

An Overview of Families in Book of Judges: *Unless The Lord Builds the House*. . . (Ps. 127:1)

For Students: Each lesson identifies a family in the book of Judges, the verses which inform us of the history and spiritual condition of that family, the author's comments on those conditions, and questions to urge the student to consider and apply lessons from those conditions. The more time and thought each student invests before the class, the more the entire class and each individual will benefit. To further benefit your family, invest 10-15 minutes discussing the application questions with your spouse before class (In most lessons, the application questions ask you to identify some strength or weakness of the family we studied and then to make some application of that. Lessons 2-13 end by asking "What verses (from Proverbs or the New Testament) relate to the topics raised by a study of this family in Israel?"). If your spouse is not a Christian or is not in this class, request their input in your preparation. Parents may find some use for these lessons in family Bible studies because children are naturally drawn to the drama of the people and events in the book of Judges.

For Teachers: These lessons are organized to encourage participation from the class, so prepare accordingly, considering the preparation you expect the class to make ahead of time and to offer during class. If you expect to receive little participation, then your answers to the questions will need to be of a sufficient length and quality to fill the class period with substance and not just reading the question and offering a one-sentence answer.

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13. Where Did They Go Wrong?: The Families of Benjamin 21:14, 20-23

#1 A Generation Arose. . .

Beside the individual decision of each citizen, the family has the greatest impact on the direction of a nation. The direction of the Israelites in the book of Judges is obvious, and when we pay attention to the families described in Judges, we are not surprised by their departure for God was neglected in the home.

Every family during the time of the judges had the law of God available to them. The Levites not only worked at the tabernacle but were spread throughout Israel (Num. 35:1-8). Part of their work was teaching the law to the people (Deut. 17:9-11; 2 Chron. 17:7-9). Also, every male Israelite was to travel to the tabernacle three times every year which provided time for teaching and remembering (Deut. 16:16). God's law was available and sufficient to establish and strengthen their faith in God in every generation (**REMEMBER THIS** and review it at the beginning of every lesson in this series, except lesson 8). For the next several weeks, we'll study the faith and failures that we find in the book of Judges, beginning with the generation that did not know God.

1. Read Judges 2:7 This generation had not seen all the things which Joshua's generation had seen God do. Without seeing those things, how could they know with certainty what God had done?

2. The generation which did not know God was the children of Joshua's generation:

- Name some the grandparents of this generation. If you can, think both of some godly and wicked people.

Godly-

Ungodly-

- Name some of the parents of this generation. If you can, think both of some godly and wicked people.

Godly-

Ungodly-

- Name a lesson the younger generation should have learned from one of these people.

3. Was Joshua's generation mostly faithful or unfaithful to God?

4. Review Joshua 23-24. Was this *generation that arose* completely untaught of the Lord and His deeds among them?

5. Judges 2:7-10 serves as a warning to whom today? What does it warn them of?

6. From Judges 3:5-6, what was one of the factors that contributed to, or was a result of, this generation not knowing the Lord?

7. When an Israelite intermarried, who was involved in that sinful decision?

8. Each generation has to decide whether or not they will seek and know the Lord. Name something that the generation that is after your generation needs from you and your peers, that will help them to seek the Lord after you (and your generation) are gone?

#2 The Influence of Godly Relatives: Othniel (Judg. 1:12-15; 3:9-11; 1 Chron. 4:13-15)
(From lesson 1, remember the many ways that God's law is available to this family)

Othniel was Caleb's nephew. Could Othniel forget that his uncle was one of the two spies who stood alongside Joshua in declaring confidence that God would lead them into the land? Caleb was among the few from that generation who entered Canaan. Caleb made a bold request, that was granted by Joshua when they entered Canaan, and he conquered a family of giants, the descendants of Anak (Josh. 14:6-15; 15:13-19; Num. 13:33). Surely Othniel's faith was strengthened by having an uncle like this and having a wife raised by Caleb.

1. What do we know about this family's attitude toward God and His law?
2. Describe how what we know of Othniel's family, primarily by Caleb, would have helped prepare him to be a judge and deliverer for Israel.
3. Though it is not our custom to marry cousins, how would Othniel's life and faith have been affected by having Caleb's daughter as his wife?
4. When "the in-laws" (whether father/mother or son/daughter) show themselves to be Christians of spiritual maturity (akin to Caleb), what unique opportunities are available to that family?
5. What verses (from Proverbs or the New Testament) relate to the topics raised by a study of this family in Israel?

