



LIFE GROUP LEADERS!

It's an exciting week here at the church, as we're gearing up for this new series! We've been looking forward to it for a while now. 1 & 2 Samuel are probably the most exciting narrative books in the Bible, and we're going to navigate the lives of Samuel, Saul, and David until March, together as a church family. The series title points us to where we're going to land – that David is simply a shadow of the One True King who the Lord is preparing His people to receive. This week, we're diving primarily into the "story behind the story." We'll be asking, what is happening in Israel when 1 Samuel opens, which launches us back to the book of Judges, where we'll see an overlap in time.

⇒ PREPARATION FOR YOUR FOURTH MEETING:

- The 4th week is upon us – and that means that we're rolling with strength into this new Fall Life Group Season. What I would like to ask each of you leaders to do this week, as you're preparing for this next meeting, is to take a close look at your ATTENDANCE – and do a few things:
 - Be sure that you are caught up with logging attendance or cancelling off the events where needed.
 - Be in touch, personally/directly, with those members of your who might have missed two or more of the first three meetings. This is important for a few reasons: (1) we want to be sure that they're ok! (2) we want to be sure that they plan on still attending, & (3) we want to be sure that they're getting the information and reminders.
- If you do need help with any of the above, please don't hesitate to reach back out to me.

⇒ ATTENDANCE:

- Please, each week, follow the BLUE button in the reminder email to fill out your attendance!!
- Remember, that we don't have a lot of measuring sticks for the health of this ministry, we rely on your feedback, and upon these attendance records.

⇒ PICTURES:

- I received a few pictures this week, and it was exciting to see people in action at the WARDROPE group!! Thanks, Bruce, for sharing!
- As your groups organize together – in your homes or out in the city on SERVE projects – please snap a pic or two and send them to me!

⇒ SERVE PROJECTS:

- Serving together is an important part of growing together! Head over [HERE](#) for a list of sites that we've pre-arranged. Pick a site and let me know what I can book for you and your group – remember, get your BLUE SERVE SHIRTS!
- Pastor Marcel wants to also invite our Life Groups to partner with the Mentor Groups in SUMMIT and EDGE youth groups, to hold up to the Lord students from Gateway. Let me know if you're keen to learn more!! It's a super neat way for our ministries to partner together.



GETTING TO KNOW YOU

LEADER NOTE: We always encourage you to start your meeting off in a light-hearted way, that encourages all your members to start talking, and to be given the chance to be heard! What we do here in the opening moments of our group, sets the stage for the coming discussion. These are the lowest risk questions! However, as your group gets more and more comfortable with the deeper conversations, limit your time here.

1. Does your family have a story about you that they always re-tell when you are together?

LEADER NOTE: You know those stories from Uncle Bill about the time he was hunting, and a bear walked up behind? Or that story of the fish that got away? Or that time a child freaked out a parent? Recall those delightful moments of family history together! This opening question might still take a little bit for your members to think about.

2. Who had a big influence on you as a kid or a teenager? How so?

LEADER NOTE: A little more of a serious question here, but one that is still simple for all your members to answer, but they might need a little time to think it through.



QUICK REVIEW

LEADER NOTE: These are two questions that have your group reflecting upon last Sunday's message. The first question will always be the same, and the second one is provided from our teaching pastor from the service.

1. Looking back at your notes from this week's teaching, was there anything that particularly caught your attention, challenged, or confused you??

LEADER NOTE: Lead by example of taking notes during the message and modelling the behavior of being prepared for your group time. Encourage your members at this point to grab a sermon guide from the tables by the doors at the auditorium, or to print a copy off from the Livestream, Online Bulletin, page on the church website.

2. This past weekend Pastor Justin noted how sin is not just "doing bad things" but is when "everyone does what is right in their own eyes" (Judges 17:6, 21:25). So, even any good thing we do could be motivated out of a love for the self, rather than God or our neighbor. Discuss with your group the hidden motivations of sin.

LEADER NOTE: Pastor Justin will also quote C.S. Lewis, when he talks about sin and hell. He said:

"...the real mark of hell is a sleepless, unsmiling concentration upon the self. We must understand hell is a place where everyone is perpetually concerned about his or her own dignity and advancement, where everybody always has a grievance, and where everybody lives in the deadly seriousness of envy and self-importance."

