Crossroads International Church Singapore Dr. Rick Griffith

23 October 2016 Message 9 of 12

NLT 40 Minutes

**Making Your Own Religion**

Title

***Judges 17–18***

**Topic:** Religion

**Subject:** What are the sad results of man-made-religion?

**Complement:** Making your own religion makes you worse off, not better off.

**Purpose:** The listeners will obey the Bible rather than making up their own religion.

# Introduction

### Interest: [Most people today reject authority by making up their own religion.]

#### Think of a decision you made recently between right and wrong. Maybe you chose to tell the truth instead of lie, perhaps decided to watch something you shouldn’t have, or if you could have turned time back a week, you would have done something differently. *Why* did you decide like you did?

Why decide?

#### If you ask someone why he or she made the decision they made, most honest ones will say, “I think this was in my best interest—or will help my family more.”

Wrong & Right

#### Whether something is right or wrong is rarely discussed in our day of relativity.

#### Some say that “Wrong is wrong even if everyone is doing it. Right is right even if no one is doing it!” But I wonder how many believe that anymore?

Birds

Tolerance

#### The greater priority seems to be whether one is tolerant—not whether one is right.

### Need: Do you have an ultimate authority by which you make decisions?

Circles

#### How would you be able to tell which orange circle is larger? Relative to the large circles on the left, the orange looks smaller, but compared to the small gray circles on the right, the orange circle looks larger, but you know that both orange circles are the same size. But how can you keep your eyes from fooling you? You have to have an absolute standard by which to make decisions. For you, what is that standard?

#### What is that authority in your life?

Create Religion

#### Do you decide based on what’s best for *you*?

#### Or do you do what is best for *others*? Like your family?

#### Are you making up your own religion so that *you* are the authority?

#### I dare say that most people do this. They pick a little Christianity here, a bit of Buddhism there, add some New Age philosophy, mix thoroughly with a pinch of other beliefs, and then bake in the oven for 60 years. I think that’s sad!

### Subject: But what are the sad results of man-made-religion? What bad things happen when we play God instead of getting truth from him?

Subject

### Background: The period of the Judges was a “make-your-own-religion” time.

#### This led to a downward spiral. We have now finished the last of the various cycles in Judges that show the pattern of sin-servitude-supplication-salvation-silence.

Cycles

#### Judges 13 began the last cycle that ended tragically with the deliverer—Samson—who was worse than Israel’s oppressors, the Philistines. The problem was so severe that judges were like putting Band-Aids on a Gunshot Wound—our series title.

Samson  
(10 slides)

#### Is there more that can be said? Yes! The author isn’t finished yet. We still have the third part of the book ahead.

Chart

#### Today we’ll see the first two of the last five chapters of the epilogue to the book. How bad can life get when people do their own thing without the guidance of a righteous king? Judges 17:6 in this section shows the reason things got so bad: “In those days Israel had no king. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”

17:6

#### Sadly, even Israel’s view of their religion wasn’t spared. They abandoned their faith in God by substituting it with a “make-your-own-religion” philosophy.

#### Even more sadly, this is that we do the same today. Most individuals do not appeal to an authority for what they believe. They just do “what is right in their own eyes.” Judges 17–18 shows that such a belief system had terrible results for everyone.

Person  
• Society

### Preview: Today in Judges 17–18 we will see four bad effects of making up our own religion—four perils when we follow a “do-it-yourself faith,” the first being idolatry.

Results  
• Idolatry

(So what is the first sad result when we make up our own religion? Idolatry.)

# 1. We worship idols that are less real than us (17:1-6).

MP

[We’re supposed to worship Someone greater than us, but idols don’t even reach our own level!]

## Micah led his family into worshipping false gods (17:1-6).

Failure

### Micah led his family into worshipping false gods (17:1-4).

• Idolatry

#### Let’s read verses 1-6.

6

4-5

2-3

17:1 Map

#### Chapter 17 begins with a man named Micah, but what does the name Micah mean (17:1)?

##### His name means, “Who is like God”! That’s a good question that demands an answer. Is an idol like God? Of course not!