#3 Children Leading Parents: Joash and Gideon 6:13-32

(From lesson 1, remember the many ways that God's law is available to this family)

At the time that the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, how would you describe the leadership of Joash, as a father?

We are not told whether Gideon participated in the false worship of Joash, but in verse 13, we learn that Gideon's faith is weakening. He is having doubts. He believes God has forsaken Israel and does not understand that it is because of the rebellion of Israel. He has heard of what God did in the past and does not know how to explain the present absence of those miracles of deliverance. Whether it was during this time of oppression or later, once Gideon was leading Israel, his brothers were killed by these enemies (Judg. 8:18-19).

By the commandment from God, Gideon confronted his father's false religion. We cannot imagine what questions and fears Gideon had, but they were the kind that made him obey God at night. Probably to Gideon's surprise, Joash seems to accept the rebuke, so much so that he mocks the god he had been promoting by the new name he gave to his son (v32). We are not told of Joash's faith thereafter, but at the least, Gideon's faith gave Joash (and the rest of his family) the opportunity to return to the true God from idols. Gideon's life thereafter, in leading Israel to victory, gave them further reasons and opportunities to return.

1. What factors are affecting Gideon's faith, in verses 11-13?
2. What did Gideon and the rest of his family have available to them, that was sufficient to establish or strengthen their faith in God?
3. What did they do with what was available to them?
4. How was Gideon's faith being affected by Joash's failure to lead his home like Deut. 6:1-9 instructed him?
5. How are children today similarly affected today (even in homes where the parents are Christians)?
6. Name any other strength or weakness in Joash's family and the effect of similar strengths or weaknesses today.
7. What verses (from Proverbs or the New Testament) relate to the topics raised by a study of this family in Israel?

#4 Father May Lead & Mislead: Gideon 8:18-23, 27-32

(From lesson 1, remember the many ways that God's law is available to this family)

Gideon's faith must have been at an all-time high as he captured Zebah and Zalmunna. Though it is hard for us to imagine and accept, by having his son present on this occasion, Gideon is training his children as God instructed in Deuteronomy 6. Jether is seeing that God has delivered Israel from these powerful kings, who killed his uncles. And though he is not prepared to do the work a leader must do (v20), he is learning.

In verses 22-23, when Gideon is offered the throne, that throne is offered to his children. It is common that parents want their children to have a better life than they did, and here Gideon has the opportunity to ensure his sons and grandsons will be leaders in Israel. Notice that Gideon not only leads Israel in the right direction by his reply, but he is also making a statement to his children.

1. Name some reasons that, as a parent, Gideon might have been tempted to accept this offer.

2. Name some lessons Gideon's children learn by this decision.

The golden ephod *became a snare to Gideon and to his house* (v27). The golden ephod had no inherent power. When it became a snare that was because there was some weakness in the ones who were "ensnared" by it. We do not know how the golden ephod was originally used or later abused, but in some way, Gideon must have changed and so did his house. Did he change first and then lead his family into the snare or did his family change first and mislead him? We cannot be sure, but whatever the problem was, we know God's solution to the problem was available.

(Answer the following questions considering everything in this lesson, not just the preceding paragraph)

3. What do we know about this Gideon's attitude toward God and His law?

4. Name a strength or a weakness of this family.

5. How are families today affected by this same strength or weakness?

6. Name something that does not begin as, but becomes, a snare to families today. (Especially you who are older—reflect on your life to help those who are younger to recognize possible snares. You who are younger, listen!)

7. What verses (from Proverbs or the New Testament) relate to the topics raised by a study of this family in Israel?

#5 The Problem of Rivalry: Gideon's Family 9:1-21

(From lesson 1, remember the many ways that God's law is available to this family)

Polygamy and concubines in the Old Testament, especially among people of great faith, is difficult to explain. Clearly, from the beginning it was not God's plan. Clearly, it violates God's law today (1 Cor. 7:2; Matt. 19:4-6). Rivalry is a constant problem in these homes. Beside Gideon, name another family in the Bible wherein there were multiple spouses. Was rivalry a problem in that home? If so, among whom?

