

Children's Church Parent's Guide

For April 17, 2005

Overview of this Week's Message

Theme: What if there were no rules?

Scripture Reference: Judges 19-21

Key Passage: Judges 21:25

Passage Background:

After strong leadership due to Moses and Joshua, the time after Joshua's death was a dark one for Israel. The people would turn from following God to instead chase after the religions and practices of their neighbors. God would allow another nation to conquer Israel until the nation repented and prayed for redemption. The Lord would raise up a deliverer to free His people and for the duration of that person's life Israel would tend to follow a Godly path. Shortly thereafter, however, Israel would turn back to its sinful ways.

This means the content of Judges 19-21 would be rated R or NC-17 if it were to be made into a movie. As a result, it's not really appropriate to cover with children unless it's toned down greatly. However, the principle that comes through is the nation of Israel was in turmoil and out of God's favor because they didn't abide by His rules.

A "kid friendly" version of the incidents would be:

- Men of the city of Gibeah committed a great sin against a man who himself was sinful.
- This man appealed to the rest of Israel for revenge.
- Eleven of the twelve tribes responded, the twelfth tribe being Benjamin, of which the people who lived in Gibeah were a part.
- The eleven tribes fought against Benjamin, meaning it was brother against brother.
- When the fighting was over, the tribe of Benjamin was almost destroyed.
- In order to "make up" for what they had done, the eleven tribes condoned more sin.
- All of this was because Israel was not following God and had forgotten what He had done for the nation with Moses and Joshua.

Had the people of Israel chosen a different path and had they stayed true to God, it is likely this tragedy would never have happened. However, the sinfulness at Gibeah and throughout the land meant repeated occurrences of incidents and situations of great sadness and loss. This is the consequence when there are no rules or when all rules are "relative."

Monday: Reinforcement

Theme: What if there were no rules?

Key Passage: Judges 19-21

Bible Memory Verse: Psalm 119:1 – *Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the Lord.* (NIV)

If you feel your child is able to comprehend the kid friendly synopsis of Judges 19-21, review that with your son or daughter. In Children's Church we summed up the book of Judges as a

historical record of where Israel stopped following God, got into trouble, finally called out to God for help, God sent a redeemer to Israel, Israel followed God for a bit, and then Israel went back to its ways of ignoring God.

Spend some time talking about the rules you have for your family. Explain why the rules exist and how they serve to reduce disputes, maintain order, or protect the family. Try and remember examples of when the rules weren't followed and what the consequences are.

Review the Bible memory verse with your child and help him or her repeat it several times.

Tuesday: The Real World

Theme: Ignoring God's rules can lead to very bad situations.

Key Passage: Acts 5:1-11

Read over the story of Ananias and Sapphira and then recap it to your child. Explain how many in the early church were giving to the believers as the needs arose. Ananias and Sapphira did the same. However, when they did so, they lied to the apostles about how much they received for the land. Peter's words are clear: the sin wasn't with how much money they gave but with their lie. In the vulnerable time of the early church, such deceit could have caused great damage to the body. As a result, God acted swiftly and surely to remind everyone in the church His rules still applied.

Talk about how God gave us the Bible to help us live. The rules and guidance He has put in this book is for us to live the safest and most productive life possible. He has put them in place to protect us. Explain the Bible is and always will be an extremely important part of our lives. The better we know it and follow it, the better off we will be.

Review the Bible verse with your child.

Wednesday: Missions Focus

Theme: Sharing God's Word with others can help them lead better lives.

Key Passage: Genesis 41

Open by talking about how not everyone knows who Jesus is. Explain what missionaries do: they bear witness of Christ to people who do not know Him. Talk about the fact that most missionaries actively work and provide services in the communities they go to. For instance, they staff hospitals, they build houses, they provide clean drinking water, etc. Also, they present an example of how to live life for others to see.

Review the passage with your son or daughter. Explain who Joseph was and how he came to be in a jail in Egypt (sold to Egyptians by his brothers then thrown into jail after the wife of his boss lied about him). Talk about Pharaoh's dream and how no one could interpret it. However, the cupbearer had met Joseph and explained to the Pharaoh Joseph might be able to tell what the dream meant. Pharaoh called for Joseph and Joseph was able to explain the dream, but Joseph was very quick to tell Pharaoh it was God who had revealed the dream's message. Then tell your child about how Joseph was placed in charge of Egypt's food in order to prepare for the famine. Because Pharaoh heeded God, his people were protected.

Review the Bible verse. Your child should be able to say it with no more than one or two prompts from you as your child recites the verse.

Thursday: Personal Application

Theme: I will learn what God expects of me.

Key Passage: 1 Peter 1:13-21

Read verse 14 to your child. Depending on the version of the Bible you use, you may need to paraphrase a bit. Talk about the words obedience and ignorance. Explain ignorance is when we don't know something. Also talk about the phrase, "Ignorance is no excuse."

Then talk about the grace we find in Christ Jesus. Make it clear to your child that though we are to try and sin as little as possible, realistically we're all going to make mistakes. Our God doesn't expect perfection. He expects our best. And with that in mind we shouldn't use God's grace as an excuse to justify sinning when we have the ability to do what's right. Discuss how the Bible gives us what we need to distinguish right from wrong. However, God leaves it to us to read His Word and put it into practice.

Review the Bible verse. Your child should be able to say it without prompting from an adult.

Friday: Family Time

Theme: Our obedience can cause a family member to turn to God.

Key Passage: Acts 15:13-21

Open by explaining that Jesus had brothers and sisters (Matthew 13). However, they didn't believe in Him at first (John 7). Among those brothers was one named James. This meant James, the brother of Jesus, at first didn't believe Jesus was God. Think of a family member or close friend who does not know Christ. Talk to your child about how his or her example towards this family member may one day make the difference to that person. A life honoring God and following His word may very well be what this loved one needs in order to finally come to accept Jesus as the boss.

Use Acts 15 as an example. Explain Barnabas and Paul were in Jerusalem to discuss with the elders of the church what was expected of believers. Among those in attendance was James, the brother of Jesus. Talk about how James backed Barnabas and Paul by giving an eloquent speech we have recorded in our Bibles. Remind your child that this is the same James that once upon a time didn't believe Jesus was God. However, James was at the crucifixion and saw what his brother went through. We don't know if that was the event that changed James' heart or if another was more critical. What is important is Jesus' own example resulted in his brother's choosing to follow Jesus. Wrap up by bringing your child's focus back to the loved one. Finish by comparing that loved one to James.

Have your child recite the memory verse. Provide prompts if necessary. When your child finishes reciting the verse, take the time to celebrate your child's hard work this week.