Name Meaning

##### Lindsey notes insightfully, “It is ironic that **a man named Micah** (meaning ‘Who is like Yahweh?’) should establish an apostate shrine with an unlawful priesthood.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

#### Was it OK for Micah to make an ephod (17:5)? What’s an ephod anyway?

High Priest

##### The ephod had been long worn only by the high priest and was made of gold. This priest had to be chosen by God himself to serve the entire nation.

Gold   
ephod

##### Micah thought, “OK, I don’t have any gold so I will use some of my silver and install my own high priest. No big deal that I chose him myself and he stays only here in my home.”

Silver ephod

##### This violated the first two of the Ten Commandments that prohibited worship of other gods through idols.

Big Ten Hebrew

##### Ironically, the mother claims she is worshipping the right God (the LORD) yet doing so through pagan means (17:2).

### He even appointed one of his own sons as priest. But would one of his sons qualify (17:5)?

Son in ephod

#### Obviously not!

#### The next verse notes this as an example of people doing whatever they wanted.

Models of Kids

(Kids need models to look up to, but…)

## Making up our own religion leads our families into idolatry today too.

Family Idolatry

### We’re told to “Keep Calm and Put Family First.” But Micah shows us “making up your own religion” at the family level, which is the basic building block of society.

### Wiersbe says it well regarding this family (17:1-6):

#### “Have you ever seen a family more spiritually and morally confused than this one? They managed to break almost all of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:1–17) and yet not feel the least bit guilty before the Lord! In fact, they thought they were serving the Lord by the bizarre things they did!

Big Ten English  
(8 clicks)

#### “The son didn’t honor his mother; instead, he stole from her and then lied about it. First, he coveted the silver, and then he took it. (According to Col. 3:5, covetousness is idolatry.) [Judges, p. 155]

#### “Then he lied about the whole enterprise until the curse scared him into confessing. Thus he broke the fifth, eighth, ninth, and tenth commandments, and he broke the first and second commandments by having a shrine of false gods in his home. According to Proverbs 30:8–9, when he stole the silver, he broke the third commandment and took the name of the Lord in vain. Breaking seven of the Ten Commandments without leaving your own home is quite an achievement!”

Catholics  
(3 slides)

### Sadly, parents often teach their children idolatry.

#### Sometimes this is in raw form, as in Catholicism.

#### Other times, it is subtler, such as in academic idolatry.

Academic

### God designed families to worship him together—yet we make the family itself the focus rather than God. That’s why Francis Chan warns us *not* to “Focus on the Family.” Each family member should have the same authority: the Word of God.

IDOLATRY

Focus on the Family

### Without the Bible, we make ourselves out to be God. When we each go our own way, we all follow different idols, whether those idols be different pop stars, different sources of information, or different things that occupy our time. All that do not conform to the Word are essentially idols. And following different idols divides our families.

iPhone etc.

### Jesus said it best: “Do you think I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I have come to divide people against each other! 52 From now on families will be split apart, three in favor of me, and two against—or two in favor and three against. 53 Father will be divided against son and son against father; mother against daughter and daughter against mother; and mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law” (Luke 12:51-53).

Jesus

Quad

(What is the second sad result when we make up our own religion?)

# 2. We appoint hirelings that we can control (17:7-13).

Hirelings

[Churches can see pastors as no more than speakers paid to tell them what they want to hear.]

## Micah hired a Levite as personal pagan priest (17:7-13).

### A Levite sought to legitimize Micah’s idolatry by abandoning his calling (17:7-13).

Failure

#### He lived in Ephraim but where was Ephraim and Bethlehem (17:1, 7)?

17:7 Map

##### Both lay in the heartland of Israel with Bethlehem south of Jerusalem and Ephraim to the north.

##### In other words, these were not obscure cities that good teachers of the Law could not reach. In fact, Bethlehem was the city that David would come from.

#### Was Bethlehem a Levitical city? No. Wiersbe notes,

##### “A young Levite named Jonathan (Judg. 18:30) had been living in Bethlehem of Judah, which was not one of the cities assigned to the priests and Levites (Josh. 21; Num. 35). He was probably there because the people of Israel weren’t supporting the tabernacle and its ministry with their tithes and offerings as God commanded them to do (Num. 18:21–32; Deut. 14:28–29; 26:12–15). Why live in one of the Levitical cities if you’re going to starve?

