



News to Know

- 1) The final payment for MissionFuge is due today! You can pay [here](#). If your student's total balance is not paid by today, they will lose their spot. If there are any issues, please let me know.
- 2) Wednesday is the deadline to sign up for Graduate Commissioning on May 19. Please make sure to get all of your information in by then. You can find out more information and sign up [here](#).
- 3) We need just a few more volunteers for VBS. If you or your student are willing, you can sign up [here](#).
- 4) A meeting for those attending MissionFuge is next Wednesday, May 8 at 7:30 in The Harbor. This will be a short meeting. Please be sure to attend.

Refuge this Week

This week, we finish our series on the Book of Judges. The Book ends with a very sad and even horrific picture of how sin and idolatry has ravaged the Israelites in chapters 19-21. It shows us the dangers of some things we tolerate in our lives.

First, see the danger of lingering sin. We're introduced to another evil Levite who has purchased a concubine. She leaves him, returns to her father's house, and the Levite chases her here. At his father-in-law's house, the Levite is encouraged by his father-in-law to stay longer and longer again. And, the author of Judges is using it to remind the Israelite reader of all the moments so far in Scripture where people have lingered in sin. The obvious warning for us is to flee sin, to stop letting it linger in our lives. Christians must not rest or become complacent in the battle against it.

Next, see the danger of disregarding the weak. The Levite and his concubine leave the house and head back home. On the way, they stop in Gibeah for the night. This is a terrible place and terrible things happen. That night, evil men demand the Levite come out. Instead of going out, fighting, or refusing, the Levite sends out his concubine who is assaulted. The woman is eventually set free, she returns to the house, and she dies on the doorstep. Every character in this story treats the concubine as an object. Nobody defends her, cares for her, or rescues her. They are all passive. In our world, we should look after the weak. Whether it is the infant, the orphan, the less-fortunate, the elderly, or those who are defenseless and voiceless, we should actively care for them.

Third, see the danger of bitterness in your life. To get revenge on the men of Gibeah, the Levite cuts the woman into 12 pieces and sends them to the tribes of Israel. After getting the body parts of this concubine, Israel assembled an army determined to give Gibeah what they deserve. They first ask the Benjamites to hand over the men, the Benjamites don't, and they summon 27,000 soldiers to face the rest of the Israelites. In even more gruesome fashion, Israel kills every single man, woman, child, and even animal in the towns of Benjamin except for 600 men. This not justice, it's genocide. This is the work of bitterness. It demands not one eye, but two in revenge for every one eye lost. The root of bitterness always turns into vindictiveness. The only way to avoid bitterness is to practice forgiveness, nothing else will uproot angry resentment.

Lastly, see the danger of not following God. The Israelites then make a vow that no woman would be allowed to marry a Benjamite. Well, after some time, the Israelites calm down and realize their vow would end one of the tribes of Israel. To fix this problem, they go to a town where the men didn't vow, kill them, and take the women. When there weren't enough women, they hide in bushes, and kidnap unsuspecting women. In every way in these 21 chapters, Israel has failed to look to the Lord for guidance. Not obeying God in one decision can snowball into a complete disaster. Because they abandoned God to pursue their own will, they have become a spiritually dark people. At the end of the book, the problem became themselves. In these last chapters, no pagan was to blame for the oppression, rape, murder, massacre, and kidnapping. They were all Israelites. Daniel Block wrote, *"No other book in the OT offers the modern church as telling a mirror as this book. This book is a wake-up call for a church dying in its own selfish pursuits. Instead of heeding the call of truly godly leaders and letting Jesus Christ be lord of the church, everywhere congregations and their leaders do what is right their own eyes."* Are you being a benefit for the church or an obstacle for the church? Are you looking out for the interests of others? Are you using your gifts to serve the church? Are you invested in the purpose of the church?

The Book of Judges shows us that we all need a savior. While the book ends in darkness and despair, there is hope. There is another book in the Bible written the same time as the last chapters of Judges... the book is called Ruth. This book ends in hope. At the end of this book, we see that Ruth's son Obed will be David's grandfather. And, from the line of David comes Jesus. Judges 19-21 are dark and gruesome, but they are not the darkest chapters in the Bible. The most distorted part of the Bible is the crucifixion of Jesus. Jesus will endure the horrific consequences of our sin and redeem us. We must look to him as the Ultimate Judge.

Resource of the Week

This week's resource is titled, "Gen Z and the Draw to Serious Faith." It can be found [here](#).



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