

LIFEGROUP NOTES: JUDGES 17-21

As ever, please use (or discard!) these ideas as is most suitable for your group. Don't feel you have to use everything.

Sermon Summary: The closing chapters of Judges are marked by lawlessness, violence, and social disintegration. Faced with the nation's agony, the writer's implicit question is, "*Why* do these things happen?" His answer is that Israel had no king (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25). At first sight, this seems curious as Israel's later years under kingship were also often turbulent. However, in the light of Ruth 1:1 and 4:22, it seems likely that the author is thinking particularly of the Davidic model of kingship. David was "a man after God's own heart", who, in spite of his faults, pointed the nation to its *true* King, the Lord Himself, and ultimately to Jesus. The point being made by the author of Judges therefore is that godly rule leads to human flourishing, but "doing our own thing" leads to heartache.

FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Ch.17 is full of "religion" – but in what ways can we see here a corruption of Israel's faith (see vv.1-2, 3, 4, 5, 10-11, 13)? Consider ways in which people today who still call themselves "Christian" often show that they have little understanding of what following Christ really involves. How can we avoid emptying the Faith of its true content?
2. Chs.18-21 are shocking stories of violence, brutality, contempt for hospitality, and the breakdown of the nation's system of justice. In the light of these chapters, and of contemporary society, discuss the statement that "When we reject the blessing of living under God's rule, we must endure the curse of living under our own."
3. See ch.21:25. The irony was that Israel *did* have a King: God Himself. Yet His people did not trust or obey Him, in spite of many painful lessons and the wonderful demonstrations of God's saving grace. In what ways are we like them? Think of specific examples in your own life. Why do we find it so difficult to "trust and obey"? How can we ensure, individually and together, that we keep our feet on God's pathway?
4. Ch.21:25 again: implicit in this verse is a note of hope. There *will* be a king, and a brighter day. God will rule over His people. He does not give up on us. Reflect on God's faithfulness to His promises in the period of the Judges and in your own life. Where, in your own experience, do you have particular cause to be grateful for God's perseverance with you? How should you thank Him?

Responding in Prayer

- What has the book of Judges brought home to you? What will you hold on to from this book about God's purpose and promise? Pray about these things.

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