##### “When God’s people grow indifferent to spiritual things, one of the first evidences of their apathy is a decline in their giving to the work of the Lord; as a result, everybody suffers.”

#### Could a Levite substitute for a priest (17:10, 13)? Why or why not?

Geneaology

##### No, these came from different lines. Priests had a narrow line only from Aaron, while there were many Levites who stemmed from Levi, including descendants of Moses.

##### Only priests could offer up sacrifices, and we don’t see anything here about sacrifices or the tabernacle or any of the things that priests were supposed to do in Jerusalem.

#### Israel initially had a very high view of priests.

Priesthood Began

##### In the early days of Israel under Moses and Joshua, God prescribed absolute holiness for priests. Aaron was ordained, as were four of his sons—but two of the four offered unauthorized fire to God where they in essence invented their own religion. God’s response was swift—as they themselves became the burnt offering!

Nadab  
(3 slides)

##### Leviticus 21 prohibits priests from marrying a divorcee, marrying outside their tribe, and marrying one who wasn’t a virgin.

Lev 21

##### They were appointed by God but also needed to be willing to sacrifice—living on the offerings of the other Jews, not owning land in a section of the country like the other tribes, teaching God’s laws to the people, and dedicating two weeks annually to serve in Jerusalem.

Uniqueness

## We need leaders who do what God requires.

Leaders

### The NT gives the basic requirements of elders and deacons—but do most churches follow them?

### Church leadership is a high calling, but only given to those with a servant spirit.

### We must strive for balance here so that leaders are not simply hirelings, but then they also cannot simply lord it over the flock.

(What is the third sad result when we make up our own religion?)

Quad

# 3. We commit stealing from others (18:1-26).

Stealing

[Self-made religion leads to taking what is not ours.]

## **Greed** of the Danites coveted land of others instead of trusting God for victory (18:1-2).

Failure

### God allotted the land for each of the tribes of Israel based on their size and need.

Tribal Map

#### The birthright tribes with Israel’s birthright comprised the center sections for Ephraim and Manasseh.

#### Judah was huge and had the southern central area. But Dan was second largest!

Settlement

Title

Title

Title

#### But the tribes only conquered the central area of Israel due to fear of enemies.

Enemies

### So why didn’t Dan conquer their land (18:1)?

#### God allotted Dan enough land. The tribe of Dan was also a larger tribe and was given land in the foothills and coastal plain with plenty of area to spread out.

Map of Dan Problem

#### However, they did not trust God to drive out the Canaanites in that area, as they had superior technology called iron chariots. These in effect were the “tanks” of 1400 BC. So Dan ended up crowding into the hill country with little space to grow.

#### Judg. 1:34 adds, “As for the tribe of Dan, the Amorites forced them back into the hill country and would not let them come down into the plains. 35 The Amorites were determined to stay in Mount Heres, Aijalon, and Shaalbim, but when the descendants of Joseph became stronger, they forced the Amorites to work as slaves.”

• Judges 1:34

#### In any case, they headed towards Ephraim…

18:1 Map

## **Godless advice** of the Levite encouraged the Danites to follow their own will (18:3-6).

MP

### They *mention* the LORD here, but they never *seek* the LORD here. They ask the Levite to seek God, but we have reason to question whether they really want to hear from God.

### Don’t we do the same today? I am amazed that, in my own country, we keep asking godless people to speak at Christian events. We ask the president to speak at the National Prayer Breakfast and then are shocked to hear anti-Christian teaching! The same is true of the past week when Trump and Clinton both spoke at the Catholic charity for the poor. I watched this thinking, “Do you really want to hear what God says about helping the poor?”

### If we want to hear godly advice, let’s read his Word instead. Let’s listen to those who truly know him.

## **Stealing** and intimidation by the Danites brought Micah’s idolatry into their tribe (18:7-26).

Be Quiet  
(18:19)

### The spies refused to seek out the land God had given them. Instead, they went to an easy target. This brought Micah’s idolatry right into the tribe of Dan.