Gideon had many wives and seventy sons. He also had at least one concubine and at least one son from that relationship (8:30-31). Our society would call this a "blended family." We are not given a detailed history of the family of Gideon or the relationship between Gideon and Abimelech—we only see the fruit. Gideon declared the Lord as king, but Israel soon turned to Baal-Berith, including the family of Gideon's concubine (8:23, 33; 9:3-4). If Abimelech knew that Gideon had once been offered the chance to rule, he clearly did not approve of his father's decision for it was his goal to reign. To some degree, Abimelech made himself a rival against Gideon. Though Gideon was dead, Abimelech pursued the position his father, based on principle, refused. Ignoring the convictions of his father, he went in the opposite direction, ultimately, making himself a rival of God.

Clearly, Abimelech made himself a rival of his brothers. Again, we do not have a record of the interaction of these brothers during their youth—we only see the fruit. We are not told that Gideon's sons were reigning, but Abimelech indicates that they are, or at least might (v2). Jotham's fable about the trees making offer after offer to different plants to rule over them makes us wonder whether after Gideon declined the throne, Israel offered it to other people. What we know is that Abimelech viewed his brothers as threats to his goals and so he went *to their hometown* and killed them all, except Jotham who escaped.

Jotham seems to have accepted the kingship of the LORD and to prophesy of the eventual, mutual destruction of Abimelech and the men of Shechem. It is possible that Jotham had some of the conviction of Gideon and would not be silent while Abimelech pursued what Gideon declined. If this was Jotham's conviction, he could not be a friend with Abimelech and God, even though Abimelech was family.

1. What do we know about the attitude of Gideon's family toward God and His law?
2. How would you describe Abimelech?
3. How would you describe Jotham? For example, is he bitter, jealous, sinfully angry, righteously angry, etc.?
4. Using either your answer to question 2 or 3, discuss how families today are affected by someone who behaves like Abimelech or Jotham.
5. What verses (from Proverbs or the New Testament) relate to the topics raised by a study of this family in Israel?

#6 Family Life Complicated By Adultery: Gilead and Jephthah 11:1-11

(From lesson 1, remember the many ways that God's law is available to this family)

Verses 1-2 From what we are told, Gilead did not have many wives or any concubines. His life was complicated because on at least one occasion, he visited a harlot. When that happened, Israel was serving the Baals and Ashtoreths (10:6). These "gods" were not very morally strict (which was probably one reason Israel repeatedly served them), so this may have been more socially acceptable than it is today. But even when such things are socially accepted, that does not mean that they are right or beneficial. So at some point, a new son joins this family. How do you explain that to the children? How does that affect the daily life of the family? This is the confusion and chaos that was likely repeated in families throughout Israel every time they began serving false gods.

Verses 3-8 The treatment of Jephthah in his adult life was probably similar to what he received in his youth. And to whom has Jephthah been taught to turn--to the Baals and Ashtoreths? For some reason in the past, Jephthah's father went to a (morally) worthless woman, likely for selfish pleasure. In this situation, Jephthah finds worthless men, offering pleasure of a different sort but aimed at pleasing the same source---self. And when the family and neighbors of Jephthah's youth find themselves in trouble, they turn to a man engaged in morally worthless business--Jephthah!

Verses 9-11 Jephthah now has the opportunity to possess what he could not while with the raiders---the respect of or power over the people who drove him from home. For that opportunity, Jephthah accepts their offer. Considering the history and character of all involved, this sounds like a recipe for disaster, but it isn't. Jephthah conquers the enemy and Jephthah is so well respected that when he carried out the vow he made, *the daughters of Israel went four days each year to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite* (11:32, 40). What explains this change? Faith (Heb. 11:32-34). Somewhere in this story, Jephthah turns from the chaos of his family and the sin of his life and obtains a good testimony through faith (Heb. 11:39). No matter what wicked and chaotic things happened in the home of your youth or in your past life, through faith, God changes lives.

