

News to Know

Refuge: Wednesday at 6:30

We meet in The Harbor at 6:30. This week, we are studying 1 Samuel 4-6.

Sunday Morning Small Groups

Every Sunday we have small groups for your student. We meet and discuss the previous Wednesday's message. This helps us understand the passage more and then apply it to our lives. Would you consider encouraging your student to attend if they don't already?

Stanhope Elmore FCA

Stanhope is trying to get Fellowship of Christian Athletes started up. They'll meet every Friday morning at 6:45!

Abounding Grace Girls' Bible Study

Kelly Davis leads our girls' Bible study that meets every Sunday at 6:00 in Grace Cottage. This is for girls in 7th-12th grade.

Refuge this Week

This week, we'll look at 1 Samuel 4-6. The chapters are centered on the Ark of the Covenant, which was the symbol of God's presence. The story is a powerful reminder that we can't "use" God for our own purposes. Instead, He calls us to trust Him, honor His holiness, and truly submit to His authority.

First, we see Israel go to battle against the Philistines and lose 4,000 men. Instead of seeking God, they decide to bring the Ark into the next battle, thinking it will guarantee victory. They treat the Ark like a magic weapon, but it backfires. This time, 30,000 die, and the Ark is captured. The lesson is clear: God isn't a charm in your pocket; He's the King on the throne. Even good things, like prayer, worship, or church attendance, can be misused if we treat them as ways to control God or secure His favor. That's what Israel did with the Ark, and it's what we can be guilty of with our rituals.

The Philistines take the Ark and place it next to their god, Dagon. The next morning, they find the idol has fallen over. They set it back up, and the next day it's missing its hands and feet. They move the Ark to other cities, and the people there are struck with tumors. God is showing that He doesn't serve us, and He doesn't belong to us. He's not Israel's pet, not the Philistines' trophy, not a mascot for our agendas. He is the living God, who rules over all. We can be like the Philistines in a way. We fill our lives with idols and hold on to empty religious routines. We worship sports all week and then go to church on Sunday. We chase grades or success, and then 'worship' Jesus only on Wednesday night. Outwardly, it looks spiritual, but inwardly, God isn't real to us. Don't settle for empty religion. Surrender to the living God. Stop going through the motions and follow the God who moves.

Once the Philistines realized the Ark was bringing judgment, they decided to send it back to Israel. They even sent gifts of golden tumors and five golden mice. When the Ark returned, the Israelites offered a burnt offering. But then some of them mishandled the Ark, and 70 were struck dead. They treated God's wrath, His commands, His holiness, and His justice lightly. They knew what God required, but they ignored it. They underestimated Him because they didn't truly know Him. And that's often our problem too. Many of us don't truly know God, we reshape Him into what we want Him to be. We project our preferences, our cultural values, and our ideas of morality onto Him, while ignoring the parts of His character that feel inconvenient like His holiness, His justice, or the cost of following Him. We take the living, holy, sovereign God and shrink Him into something manageable, safe, and useful for us instead of letting Him shape us.

Resource of the Week

This week's resource is titled, "Five Myths about Parenting." You can find it [here](#).



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