**Weeks 9 and 10 (Chapters 19-21)**

Ice breaker: Have you ever made a promise that you refused to break? What helps you with keeping your promises made to other people?

Well we have come to our final study containing the last three chapters of Judges. What a wild ride this has been. We have seen the cycle of what Lydia refers to the downward spiral repeated time and time again- Israel turns to false gods, Israel is plundered, Israel is in distress, the Lord raises up deliverers and works through the judges, once there is ease Israel returns to idols and once again God brings oppression. Woven throughout the book of Judges we see Gods faithfulness for his chosen people despite their sin and wandering far from Him.

Week 9 opens with a Levite taking a concubine for himself. Even though priests could marry they were to marry a virgin (Lev 21 v 7 and 13 &14). More thoughts on concubines in the old testament in an article from Got Question. <https://www.gotquestions.org/concubine-concubines.html>

This concubine went and played the harlot and then was accepted into her father’s house. There seems to have been no consequences for her actions in that she was welcomed at her father’s house. Her husband the Levite also welcomes her back after 4 months. According to law, she should have been put to death (Deuteronomy 22 v 21). When we look at how chapter 19 opens, why do you think her father and husband did not follow that law? Her husband spoke tenderly to her does this suggest forgiveness? As the story progresses we question his love for his concubine.

The Levites father-in-law seems to be very hospitable. Later on we will see a city that forgot God’s commands on being hospitable and the very sad ending to the story.

What does the bible say about hospitality? Any specific verses that you can think of? Got questions article on hospitality: <https://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-hospitality.html>

If you are interested, Rosaria Butterfield has an excellent book – The Gospel comes with a House Key

When the Levite and his company left and journeyed homewards. They did not want to stay in Jebus because the inhabitants were not Israelites. They may have been treated better by the Canaanites.

We read the company was forced to stop in Gibeah a Benjamite town (due to them leaving the father-in-law house at noon instead of morning) and sat down in the town square as no one took them into their house. The men of Gibeah did not uphold the principle of hospitality which tells us that something may be wrong or about to happen. An old man from the tribe of Ephraim who himself was a sojourner in Gibeah did take them into his home. Lydia compares the story of Sodom and Gomorrah with this current one. How does this story end differently then Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19 v 24 – 25)? Why do you think God allowed Gibeah to escape the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah? This certainly would have avoided the upcoming civil war between tribes.

Chapter 19 ends with the Levite cutting his concubine into 12 pieces (some crazy love story here eh) and a part of her was sent to all the tribes including Benjamin. Israel recognized it as the most heinous crime committed. The sins of Gibeah is mentioned in Hosea 9 v 9 & 10.

Chapter 20 opens with Israel meeting together at Mizpah. It is encouraging to see them united to deal with this wickedness (to bad the did not feel this anger when other laws were broken especially around serving the baals). The Levite seems to exaggerate his story a bit here. Also he does not mention his part in why his concubine is dead. Was he really the one to be pitied in all of this??

The tribe of Benjamin does not join at Mitzpah nor do they hand over the evil men from Gibeah when given the chance. Are we at time tempted to protect our family and friends even though we know what they did was wrong? Or are we tempted to give them the benefit of the doubt that there was a miscommunication?

Israel asked for council from God before the go to war against Benjamin- civil war. It took 3 battles before Benjamin was conquered. How was victory finally attained? Anything different between the first two battels and the last one? John Macarthur notes that while they sought counsel from the Lord they depended to much on their own prowess an on satisfying their own outrage. Finally, when desperate enough they fasted and offered sacrifices (v 26). The Lord then gave them victory with a strategy similar to Ai.

The last chapter opens with the mention of another vow or oath. Even though we can understand Israel’s zeal in not wanting their daughters to be married into the tribe of Benjamin was this an oath God demanded and to be upheld under any circumstances? God seems to be blamed if the tribe of Benjamin should not survive (21 v3 & 15). Again, if only Israel would have been so zealous in upholding the laws and commandments of God as they were their vow. Israel come up with different ways to provide wives for the 600 remaining Benjamin men. 400 virgins through another bloody battle and 200 virgins by stealing. Even though Israel build an alter and offered burnt offering and peace offerings, was there any word from the Lord on how Israel proceeded with obtaining wives for 600 men of Benjamin?

The book of Judges ends with: In those days there was no king in Israel and everyone did what was right in their own eyes. Matthew Henry notes that even though God was their King they lived as if each of them was their own master of their lives.

Lydia does an amazing job with wrapping it all up pointing to the King of Kindgs and Lord of Lords.

Ligonier Ministries quote: When we have no King over our lives we will do what is right in our own eyes, even justifying our sinful actions. If we are Christians, Jesus is our King though in many ways we will fall short in serving Him. So, we must regularly commit ourselves to His Lordship, seeking to live by His word. As we do this we will be convicted of our sin and renewed so that we will sere our Lord. His Spirit will enable us not to do what is right merely in our own eyes but to seek to love and serve Him.