### They actually stole both a carved idol out of wood as well as a cast idol made from silver—plus other household gods (18:14).

Idols  
(18:20)

### Why did Dan resort to such godless tactics?

#### God said it would happen. Gen. 49:17 prophesied, “Dan will be a snake beside the road, a poisonous viper along the path that bites the horse’s hooves so its rider is thrown off.”

#### Idolatry is so foolish that anything is possible.

#### Wiersbe notes, “Someone has said that there are only three philosophies of life in today’s world: (1) ‘What’s mine is mine, I’ll keep it’; (2) ‘What’s yours is mine, I’ll take it’; and (3) ‘What’s mine is yours, I’ll share it.’ The Danites followed the second philosophy, and so do too many other grasping people. One of the current booming industries in the United States is the installing of security systems in private homes. The number of shooting sprees in shopping malls and fast-food restaurants has frightened many people into doing their shopping by telephone.”

3 Philosophies Wiersbe

## In contrast, true worship thanks God for what we already have.

Thankful Woman

### Are you content—truly content with your lot in life?

### One key sign of God’s work in your life is thankfulness!

Quad

(What results when we make up our own religion?)

# 4. We condone violence against the powerless (18:27-31).

Violent

[Man-made religion is actually OK with hurting or even killing people.]

## **Violence and murder** of peaceful people resulted from having no king to teach them (18:27-31).

Map

### Josh. 19:47 notes, “But the tribe of Dan had trouble taking possession of their land, so they attacked the town of Laish. They captured it, slaughtered its people, and settled there. They renamed the town Dan after their ancestor.”

• Josh 19:47

• Moses

### “When all else fails, resort to force.” That is man-made religion.

#### When you cannot convince people about your religion, hold a knife or a gun to their head.

#### Such a strategy shows how bankrupt “do-it-yourself” religion really is.

#### Leonardo DiCaprio noted, “Sometimes I wonder will God ever forgive us for what we’ve done to each other? Then I look around and I realize God left this place a long time ago.”

Leonardo DiCaprio

### Who actually was this Levite (18:30)? Did you catch it?

Who was Levite?

#### We aren’t told for nearly two chapters who he actually was. We only know that he was a Levite from Bethlehem. Now we find that his name was Jonathan.

• Gershom

#### Finally, when the suspense cannot be contained, we find out his identity as the son of Gershom and therefore the *grandson of Moses!*

### Can values really degenerate that fast? Can a godly man have a grandson complicit with mass murder?

#### Our base nature falls back to its naturally sinful state far quicker than any of us realizes. It also lasts a long time—this pagan worship lasted hundreds of years!

Altar Ruins

#### Just read Kings and Chronicles and you will see that the true worship of God is always only one generation away from extinction. The most righteous king (Hezekiah) had the worst king of them all (Manasseh). Each of us is accountable to God, whatever our spiritual heritage.

## Genuine Christianity defends the defenseless.

Defense

(So what results when we make up our own religion?)

Subject

# Conclusion

### Making your own religion makes you worse off, not better off (Main Idea).

MI

### “Do-it-yourself” religion hurts rather than helps us (Main Idea restated).

### Do you see any of these perils of man-made religion in your own life?

Quads

#### We worship idols that are less real than us (17:1-6).

• Idols

#### We appoint hirelings that we can control (17:7-13).

• Hirelings

#### We steal from others (18:1-26).

• Stealing

#### We condone violence against the powerless (18:27-31).

• Violence

### In what area might you have designed your own religion?

### Exhortation: How can you avoid the perils of man-made beliefs?

#### Learn the truth on your own daily.

#### Be accountable where you need help most.

### Prayer

Prayer

# Preliminary Questions

Got time?

Tozer

**Verses Questions**

# Context: What did the author record just prior to this passage?

### We have now finished the last of the various cycles in Judges that show the downward spiral of sin-servitude-supplication-salvation-silence.