1. What do we know about the attitude of Gilead and his family toward God and His law?
2. Compare Gilead as a father with Jephthah as a father.
3. Compare Jephthah in his youth (verse 3) with Jephthah's daughter in her youth (verses 34-39).
4. For people today who have had a father like Gilead, discuss the hope they can have by learning of Jephthah's life and faith.
5. What verses (from Proverbs or the New Testament) relate to the topics raised by a study of this family in Israel?

#7 The Need for Steadfast Parents: Samson's Parents 13-14:11

(From lesson 1, remember the many ways that God's law is available to this family)

From chapter 13, it appears that Manoah and his wife are among the best parents of Israel. God chooses them to raise a son who *shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines* (v5). When Manoah's wife tells him what she was told, he prays a prayer worthy of imitation *O my Lord, ...teach us what we shall do for the child who will be born* (v8). When Manoah fears they have seen God and will die, his wife shows herself to be a calm, clear-thinking woman by replying *If the Lord had desired to kill us, ...nor would He have shown us all these things, nor would He have told us such things as these at this time* (v22-23). Surely Samson heard this story in his youth. He claimed to have been a Nazarite from his youth, so clearly his parents taught him what that meant and, to some degree, he accepted it and was blessed by the LORD (16:17; 13:24). A family like this will always produce children who always grow in faith, right? Is it possible that this home is not as perfect as it appears? When Samson requested that his parents get him a wife from the Philistines, his parents objected at first (14:3). Samson's reply sounds unlike someone growing in faith (*Get her for me, for she pleases me well*). Soon thereafter we read that *his father went down to the woman* (v10). Is that what God taught them to "do for the child who will be born"? This looks like parents seeking to please, not lead, their son. Whether the rest of Samson's life is the result of or in spite of the training of his parents, we can find things to imitate and avoid from Manoah and his wife.

1. What do we know about the attitude of Manoah and his wife toward God and His law?
2. Name some things God expected all Israelite parents to "do for the child who will be born"?
3. Review the conversation between Samson and his parents in 14:3 and the ensuing decisions in 14:5, 10. What is lacking in these words and deeds?
4. Every society has different customs related to selecting a spouse for marriage. In our society, what does the Bible say that helps parents before or during the time when their children are selecting a spouse?
5. What verses (from Proverbs or the New Testament) relate to the topics raised by a study of this family in Israel?

#8 The Dating Game: Samson's Women 14-16:20

Samson, like others in Hebrews 11, obtained a good testimony through faith (Heb. 11:32, 39). Obviously, that does not mean they never sinned but that faith played a prominent role in their life and decisions. Without the testimony of Hebrews 11, we might view Samson in a different way, but those words remind us that the failures of Samson were overcome by faith.

For a variety of reasons, Samson remained unmarried until his death, so there's no spouse or children from which to draw lessons. But there are potential spouses in his life, from which we can learn.

Samson's first marriage proposal was offered to a woman of Timnah in Philistia. Despite his parents' objections, Samson was pleased by what he saw and heard and pursued her. Having been threatened by her people, she cried and begged for seven days for Samson to tell her the answer to his riddle. When she betrayed him by telling others the answer to his riddle, potentially costing him the price of sixty articles of clothing, he still pursued her. In the end, he was denied the chance to marry her.

We are briefly told that he went in to a harlot in Gaza but nothing else is said of her (16:1). Gaza was a chief city of the Philistines. No doubt he could have found a harlot in many places, so his choice of going to Gaza shows he was brave (if he went trusting in God) or arrogant (if he went for selfish, sensual reasons).

His final choice in women was Delilah. She was offered money to betray Samson and did her best. Samson did not spend as much time learning about her, as he did learning to love her (16:4), so her moral flaws, which would likely not be well-hidden, easily destroyed him. We are told that she pestered, pressed, and vexed him and this persuaded him to "tell her all his heart." It is probably good that Samson was never able to marry her—we can only imagine what their children would have seen in a home like this.

If children in Israel were anything like most children today, Samson would have been viewed as a hero—most children fantasize about strength and victories such as Samson had. We can only hope that the greatest influence he had in Israel was by the times when he displayed the faith which gained him a good testimony from God. His relationships with women do not appear to have been his occasions of faith, nor occasions for useful influence.