Encourage group members to consider the ways we may be blind to our own sinful desires, even in the way we do good. Consider the main character of the story, Micah, whose name means "Who is like God?" who makes a shrine (an image of God) as a way to please God. He sees himself doing something "good" even though it is "sin." What are the ways we fall into similar self-deception today?



SCRIPTURE REVIEW

LEADER NOTE: In these initial weeks of this semester, follow these three questions as scripture is read. Encourage your members to even consider these three questions as they approach scripture on their own time! It's good practice and provides a good and helpful devotional pattern of reflection upon what scripture teaches.

READ Judges 17:1-13

1. What does this passage say about the character of God?
2. What does this passage say about fallen humanity and the world we are in?
3. Where does this passage specifically expose sin or unbelief in my own life? How does it specifically call me to change my thinking, redirect my affections, replace behaviors, and trust in my Savior?



DIGGING DEEPER

1. READ Exodus 19:1-6. The nation of Israel had not been in the wilderness too long, and they were already beginning to forget their purpose as a nation. What was that purpose?

LEADER NOTE: Just five chapters earlier, the Nation crossed the Red Sea on dry ground, and they were reminded that they were chosen by God for a purpose of worshipping Him and letting the nations around know that He is God! Flip back a little further in your Bible and point your group to the calling of Abram in Genesis 12, where God outlines just how He desires to use the nation of Israel to bless the nations around. Now Here, in Exodus, we're seeing the early stages of their journey to the Promised Land, where they were to settle, and be an example for the world around.

- READ Exodus 19:8.** The Israelites are quick to agree to the covenant with God, yet it was not long until they failed to uphold their side. What could they have done in order to not only remember, but to live out their calling?

LEADER NOTE: It is recorded in Exodus 15:24, that just only after three days of being in the wilderness, that they started to grumble to God about the lack of pure drinking water. Their first instinct was to complain, rather than ask the Lord for help! God in spite of their complaining, in His abundant mercy and love for His children provided water for the nation. He also in the same moment recommitted Himself to them, He tells them in Exodus 15:26, "*If you will diligently listen to the voice of the Lord your God, and do that is right in His eyes, and give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians.*" What could this nation have done to remember the words of God? It's becoming evident that this nation perpetually forgets the words of the Lord. They could have started each of their days reflecting and recounting the words. They could have set up altars that pointed them to the Lord. They could have lived out certain patterns, with certain guidelines that emphasized God's care. *Which the Lord commanded them to all do!* And yet, they still forgot.

2. READ Deuteronomy 28:1-6. Life sounds pretty great under God's blessings! Much of what is recorded between Exodus 19 and Deuteronomy 28 are God's instructions for His people. What made it so difficult for this nation to follow God? Why was that the case?

LEADER NOTE: As we took note of in the prior question, the Lord provided abundant opportunities for the Israelite nation to live into His blessings, as opposed to experiencing curses. Being careful to not justify their actions but consider the challenge that living in the wilderness must have been. Water was far. Food was only quail and manna. Patterns of

life were difficult. While this pattern was supposed to point them to God, it drove them away. When life got hard, they leaned on their own abilities, instead of God's provisions. Their mindset and attitude were off the mark as they worried only about themselves and their own day to day existence, then upon the purpose and direction that the Lord was taking them in.

- Considering life in the 21st century, and the call for us to emulate Christ's life, are we any different than the Israelites?

LEADER NOTE: Flash forward to the turn of BC to AD, when Christ arrived. While we understand that we're not under the same Old Testament law that the Israelites were bound to, we are to model His example. Jesus teaches succinctly that example in the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 5-7, where we see quickly that life is about our hearts posture and our motives, more than about our actions. Because our actions will flow out of our hearts. Yet, that is extraordinarily a difficult task still for us today. While our situation is vastly different, our sinful nature isn't.

DISCUSSION NOTE: Encourage your members as you grapple with the Israelites reality and forgetfulness, to look to the present and our own realities, of how quickly we forget our purpose because of our more general sense of selfishness and independence. Ask your members to share how in their patterns now, they remember the works of God.

