



### News to Know

- 1) Vacation Bible School is approaching, and volunteers are needed. Lauri Cox, the VBS Director, is asking for adults and students. VBS is June 3-7. If you or your student are interested, you can sign up [here](#). One big change, students are no longer required to participate in a leader lab. If your student has already signed up for one, it is no longer needed.
- 2) If you are the parent of a senior, Graduate Commissioning is May 19th. You can find out more information and sign up [here](#).
- 3) The final payment for MissionFuge is due next Monday, April 29th. You can pay [here](#). If your student's total balance is not paid by this date, they will lose their spot. If there are any issues, please let me know.
- 4) A mandatory meeting for parents and students attending MissionFuge is May 8th at 7:30pm in The Harbor. This will be a short meeting to go over final details and to turn in paperwork. Please be sure to mark this on your calendar.
- 5) Refuge is this Wednesday at 6:30 in The Harbor.
- 6) Small groups will meet in Grace Cottage Sunday morning at 9:45 and 11:00.

### Refuge this Week

We have two weeks left in our series on the Book of Judges. This week, we'll look at Judges 17-18. There is a type of faith that believes in God but the person's life doesn't really reflect who God is. They believe in God but don't know him personally. Many refer to this state as "Christian atheism." Judges 17-18 give us a picture of what this looks like. These people believe in God, but practically speaking, they live like atheists.

First, Christian atheism focuses on the consequence rather than character. Chapter 17 introduces us to a man named Micah who has stolen 1100 pieces of silver from his mother. His mother, not knowing who stole the silver, called down a curse on the robber. Micah overhears, gets scared, and gives the silver back to his mother. Micah's conscience didn't prompt him to return the money, it was the fear of the consequence. Had there not been a threat of a curse, Micah would have kept the silver. So often, we live in the same way spiritually. We "follow Jesus" so we don't go to Hell. We don't sin because we're afraid of the consequences, not because we love God.

Next, Christian atheism redefines God rather than submits to him. Micah's mother is so grateful for the returned silver she decides to build an image of God out of it. By building the shrine, she breaks the 2nd commandment. You see, when you make an image of God, you pick and choose who God is and who he isn't, what attributes he has and which he doesn't. Micah's family shapes a God who is convenient to worship. They follow the laws they like and ignore the laws they don't. This is one of the primary sins of our culture today. It's not that we completely reject Jesus, we just want him to be a certain way. We filter out things about God that our hearts can't accept. We, like Micah's family, are reshaping God to fit our society and our hearts instead of letting God reshape our hearts

Third, Christian atheism keeps something back rather than giving all. Micah's mother dedicated the silver to the Lord, yet we see her only give 200 pieces of the 1100 to make the idol. Micah's mother doesn't really put God first. She doesn't really give him control over every part. Similarly, it's easy for us to only obey God in certain areas of our lives. It's more than possible to give God our lives on Sundays but then really give him only our Sundays.

Christian atheism uses God rather than worships him. Some time later, Micah meets a Levite traveling through town, he asks him if he would be his priest. Micah sees an opportunity to make his homemade shrine even more impressive by adding this man. Micah's shrine now outwardly conforms even more to God's rules for worship. Micah is assuming God exists to serve him and that doing the right things means God will bless him. The aim of his religious efforts is to get access to God so that he can get God to do what he wants. False religion seeks control of God; true faith surrenders to God. The goal of true faith is to give God access to your heart so that you do what he wants.

Fifth, Christian atheism relies on human strength rather than God's. In Chapter 18, we read that members of the tribe of Dan are searching for their new home and encounter Micah's priest. The priest points them to a land they can dwell in that was isolated and easy. As a member of God's people, God has promised them land, but they must fight to get it. Instead, the tribe of Dan takes the easy route. They are able to take this land by their own strength with no need to rely on God. True faith takes risks, it says, "God you're in control I trust you." It does hard things. When was the last time you did something that required faith?

Next, Christian atheism does not save. As the tribe of Dan leaves, they take Micah's shrine and persuade the priest to go with them. Micah is upset at this, he chases after them, and he tells them he now has nothing left. He looked to what he built for blessing and fulfillment, but all that he had trusted in had gone. He teaches us that whatever we make into our god will not deliver us or fulfill us. Our idols cannot save. There is only one God who will never be taken away from us.

Last, Christian atheism does not sustain. Finally, we find out more about the priest. He is a direct descendant of Moses. The priest who will compromise on everything but his own interests is a descendant of Moses. This is proof that God has no grandchildren. Every individual must find God personally and individually. No one is related to God by family tree.

### **Resource of the Week**

This week's resource is titled, "Seven Questions that Teens Need to Answer." It can be found [here](#).



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