1. What do we know about the attitude of Samson toward God and His law?
2. Name a strength or a weakness of Samson or the families of the women he wanted.
3. Read 14:16-17 and 16:15-16 and then discuss how these women said love should cause Samson to act.
4. When have you seen the word "love" similarly used today? How should we react on those occasions?
5. Every society has different customs related to selecting a spouse for marriage. In our society, what does the Bible say that helps children before or during the time when they are selecting a spouse?
6. What verses (from Proverbs or the New Testament) relate to the topics raised by a study of this family in Israel?

#9 The Hand That Rocks the Cradle: Micah's Mother 17:2-3

(From lesson 1, remember the many ways that God's law is available to this family)

The final section of the book of Judges gives us insight into the conditions of many families in Israel. These events occurred early in the period of the Judges, so this shows us what was happening among the common people whom the judges were rescuing and trying to lead. It also shows the morals of people who followed the Baals and Ashtoreths—the kind of behavior for which the Canaanites were removed from their land (Gen. 15:16). As Israel imitated this behavior, they were also removed from the land. What do homes look like, which bring the long suffering of God with a nation to an end? You will see in this lesson and those which follow.

Mother saving money for images We do not know the time required or how difficult it was for this woman to save this amount of money. We do know it was a significant enough amount for her to pronounce a curse on the unknown thief. One way we show what we value is by where we spend our money. What does the amount of money you spend in various ways say about your priorities? In this home, it seems that religion had a high place of priority. Sadly, all that devotion was dedicated to imaginary gods.

- What were some of the ways God told Israel to use their money that would be neglected when money was saved and spent on images?

Mother speaking like the world Did you notice that Micah's mother said she dedicated the money *to the LORD...* to make a carved and molded image? Remember that "LORD" was one of the specific names of the God of Israel. She is using the LORD's name but applying it to an idol just like Israel did at Mt. Sinai (Ex. 32:4-5). She was using the words God revealed and approved of but in a way God did not reveal, nor approve of. When children hear this growing up, they have no idea what that word *really* means.

- Why does it matter what we think words mean and whether or not we use words in the right way, especially when talking about spiritually-related subjects? Give an example of a word, or words, which are commonly misused resulting in confusion.

Mother imitating the world Where did Micah's mom get the idea to make an image? We can only imagine what other ideas she borrowed from the same source. This affected not only what was and was not said in this home (creation of the heavens and earth, promises to Abraham and his descendants, the purpose and process of Israel obtaining Canaan) but also what was and was not done (Sabbath, circumcision, Passover). We are not told in detail what Micah's mother said and did in place of these things, but sometimes it is what is *lacking* in a home that has the greatest impact.

They didn't do everything wrong Micah admitted his guilt, and his mother forgave him. Would you criticize and condemn the teachings and practices of a religion whose followers showed honesty and forgiveness? Is that enough to show that they know God? To some people, this is all that God really cares about. While their conduct toward each other was admirable at times, what can be said about their conduct toward the LORD?

1. What do we know about the attitude of Micah's mother toward God and His law?

2. Name some lessons we learn from this family about false religion then and today?

3. What verses (from Proverbs or the New Testament) relate to the topics raised by a study of this family in Israel?

#10 When Father Thinks He Knows Best: Micah and His Sons 17:4-5, 11-13

(From lesson 1, remember the many ways that God's law is available to this family)

Micah appears to be a wealthy man, having enough money to build the shrine, provide all the related items, and provide salary and room/board for the Levite. Before the Levite arrived, Micah consecrated one of his sons to be his priest. We lack the details but this shines a light on the depths of darkness into which Micah had fallen. Whether Micah is an extreme or a typical example of the wickedness of the Israelites, in either case, something like this would have brought immediate punishment during the days of Moses or Joshua. What had Micah taught his sons, during their youth, so that at some point one of them accepts his father's consecration to be priest? Might he have reasoned "Moses didn't say not to consecrate non-Levites" (which is true and which makes it sinful, Heb. 7:14). What is the need for a priest from Levi, if man can consecrate his own priest? Surely his sons saw, as easily as we do, that Micah is inventing his own laws. If he can do this, so can they in their future homes and families. Thus, generation after generation does not know the Lord.

