

Judges 17-21

Discussion Guide: Judges 17–21

Theme: *When Everyone Does What Is Right in Their Own Eyes*

Big Idea

When God's people reject His authority, moral confusion and relational breakdown follow. Without a faithful King, even religious activity becomes empty and destructive.

Opening Icebreaker

- Where do you see the phrase “do what feels right to you” shaping our culture today?

Discussion Questions

1. Judges 17 introduces Micah. What stands out about his actions and his “worship”?

Leader Notes:

- He steals, then returns money → mixture of sin and partial repentance
- Creates idols and a personal shrine
- Appoints his own priest
- Religion is self-made and customized

2. What is wrong with Micah's setup—even though it looks spiritual?

Leader Notes:

- Idolatry (graven image)
- Self-appointed priesthood
- No submission to God's Word
- This is man-centered religion, not God-centered worship

3. What does the repeated phrase in 17:6 (and throughout these chapters) mean?

“In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”

Leader Notes:

- Not just political chaos—spiritual rebellion

- Everyone becomes their own authority
- This is the root issue behind everything that follows

4. In Judges 18, what are the tribe of Dan doing? What does this reveal?

Leader Notes:

- Seeking land outside God's allotment
- Taking what they want by force
- Stealing Micah's idols and priest
- Spiritual confusion + opportunism

5. Why is it significant that they take Micah's priest and idols with them?

Leader Notes:

- Treating religion as useful, not true
- God becomes a tool for success
- "Better to have a priest for a tribe..." (18:19) → pragmatic faith

6. What do chapters 17–18 together show us about the state of worship in Israel?

Leader Notes:

- Corrupted, distorted, self-serving
- No reverence for God's design
- Spiritual leadership is compromised

7. Judges 19 is one of the darkest chapters in Scripture. What stands out—and what is it meant to show us?

Leader Notes:

- Echoes Genesis 19 (Sodom)
- Abuse, violence, complete moral collapse
- Israel looks no different than the worst pagan nations
- This is intentional—it shows how far they've fallen

8. What is the response of Israel in 20:1–11? What seems right—and what might still be missing?

Leader Notes:

- Unity against evil (good)

- Desire for justice (good)
- But still little evidence of true repentance or seeking God deeply

9. Why do the Israelites initially lose battles in chapter 20, even though their cause seems just?

Leader Notes:

- They inquire of God—but may still be relying on themselves
- Justice without humility before God is incomplete
- God is exposing deeper issues in them

10. What changes in 20:26–28 before their eventual victory?

Leader Notes:

- Weeping, fasting, sacrifices
- Greater dependence on God
- This is closer to genuine repentance

11. In chapter 21, how do the Israelites try to fix the situation—and what does it reveal?

Leader Notes:

- More questionable decisions (abduction of women, etc.)
- Trying to solve problems with human wisdom
- Even their “solutions” are flawed

12. How does the book end—and why is that ending so important?

“Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”

Leader Notes:

- No resolution
- No restoration
- Leaves you longing for something more
- This ending is meant to feel incomplete and unsettling

Closing Application

- Where are you tempted to define right and wrong based on your own feelings or preferences?
- Are there areas where your “faith” has become shaped more by culture than by God’s Word?

- What does it look like to truly submit to God as King in your daily life?

Gospel Connection (Leader Emphasis)

This is where you bring the whole book together:

- Judges ends in chaos because there is no king
- God's people needed a righteous ruler—but they didn't have one

Point clearly to Jesus:

- Jesus is the true and better King
- He doesn't leave people to do what is right in their own eyes—He leads them in truth
- He brings order out of chaos, light into darkness, and righteousness into brokenness

A strong closing line:

"Judges ends with everyone doing what is right in their own eyes. The gospel begins with a King who shows us what is right—and gives us the power to live it."

Leader Tip (Final Week of the Series)

This is your moment to help people:

- Feel the weight of sin and cultural drift
- See how easily we mirror Israel
- Recognize the insufficiency of human leadership and effort

And then clearly point to:

- The necessity of a true King
- The beauty of Jesus' rule
- The hope of transformation, not just behavior change

Optional Final Reflection for Your Group

You could close the whole series with something like:

- Where have you seen yourself in the story of Judges?
- What has God exposed in your heart over these weeks?
- What would it look like to live fully under Jesus as your King moving forward?