### Judges 16 ended tragically with the deliverer—Samson—who was worse than the oppressors of Israel, the Philistines.

### Is there more that can be said? Yes! The author isn’t finished yet.

# Purpose: Why is this passage in the Bible?

### Today we’ll see the first two of the last five chapters of the epilogue to the book. How bad can life get when people do their own thing without the guidance of a righteous king? Judges 17:6 in this section shows the reason things got so bad: “In those days Israel had no king. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”

### Sadly, even Israel’s view of their religion wasn’t spared. In other words, it’s not that they held to their belief in God but things got bad. Rather, it’s that they abandoned their faith in God by substituting it with a “make-your-own-religion” philosophy.

### Even more sadly, this is that we do the same today. Most people do not appeal to an authority for what they believe. They just do “what is right in their own eyes.” Judges 17–18 shows that such a belief system has terrible results.

# Background: What historical context helps us understand this passage?

### God allotted the land for each of the tribes of Israel based on their size and need.

#### The larger tribes with Israel’s birthright comprised the center sections for Ephraim and Manasseh.

#### Judah was huge and had the southern central area.

#### The tribe of Dan was also a larger tribe and was given land in the foothills and coastal plain with plenty of area to spread out. However, they did not trust God to drive out the Canaanites in that area, as they had superior technology called iron chariots. These in effect were the “tanks” of 1400 BC. So Dan ended up crowding into the hill country with little space to grow.

### Israel initially had a very high view of priests.

#### In the early days of Israel under Moses and Joshua, God prescribed absolute holiness for priests. Aaron was ordained, as were four of his sons—but two of the four offered unauthorized fire to God where they in essence invented their own religion. God’s response was swift—as they themselves became the burnt offering!

#### Priests had to descend from Aaron also.

#### Leviticus 21 prohibits priests from marrying a divorcee, marrying outside their tribe, and marrying one who wasn’t a virgin. They couldn't even marry a widower!

#### They were appointed by God but also needed to be willing to sacrifice—living on the offerings of the other Jews, not owning land in a section of the country like the other tribes, teaching God’s laws to the people, and dedicating two weeks annually to serve in Jerusalem.

# Questions

### What does the name Micah mean (17:1)?

#### “It is ironic that **a man named Micah** (meaning “Who is like Yahweh?”) should establish an apostate shrine with an unlawful priesthood.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

### Where was Ephraim and Bethlehem (17:1, 7)?

#### Both lay in the heartland of Israel with Bethlehem south of Jerusalem and Ephraim to the north.

#### In other words, these were not obscure cities that good teachers of the Law could not reach. In fact, Bethlehem was the city that David would come from.

### Was Bethlehem a Levitical city? No. Wiersbe notes,

#### “A young Levite named Jonathan (Judg. 18:30) had been living in Bethlehem of Judah, which was not one of the cities assigned to the priests and Levites (Josh. 21; Num. 35). He was probably there because the people of Israel weren’t supporting the tabernacle and its ministry with their tithes and offerings as God commanded them to do (Num. 18:21–32; Deut. 14:28–29; 26:12–15). Why live in one of the Levitical cities if you’re going to starve?

#### “When God’s people grow indifferent to spiritual things, one of the first evidences of their apathy is a decline in their giving to the work of the Lord; as a result, everybody suffers.”

### Was it OK for Micah to make an ephod (17:5)? What’s an ephod anyway?

#### He actually made both a carved idol out of wood as well as a cast idol made from silver.

#### Both violated the first two of the Ten Commandments that prohibited worship of other gods through idols.

#### Ironically, the mother claims she is worshipping the right God (the LORD) yet doing so through pagan means.

### Would one of his sons qualify (17:5)?

#### Obviously not! The next verse notes this as an example of people doing whatever they wanted.

#### The repeated phrase "in those days Israel had no king" (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25) is the key to understanding the whole book of Judges.

##### Judges first shows the failure of the theocracy (not acknowledging God as king) in the political and religious failure of the nation (1:1–2:5).

##### Then it shows the successive attempts of twelve judges to provide stability to the theocracy (2:6–16:31).

##### But it all ends with the complete spiritual and moral collapse of the nation (chs. 17–21).

##### All four occurrences of the lack of a king (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25) appear only in this third section of the book to show the need for a righteous monarchy to replace the failed theocracy explained in the first sixteen chapters.