- **READ Deuteronomy 28:15-19.** The rest of this chapter outlines the totality of curses. Yet the Israelites still did "*what was right in their own eyes.*" We learn through scripture that the Lord disciplines those who He loves (Prov 3:12, Rev 3:19), yet commits to destruction those who remain evil (Ezek 25:15-17, Col 3:6, Rom 12:19). How do we navigate all this?

LEADER NOTE: This perhaps is the most difficult question we'll navigate together in this study, as it raises the question of ever present good and evil – in our own hearts – and God's response to the Israelites, and to us. The Israelites were presented this knowledge of how God desired to bless them, and how they could receive it all; they were told of the potential curses and how to avoid them. With all this information in front of them, they made a choice, like the one that Adam and Eve (that we'll look at next) made in Genesis 3, which lead to their expulsion from the Garden, and the complete fall of humanity. There must be consequences for our actions. As we saw earlier in Exodus 19:8, the Israelites committed themselves to serving the Lord, and now, dire ramifications are outlined if they fall short. This is a tension that we live in – we are wired to honor and glory the Lord, and to live for Him, however, our hearts are very easily distracted by the world around us. How do we, in the words of Jesus, live in this world, and be not of it?

3. READ Judges 2:20-3:7. Like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, left to their own devices, the Israelites choose to walk apart from God. Why didn't God directly insert Himself into the story at any point throughout the book of Judges, in order to stop the chaos?

LEADER NOTE: So often, we want God to show up and simply, by His mighty hand, lift us up out of difficult situations, and plant us in places of health and security. But as David sees himself in Psalm 23, that the Lord journeys with him through the valley, as opposed to lifting him up out of it. God makes Himself present within our challenges, guiding us back to Himself. However, here, God has outlined that He's tired of their neglect to hold up their side of the covenant, and finally he allows their enemies to overtake them, and allows the curses pronounced in Deuteronomy 28, to become a reality as we read here in Judges, "*in order to test Israel ... whether they will take care to walk in the way of the Lord ... or not.*" Consider who God would be, if He outlined these blessings and curses, and didn't follow through with His promises? God would be less than the God He is and would lose all power and influence amongst us humans. He'd be less than trustworthy. That's what the story of Micah and his mother in Judges 17 is showing us, that when we start making God in our own image, He becomes less than who He really is. What would Adam and Eve have learned if they were allowed to stay in the Garden? What would the Israelites have discovered about God if He cast out their enemies with a swift swing of His own arm, rather than with their own armies? They wouldn't have learned all the needed to, and we would quickly miss the point of living in His love.



TAKING IT HOME

READ Judges 17:6 & 21:25. These two texts bookend these five chapters, which describe in great detail just how far the nation of Israel walked away from God, the One True Leader that they'll ever need. Today, how have we as a society done the same with God? How have we done the same with the leadership that God has placed over us?

LEADER NOTE: Today, we might not be making idols of stone, wood, or precious metals, but we are certainly making similar decisions as we consider how we our attention towards our bank accounts, our things, and our time – and as a result, we push God to the sidelines and fringes of our lives. Now, those are all good and important elements of our lives that need our attention and consideration, but like we explored last week in our journey through Luke 17:11-19, the difference between the nine lepers and the one, is that the one returned *first* to Christ in utter gratitude, while the other nine ran off to fulfill their selfish desires to re-enter society. We need to return to Christ first, in gratitude for all that He has done for us, and from there enjoy the blessings that He's granted us.

Be sure to close your meeting in a word of prayer holding up each other's joys and sorrows to the Lord.

Also, take a moment to also reflect upon our church community and just how far we've come, and how many blessings we've been enjoying over the last 73 years. On Friday, we posted on Facebook, commenting on the Lord's faithfulness since Gateway met together for the first time. We pause and recognize that this church community began when Christians gathered in their homes to pray and ask God about what He desired to do in and through them.



PERSONAL REFLECTION

LEADER NOTE: This following question is completely optional, and is intended for the participants' personal reflection. But do feel free to explore using the question within your groups meeting.

READ Psalm 121. This Psalm was used to point the eyes of its audience beyond the hill tops that surrounded the lowlands of Israel, up into the heavens where they saw God residing, while they climbed the hill to Jerusalem on their way to Passover Feast. How have you seen the Lord's guidance and protection in your life in your coming and going?