Last, we are told that Micah said *Now I know that the LORD will be good to me, since I have a Levite as priest!* In the days that followed, Micah would believe that all the positive events of life were a sign of the LORD's approval and possibly his sons accepted this as proof. Such is the case when man declares to God how God will show His approval in their life (as people today may say "I asked God for a job and found one---I know He hears my prayers" despite their life of ongoing sin).

When the Danites came and took his shrine and priest (18:19-20), I wonder how he interpreted those events and what he told his sons. When father thinks he always knows best and defies God, the next generation will typically go even further with that thinking.

1. What do we know about the attitude of Micah toward God and His law?
2. Name some likely influences on Micah's ideas of God, worship, and conduct in general.
3. Name some lessons Micah's children learned from him by what happened in this chapter.
4. Name some ways that people today have a view of "religion" similar to Micah's.
5. What verses (from Proverbs or the New Testament) relate to the topics raised by a study of this family in Israel?

#11 “That Could Never Happen In Our Family”: The Levite and His Concubine 19:1-10, 22-28; 20:4-5
(From lesson 1, remember the many ways that God’s law is available to this family)

The practice of having concubines, and the problems that it brought, is consistent throughout the Old Testament. We know little about the faithfulness of this Levite. Death was the punishment for harlotry under God’s law, but we are not surprised to see God’s law neglected and ignored during this period. We assume this family, like most do, had a happy beginning and could never imagine the future recorded here. Somehow this family fell into constant chaos, with both the Levite and his concubine wounding each other.

Without knowing more about the Levite, the concubine, or the occasion of her harlotry, its difficult to say whether he was wise for wanting her back. After four months, he decided to persuade her to return and it “feels good” to read that he tenderly appealed to her, she welcomed his words, and she decided to return with him. If spouses today who are wronged, could speak as he did to her, maybe fewer homes would be poisoned by the root of bitterness.

The concubine’s father is more of a mystery. Upon what conditions he welcomed his daughter back, we do not know—whether he was the “my daughter can do no wrong”-type or sincerely trying to help her. Wouldn’t the best kind of “help” he could offer be that which would help lead to reconciliation with her husband?

The offer of verse 25 shows that the people of Gibeah were not the only ones with some corrupted views. The hosts offer (v24) is often explained as being the result of their society’s expectations of hospitality and protecting guests, and we recall Lot making a similar offer (Gen. 19:8), but this does not explain why the Levite was willing to surrender his concubine (whom he had diligently sought to retrieve). Clearly this solution was not the result of what God had revealed about family and the man’s duty to lead and provide. He likely chose this solution either for mere self-preservation or according to the influence of society. Either way, this is one of the effects upon the family when men do not know God and instead do what is right in their own eyes (2:10; 21:25). There is no evidence of concern for her as or after he sends her out. He apparently went to bed, got some sleep, and prepared to leave the next morning only to have his path to his donkey blocked by her limp body (v27). Are you surprised later, when he gave his angry report of these events, he failed to mention how the men of the city were able to get his concubine to ravish her?

1. What do we know about the attitude of the Levite or his concubine toward God and His law?
2. Summarize the concubine’s conduct toward the Levite, from the beginning to the end of their relationship.
3. Summarize the Levite’s conduct toward the concubine, from the beginning to the end of their relationship.
4. The Bible is full of examples which show that “family wounds” are not easily healed—name several families of the Bible illustrating this and the type of wound that family received. [The application is obvious---these same wounds are constantly inflicted today]
5. What verses (from Proverbs or the New Testament) relate to the subject of how families can recover from wounds inflicted from within?

#12 Father Shows His Love: The Ephraimite host in Gibeah 19:17-25

(From lesson 1, remember the many ways that God's law is available to this family)

The Ephraimite in Gibeah reminds us that people drift from the Lord in different ways. Compared with the men of the city, the Ephraimite seems to be a light in a dark city, but we quickly find out that he too does what is right in his own eyes under some circumstances. He believed it was right to open his home to and generously provide for strangers in his city and that what the men of Gibeah wanted to do was wicked *and he told them so*. Were these beliefs and decisions learned from God's law and motivated by faith? We might answer, "Yes," until we read that his first offer to the perverted men was his virgin daughter and his female guest, with the words, *Humble them, and do with them as you please* (v24). We prefer not to imagine the look on the face of these two women upon hearing this offer. What message does this send to the daughter about the depth of her father's love for her?