### Could a Levite substitute for a priest (17:10, 13)? Why or why not?

#### No, these came from different lines. Priests had a narrow line only from Aaron, while there were many Levites who stemmed from Levi, including descendants of Moses.

#### Only priests could offer up sacrifices, and we don’t see anything here about sacrifices or the tabernacle or any of the things that priests were supposed to do in Jerusalem.

### What’s the deal here talking about a personal priest (17:5)?

#### There existed no such thing as a personal priest or a personal Levite.

#### They were to be paid by the temple, not individual families.

### How do we sum up chapter 17?

#### Here we see “making up your own religion” at the family level, which is the basic building block of society.

#### Wiersbe says it well regarding this family (17:1-6):

##### “Have you ever seen a family more spiritually and morally confused than this one? They managed to break almost all of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:1–17) and yet not feel the least bit guilty before the Lord! In fact, they thought they were serving the Lord by the bizarre things they did!

##### “The son didn’t honor his mother; instead, he stole from her and then lied about it. First, he coveted the silver, and then he took it. (According to Col. 3:5, covetousness is idolatry.) [Judges, p. 155]

##### “Then he lied about the whole enterprise until the curse scared him into confessing. Thus he broke the fifth, eighth, ninth, and tenth commandments, and he broke the first and second commandments by having a shrine of false gods in his home. According to Proverbs 30:8–9, when he stole the silver, he broke the third commandment and took the name of the Lord in vain. Breaking seven of the Ten Commandments without leaving your own home is quite an achievement!”

#### Wiersbe also aptly writes on the Levite’s work (17:7-13):

##### “2. Confusion in the Ministry (17:7–13)

##### Not only did God establish the home and instruct parents how to raise their children (Deut. 6), but He also instituted spiritual leadership in the worshipping community. Under the old covenant, the tabernacle and then the temple were the center of the community, and the Aaronic priesthood supervised both. Under the new covenant, the church of Jesus Christ is the temple of God (Eph. 2:19–22), and the Holy Spirit calls and equips ministers to serve Him and His people (1 Cor. 12–14; Eph. 4:1–16). In His Word, God told the Old Testament priests what they were supposed to do, and in His Word today, the Holy Spirit guides His church and explains its order and its ministry.

##### A young Levite named Jonathan (Judg. 18:30)1 had been living in Bethlehem of Judah, which was not one of the cities assigned to the priests and Levites (Josh. 21; Num. 35). He was probably there because the people of Israel weren’t supporting the tabernacle and its ministry with their tithes and offerings as God commanded them to do (Num. 18:21–32; Deut. 14:28–29; 26:12–15). Why live in one of the Levitical cities if you’re going to starve? When God’s people grow indifferent to spiritual things, one of the first evidences of their apathy is a decline in their giving to the work of the Lord; as a result, everybody suffers.

##### Instead of seeking the mind of the Lord, Jonathan set out to find a place to live and work, even if it meant abandoning his calling as a servant of God. The nation was at a low ebb spiritually, and he could have done something to help bring the people back to God. He was only one man, but that’s all God needs to begin a great work that can make a difference in the history of a nation. Instead of being available to God, Jonathan [Judges, p. 157] was agreeable only to men, and he eventually found himself a comfortable home and job with Micah.

##### If Jonathan is typical of God’s servants in that period of history, then it’s no wonder the nation of Israel was confused and corrupt. He had no appreciation for his high calling as a Levite, a chosen servant of God. Not only were the Levites to assist the priests in their ministries (Num. 3:6–13; 8:17–18), but they were also to teach the law to the people (Neh. 8:7–9; 2 Chron. 17:7–9; 35:3) and be involved in the sacred music and the praises of Israel (1 Chron. 23:28–32; Ezra 3:10). Jonathan gave up all that for comfort and security in the home of an idolater.

##### Jonathan’s ministry, however, wasn’t a spiritual ministry at all. To begin with, he was a hireling and not a true shepherd (Judg. 18:4; John 10:12–13). He didn’t serve the true and living God; he worked for Micah and his idols. Jonathan wasn’t a spokesperson for the Lord; he gave people just the message they wanted to hear (Judg. 18:6). When he was offered a place involving more money, more people, and more prestige, he took it immediately and gave thanks for it (v. 19). And then he assisted his new employers in stealing his former employer’s gods!

