house of Micah, they recognized the voice of the young man, the Levite; and they turned aside there and said to him, "Who brought you here? And what are you doing in this place? And what do you have here?" 4 He said to them, "Thus and so has Micah done to me, and he has hired me and I have become his priest." 5 They said to him, "Inquire of God, please, that we may know whether our way on which we are going will be prosperous." 6 The priest said to them, "Go in peace; your way in which you are going has the LORD'S approval." 7 Then the five men departed and came to Laish and saw the people who were in it living in security, after the manner of the Sidonians, quiet and secure; for there was no ruler humiliating them for anything in the land, and they were far from the Sidonians and had no dealings with anyone. 8 When they came back to their brothers at Zorah and Eshtaol, their brothers said to them, "What do you report?" 9 They said, "Arise, and let us go up against them; for we have seen the land, and behold, it is very good. And will you sit still? Do not delay to go, to enter, to possess the land. 10 "When you enter, you will come to a secure people with a spacious land; for God has given it into your hand, a place where there is no lack of anything that is on the earth." 11 Then from the family of the Danites, from Zorah and from Eshtaol, six hundred men armed with weapons of war set out. 12 They went up and camped at Kiriath-jearim in Judah. Therefore they called that place Mahaneh-dan to this day; behold, it is west of Kiriath-jearim. 13 They passed from there to the hill country of Ephraim and came to the house of Micah. 14 Then the five men who went to spy out the country of Laish said to their kinsmen, "Do you know that there are in these houses an ephod and household idols and a graven image and a molten image? Now therefore, consider what you should do." 15 They turned aside there and came to the house of the young man, the Levite, to the house of Micah, and asked him of his welfare. 16 The six hundred men armed with their weapons of war, who were of the sons of Dan, stood by the entrance of the gate. 17 Now the five men who went to spy out the land went up and entered there, and took the graven image and the ephod and

household idols and the molten image, while the priest stood by the entrance of the gate with the six hundred men armed with weapons of war. 18 When these went into Micah's house and took the graven image, the ephod and household idols and the molten image, the priest said to them, "What are you doing?" 19 They said to him, "Be silent, put your hand over your mouth and come with us, and be to us a father and a priest. Is it better for you to be a priest to the house of one man, or to be priest to a tribe and a family in Israel?" 20 The priest's heart was glad, and he took the ephod and household idols and the graven image and went among the people. 21 Then they turned and departed, and put the little ones and the livestock and the valuables in front of them. 22 When they had gone some distance from the house of Micah, the men who were in the houses near Micah's house assembled and overtook the sons of Dan. 23 They cried to the sons of Dan, who turned around and said to Micah, "What is the matter with you, that you have assembled together?" 24 He said, "You have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and have gone away, and what do I have besides? So how can you say to me, 'What is the matter with you?'" 25 The sons of Dan said to him, "Do not let your voice be heard among us, or else fierce men will fall upon you and you will lose your life, with the lives of your household." 26 So the sons of Dan went on their way; and when Micah saw that they were too strong for him, he turned and went back to his house. 27 Then they took what Micah had made and the priest who had belonged to him, and came to Laish, to a people quiet and secure, and struck them with the edge of the sword; and they burned the city with fire. 28 And there was no one to deliver them, because it was far from Sidon and they had no dealings with anyone, and it was in the valley which is near Beth-rehob. And they rebuilt the city and lived in it. 29 They called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father who was born in Israel; however, the name of the city formerly was Laish. 30 The sons of Dan set up for themselves the graven image; and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of the Danites until the day of the captivity of the land. 31 So they set up for themselves Micah's graven image which he had made, all the time that the house of God was at Shiloh.

(Judges 17:1-18:31, NASB95)