

The Domino Effect  
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Judges 17:1-6; Judges 17:7-8; Judges 17:12-13; Judges 18:30-31

Question: What do we mean by the “Domino Effect”? A multiplying effect where one action triggers another, and then another, and so on.

- This morning’s lesson is all about the DOMINO EFFECT of SIN in the life of Israel in the time of the judges. However, the DOMINO EFFECT can work in TWO DIRECTIONS...the DOMINO EFFECT for GOOD or EVIL. “The Lord wants His people to live by godly standards, so that the GOOD WE DO, and not the EVIL, will have repercussions for years to come.”
- Now, on to Judges 17 and 18.
- Question: What usually happens after someone utters the words: “How hard can it be?”
- Big disasters often occur right after someone utters the words: “How hard can it be?”
- Do it Yourself or D-I-Y is a popular concept. Home Depot and Lowes are humming!
- But, DO IT YOURSELF can be a DISASTER in some things!
- This morning we meet a man who tried “DO IT YOURSELF” Religion. A family that ABANDONED God’s standards leading to a DOMINO EFFECT of SIN and DISASTER.

Judges 17:1-6

17 Now a man named Micah from the hill country of Ephraim 2 said to his mother, “The eleven hundred shekels of silver that were taken from you and about which I heard you utter a curse—I have that silver with me; I took it.”

Then his mother said, “The Lord bless you, my son!”

3 When he returned the eleven hundred shekels of silver to his mother, she said, “I solemnly consecrate my silver to the Lord for my son to make a carved image and a cast idol. I will give it back to you.”

4 So he returned the silver to his mother, and she took two hundred shekels of silver and gave them to a silversmith, who made them into the image and the idol. And they were put in Micah’s house.

5 Now this man Micah had a shrine, and he made an ephod and some idols and installed one of his sons as his priest. 6 In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.

- Let me start with some context.
- The last five chapters of Judges form an appendix.
- Though they are placed after the death of Samson, they describe events that likely happened just after the death of Joshua and LEADING UP TO the pattern of BACKSLIDING of the children of Israel we’ve been studying.

Henrietta Mears outlines these five chapters this way:

*“First, we find confusion in the religious life of the nation (Judges 17-18).*

*Second, we find confusion in the moral life of the nation (Judges 19).*

*Third, we find confusion in the political life (Judges 21).*

*It gives us a picture of the internal condition of the chosen people. The story of the backsliding of individuals is followed by the backsliding of the nation.”*

J. Vernon McGee said:

*“Every nation goes down in this order: 1. religious apostasy; 2. moral awfulness; 3. political anarchy. Deterioration begins in the temple, then to the home, and finally to the state. That is the way a nation falls.”*

- Now, back to our friend Micah here in Judges 17.
- To be clear, THIS Micah is a different man than the Israelite prophet of the book of Micah. A different time, and a VERY different man.
- The name Micah means “Who is like Jehovah?” That’s IRONY! This man wasn’t much like God.
- Look at verses 1 and 2 of Judges 17. What is the first thing we learn about Micah?
- He’s a THIEF who stole from his dear old mother!
- 1,100 shekels of silver is a LOT...about 28 pounds of silver, a FORTUNE.
- Verse 2: Why did Micah confess to taking his mother’s silver? Fit of conscience?
- He was afraid because she had “uttered a curse” on whoever took it.
- These Israelites took curses seriously and Micah was afraid, so he gave back the loot.
- End of verse 2: What did Micah’s mother say when he gave back the silver?
- “The Lord bless you, my son!” Maybe she was proud of her boy’s honesty...but, what was the likely thing she was really trying to do by saying that? Reverse the curse!
- So, she makes a PLEDGE in verse 3. Someone with a KJV, read what she said in verse 3: “I had wholly dedicated the silver unto the Lord from my hand for my son, to make a graven image and a molten image: now therefore I will restore it unto thee.”
- Note that word, “wholly”...with a “w,” we’ll come back to it.
- What’s the first problem with Micah’s mother in verse 3? Graven image...idolatry.
- Micah’s mother said she DEDICATE WHOLLY the 1,100 shekels of silver.
- Verse 4: How many shekels did she give to be made into an idol? 200.
- She was so GREEDY that she’s even skimping on making idols!!!
- Verse 5: Idolatry wasn’t just “mama’s” problem was it? What does verse 5 tell us about Micah?
- Micah didn’t just have a private “shrine” of false gods (little “g”) in his house...he went further in the disobedience of his “home grown”, “do it yourself” religion.
- What else did he do according to verse 5? Installed one of his sons as priest.
- But, still he went further. Look at verse 7.

Judges 17:7-8

7 A young Levite from Bethlehem in Judah, who had been living within the clan of Judah, 8 left that town in search of some other place to stay. On his way he came to Micah’s house in the hill country of Ephraim.

- Apparently, in that day people had deserted the church and stopped giving to the church so much that the Levites...the priests...were “looking for another gig.” This was a “preacher for hire” to whomever would give him room and board.
- Now, the “preachers” were so out of God’s will they were available to the highest bidder.
- Micah saw this as a great opportunity! Not only did Micah build his own private “shrine” now, he’s gonna hire his own PRIVATE PREACHER!

Judges 17:12-13

12 Then Micah installed the Levite, and the young man became his priest and lived in his house. 13 And Micah said, “Now I know that the Lord will be good to me, since this Levite has become my priest.”