##### Whenever the church has a “hireling ministry,” it can’t enjoy the blessing of God. The church needs true and faithful shepherds who work for the Lord, not for personal gain, and who will stay with the flock to feed them and protect them. True shepherds don’t see their work as a “career” and run off to a “better job” when the opportunity comes. They stay where God puts them and don’t move until He sends them.

##### True shepherds receive their calling and authority from God, not from people (Gal. 1:6ff.), and they honor the true God, not the idols that people make. It must grieve the Lord today to see people worshipping the idols of ministerial “success”: statistics, buildings, and reputation. In today’s “consumer society,” self-appointed preachers and “prophets” have no problem getting a following and peddling their religious wares to a church that acts more like a [Judges, p. 158] Hollywood fan club than a holy people of God. And to make it worse, these hirelings will call what’s happening “the blessing of God.” Jonathans and Micahs will always find each other because they need each other.

##### The sad part of the story is that Micah now thought he had the favor of God because a genuine Levitical priest was serving as his private chaplain. Micah practiced a false religion and worshipped false gods (with Jehovah thrown in for good measure), and all the while he rested on the false confidence that God was blessing him! Little did he know that the day would come when his priest and his gods would be taken from him and nothing would be left of his religion.

### Where was the tribe of Dan living and why didn’t they have land (18:1)?

#### God allotted Dan enough land.

#### Josh. 19:47 notes, “But the tribe of Dan had trouble taking possession of their land, so they attacked the town of Laish. They captured it, slaughtered its people, and settled there. They renamed the town Dan after their ancestor.”

#### Judg. 1:34 adds, “As for the tribe of Dan, the Amorites forced them back into the hill country and would not let them come down into the plains. 35 The Amorites were determined to stay in Mount Heres, Aijalon, and Shaalbim, but when the descendants of Joseph became stronger, they forced the Amorites to work as slaves.”

### Who actually was this Levite (18:30)?

#### We aren’t told for nearly two chapters who he actually was. We only know that he was a Levite from Bethlehem.

#### Finally, when the suspense cannot be contained, we find out his identity as the grandson of Moses!

### Why did Dan resort to such godless tactics?

#### God said it would happen. Gen. 49:17 prophesied, “Dan will be a snake beside the road, a poisonous viper along the path that bites the horse’s hooves so its rider is thrown off.”

#### Idolatry is so foolish that anything is possible.

#### Wiersbe, notes, “Someone has said that there are only three philosophies of life in today’s world: (1) ‘What’s mine is mine, I’ll keep it’; (2) ‘What’s yours is mine, I’ll take it’; and (3) ‘What’s mine is yours, I’ll share it.’ The Danites followed the second philosophy, and so do too many other grasping people. One of the current booming industries in the United States is the installing of security systems in private homes. The number of shooting sprees in shopping malls and fast-food restaurants has frightened many people into doing their shopping by telephone.”

### How do we sum up chapter 18?

# Tentative Subject/Complement Statements

Text

# Possible Illustrations

### Text

# Possible Applications

### Text

# Making Your Own Religion

***Judges 17–18***

**Exegetical Outline (Steps 2-3)**

# *Exegetical Idea*: The result of Israelites making up their own religion prior to a righteous monarchy was seen in Micah hiring a Levite pagan priest who blesses Dan's ungodly migration (Chs. 17–18).

# I. The evidence of Micah making up his own religion is by his idolatry and hiring a Levite as personal pagan priest (Judg 17).

## Micah led his family into worshipping false gods (17:1-6).

## A Levite sought to legitimize Micah’s idolatry by abandoning his calling (17:7-13).

# II. The evidence of the Danites making up their own religion was their selfish and faithless migration aided by the Levite (Judg 18).

## **Greed** of the Danites coveted land from others rather than trusting God to give them victory (18:1-2).

## **Godless advice** of the Levite encouraged the Danites to follow their own will (18:3-6).

## **Stealing** and intimidation by the Danites brought Micah’s idolatry into their tribe (18:7-26).

## **Violence** against peaceful people resulted from having no king to teach them (18:27-31).

**Purpose or Desired Listener Response (Step 4)**

The listeners will obey the Bible rather than making up their own religion.