After the Levite voluntarily took his concubine to the perverted men, things settled down around the Ephraimite's house. As far as we know, the Ephraimite (like the Levite) went on to bed, showing no concern through the night or in the morning for his female guest and unaware that he himself committed an outrage of a different kind. Could this home have ever been the same? Though they probably never wanted to talk about it, this must have been an unforgettable, dark night in the history of this family. Without the aid of the God of justice and forgiveness, the emotional and spiritual wounds of this night exceeded the physical ones.

1. What is implied about the Ephraimite's attitude toward or knowledge of God and His law?
2. What do these events tell us about how the Ephraimite viewed ("in his own eyes") himself, his daughter, and the people of Gibeah?
3. Maybe this family never talked about this night again, in an effort to forget about it. What is usually the result of trying to hide painful memories left by sin?
4. What solution does the gospel offer and urge regarding the painful memories of our own sin?
5. What solution does the gospel offer and urge regarding the painful memories of the sins of others which wound us?
6. What verses (from Proverbs or the New Testament) relate to the topics raised by a study of this family in Israel?

#13 Where Did They Go Wrong?: The Families of Benjamin 19:22, 25; 20:12-14; 21:14, 20-23
(From lesson 1, remember the many ways that God's law is available to this family)

The second judge of Israel, Ehud, was from the tribe of Benjamin (3:15). Deborah praised Benjamin for participating in the battle against Sisera (5:14). But the end of the book of Judges records dark days in this tribe which must have occurred after the brighter days of Ehud and Deborah.

The city of Gibeah was in the territory of Benjamin (19:11-30). Throughout the book of Judges, we ask ourselves, "How could things get *that bad*?" and that question arises again. Clearly things were not always this bad in Gibeah. Most likely, if we knew more about the Jebusites or other native tribes who were not driven out of the land (1:21), we would learn more about the causes. We must remember that each person in Gibeah, even the most perverted, came from a godly or ungodly home and chose to accept or reject what they learned there. These people did not invent their perverted ways—they borrowed them from someone else (and possibly perverted what they saw even more). They were doing what had been done to them or what they had witnessed being done to others. Usually, the first exposure to these types of perversion is in the home, often at a young age.

As surprising as the behavior of the Gibeahites is, we should be equally surprised that the tribe of Benjamin is willing to go to war against the rest of Israel in order to defend the people of Gibeah (20:12-13). This tells us of another major compromise in the mind of this tribe—most of them did not practice this type of behavior, but they were not willing to condemn it. This makes us wonder what other things had been happening in Benjamin that were being both unpunished and defended. Read Romans 1:32.

After the tribe of Benjamin is almost annihilated, Israel forms two plans to save them from extinction. Consider the kind of homes these plans created:

1. 21:8-14 Can you imagine being one of these virgins? It would take a Job-like faith for any of them to be happily married—remember the kind of men they are marrying! Can you imagine the story that was told when their children asked "Daddy, how did you meet and marry Momma?" or "Momma, where do your parents live?" Without the law of the Lord to convert the soul, make the simple man wise, rejoice the heart, and enlighten the eyes (Ps. 19:7-8), a home that begins in chaos will typically continue down that path in other ways.

2. 21:20-23 How many of these families celebrated their wedding anniversary (if they did that back then)? How many of these families taught their children that marriage, and the spouse given in marriage, is a gift from God (Prov. 18:22)? Without the LORD as the shepherd of their family they wanted (lacked), they had no green pastures or still waters, their soul could not be restored, and they were led in the paths of untold unrighteousness (Ps.23:1-3). And when they walked through the valley of the shadow of death, what comforted them?

1. Choose any group of people from the tribe of Benjamin mentioned above. What was their attitude toward God and His law?

2. The Gibeahites were the minority in the tribe of Benjamin—what was the more devastating sin in Benjamin?

3. If the way the elders of the congregation led Israel was the way they led their homes, what were their wives and children learning?

4. The leadership needed in the local church and home are similar (1 Tim. 3:5). Name some of the similarities.

5. What verses (from Proverbs or the New Testament) relate to the topics raised by a study of this family in Israel?