- Question: Why did Micah want a shrine in his house?
- I want God...but I want it “Frank Sinatra style”... MY WAY!

The Preacher’s Commentary tells us:

*There was to be one sanctuary for all the people, which was the Tent of Meeting, now situated at Shiloh (18:31). This had been the only focus for acceptable worship of Yahweh since Israel had come out of Egypt...Here alone could the proper worship of Yahweh be carried out, as He had dictated, by the priests whom He had appointed. But it was so much more convenient to stay at home. It was so much easier not to have to cope with long journeys to Shiloh for the festivals, not to have to bother with the expensive business of providing animal sacrifices without blemish. It was so much handier to have a residential priest to pray for you...And so, because Micah’s heart was not right with God, his so-called worship was an empty fake. Doubtless, he was very pleased with it all, as it was all on his terms; it is the mark of the idolater to presume that if he is pleased with it then his “god” must be also. But actually what Micah was doing was an abomination in God’s eyes. All that he had succeeded in doing was to mirror the pagan culture all around him, of which he was increasingly a part, by bringing the Creator God who made him, the covenant Lord to whom he owed his very existence, down to his own human level. — Jackman, D., & Ogilvie, L. J. (1991). Vol. 7: The Preacher’s Commentary Series, Volume 7 : Judges, Ruth. The Preacher’s Commentary series (256–257). Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Inc.*

- If we continue to read Judges chapter 18 we learn that the tribe of Dan (the Danites) was looking for territory. When they stopped by Micah’s house they liked his “shrine” and his “priest” so much, they STOLE the idols for a “shrine” for their TRIBE, and hired away the priest.
- Now, this idol worship has spread to a whole TRIBE.
- By the way, sometime if you want to check out Revelation Chapter 7. There’s a listing of the 12 tribes of Israel. But it doesn’t match the sons of Jacob. The tribe of DAN is MISSING.

The KJV commentary tells us:

*"Throughout its history, Dan was known as a center of idolatry and became a symbol of the apostate tribe of Israel. Thus, it is not named in Revelation 7 as one of the twelve tribes of the future kingdom."*

- The "domino effect" continued. If you read Chapters 19-21 of Judges the story of DEPRAVITY gets more BIZARRE.
- A Levite obtains a CONCUBINE. They are attacked. The woman was raped and killed.
- This event led to war between the Benjamin tribe and other Israelite tribes. Many Israelites died and the Benjamin tribe was almost wiped out.
- And so began the time of the Judges. A time of SPIRITUAL DECAY.
  
- So, HOW does the "domino effect" of SIN get started?
- Let's circle back to Micah, his "mama," and their idols.
- Go left in your Bible and turn to Exodus Chapter 20. Beginning in verse 3. What were the first TWO of the TEN COMMANDMENTS God gave Moses?

Exodus 20

3 "You shall have no other gods before[a] me.

4 "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. 5 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, 6 but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

- Micah and his mother had already broken the FIRST TWO COMMANDMENTS!
- While we're here...what are the NEXT TWO Commandments in verses 7-10?

7 "You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

8 "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God.

- Question: Why do you think God made those the FIRST FOUR COMMANDMENTS?

A.W. Tozer told us:

"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. The history of mankind will probably show that no people has ever risen above its religion, and man's spiritual history will positively demonstrate that no religion has ever been greater than its idea of God. Worship is pure or base as the worshiper entertains high or low thoughts of God."

—A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (New York: HarperCollins, 1961), 1.

- Discussion Question: Thinking about our society today, how are we seeing the DOMINO EFFECT of getting away from God's standards?

- You want to talk about the DOWNFALL of a nation? I close with a REAL LIFE illustration. A news story from May of 2012. Giles County Virginia...the latest ACLU lawsuit about the TEN COMMANDMENTS on display in Narrows High School. The story begins:

*Could the Ten Commandments be reduced to six, a federal judge asked Monday.*

*Would that neutralize the religious overtones of a commandments display that has the Giles County School Board in legal hot water?*

*That unorthodox suggestion was made by Judge Michael Urbanski during oral arguments over whether the display amounts to a governmental endorsement of religion, as alleged in a lawsuit filed by a student at Narrows High School.*

*After raising many pointed questions about whether the commandments pass legal muster, the judge referred the case to mediation - with a suggestion:*

*Remove the first four commandments, which are clearly religious in nature, and leave the remaining six, which make more secular commands, such as do not kill or steal.*

*Ever since the lawsuit was filed in September amid heated community reaction, school officials have said the display is not religious because it also includes historical documents such as the Bill of Rights and the Declaration of Independence.*

*"If indeed this issue is not about God, why wouldn't it make sense for Giles County to say, 'Let's go back and just post the bottom six?'" Urbanski asked during a motions hearing in U.S. District Court in Roanoke.*

*"But if it's really about God, then they wouldn't be willing to do that." <http://www.roanoke.com/news/roanoke/wb/308501/>*

So, What's The Takeaway?

- Jesus said in John 14:15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command."
- The "Domino Effect" works both ways...our decision to either HONOR or DISHONOR God's standards in our lives will have RAMIFICATIONS for generations to come.
- The decision for each of us is straightforward, do we honor God's standards and set in motion a "Domino Effect" of ETERNAL LIFE?
- Or, do we IGNORE God's standards and run the risk of leaving a "Domino Effect" of SIN as our legacy?
- We CHOOSE every day.