**Homiletical Outline** (Cyclical inductive form)

# Introduction

### Interest: Most people today reject authority by making up their own religion.

### Need: Do you have an ultimate authority by which you make decisions?

### Subject: What are the sad results of man-made religion?

### Background: The period of the Judges had no king and thus no one to show them the right way to live.

### Preview: Today we will see the bad effects of making up our own religion—four perils when we follow a “do-it-yourself faith.”

### Text: Judges 17–18 comprise the first part of the epilogue to the book of Judges.

(What is the first sad result when we make up our own religion?)

# 1. We worship idols that are less real than us (17:1-6).

## Micah led his family into worshipping false gods (17:1-6).

## Making up our own religion leads our families into idolatry today too.

# 2. We appoint hirelings that we can control (17:7-13).

## Micah hired a Levite as personal pagan priest (17:7-13).

## We need leaders who do what God requires.

# 3. We commit stealing from others (18:1-26).

## **Greed** of the Danites coveted land of others instead of trusting God for victory.

## **Godless advice** of the Levite encouraged the Danites to follow their own will (18:3-6).

## **Stealing** and intimidation by the Danites brought Micah’s idolatry into their tribe (18:7-26).

## True worship thanks God for what we already have.

# 4. We condone violence against the powerless (18:27-31).

## **Violence and murder** of peaceful people resulted from having no king to teach them (18:27-31).

## Genuine Christianity defends the defenseless.

(So what are the sad results when we make up our own religion?)

# Conclusion

### Making your own religion makes you worse off, not better off (Main Idea).

### “Do-it-yourself” religion hurts rather than helps us (Main Idea restated).

### What, once again, are the perils of man-made religion?

#### We worship idols that are less real than us (17:1-6).

#### We appoint hirelings that we can control (17:7-13).

#### We commit stealing from others (18:1-26).

#### We condone violence against the powerless (18:27-31).

### In what area might you have designed your own religion?

### Exhortation: How can you avoid the perils of man-made beliefs?

#### Learn the truth on your own daily.

#### Be accountable where you need help most.

### Prayer



**Rick Griffith**

23 October 2016

Message of 9 of 12

**Making Your Own Religion**

***Judges 17–18***

# Introduction

### Most people today reject authority by making up their own religion.

### Do you have an ultimate authority by which you make decisions?

### *Today’s Subject: What are the sad \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of man-made religion?*

### The period of the Judges had no king and thus no one to show them the right way to live (17:6).

# 1. We worship \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that are less real than us (17:1-6).

## Micah led his family into worshipping false gods (17:1-6).

## Making up our own religion leads our families into idolatry today too.

# 2. We appoint \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that we can control (17:7-13).

## Micah hired a Levite as personal pagan priest (17:7-13).

## We need leaders who do what God requires.

# 3. We commit \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ from others (18:1-26).

## **Greed** of the Danites coveted land of others instead of trusting God for victory (18:1-2).

## **Godless advice** of the Levite encouraged the Danites to follow their own will (18:3-6).

## **Stealing** and intimidation by the Danites brought Micah’s idolatry into their tribe (18:7-26).

## True worship thanks God for what we already have.

# 4. We condone \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ against the powerless (18:27-31).

## **Violence and murder** of peaceful people resulted from having no king to teach them (18:27-31).

## Genuine Christianity defends the defenseless.

(So what are the sad results when we make up our own religion?)

# Conclusion

### Making your own religion makes you worse off, not better off (Main Idea).

### How can you avoid the perils of man-made beliefs?

#### Learn the truth on your own daily.

#### Be accountable where you need help most.

**Thought Questions**

1. Read Judges 17 on your own. Contrast:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Religion Micah’s Way** | **True Christianity** |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
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| Text | Text |

1. What parallels to Judges 17–18 do you see in society and the church today?

Text

Text

Text

1. In what area might you have designed your own religion?

Text

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1. F. Duane Lindsey, “Judges,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 408–409. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. F. Duane Lindsey, “Judges,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 408–409. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)