

**Judges 17:1-6**  
**“When Motherhood Is Not So Good”**

- 1. THE FAILURES SHE SHOWED TO HER SON**
  - A. Her loss of control
  - B. Her lack of consistency
- 2. THE FUTURE SHE SHAPED FOR HER SON**
  - A. A man for whom covetousness was motivation
  - B. A man for whom consequences were minimal
- 3. THE FAITH SHE SHARED WITH HER SON**
  - A. A diluted worship of God
  - B. A displeasing worship of God

1. Controversial author, Ayelet Waldman, has just released a new book entitled: *Bad Mother: A Chronicle of Maternal Crimes, Minor Calamities, and Occasional Moments of Grace*.

2. In the book, Waldman contends that there are really no *good* mothers. She states in the opening chapter of the book:

“Being a Good Mother, as defined by mothers themselves, is impossible. When asked for an example of a Good Mother, the women I polled came up with June Cleaver and Marmee, from *Little Women*. Both of whom are by necessity, not coincidence, fictional characters. The Good Mother does not exist, and she has never existed...”<sup>i</sup>

3. Contrary to Mrs. Waldman’s thesis, I do not believe that a good mother is a myth. While there is no such thing as a perfect mother; good mothers abound.

4. Even the best moms, though, would admit that there are times when they are not so good at motherhood.

5. In the Old Testament book of Judges, we find a mother who portrays for us the dangers of a woman who is not careful with the delicate duty of motherhood.

6. Sometimes, you can learn as much from a bad example as you can from a good one. Such is the case with Micah’s mother in Judges 17.

7. She points us to the kinds of things good mothers must avoid if they want to raise kids who know and honor God.

8. Notice some things this mother did that negatively affected the life of our son. First of all, notice:

**I. THE FAILURES SHE SHOWED TO HER SON**

1. Dr. Adrian Rogers once said, “The home is the University of Life with parents as the professors, children as students, and life as the lab.”<sup>ii</sup>

2. The teacher from whom your children will learn the most is not the one in their homeroom; it's the one in their home.
3. As a parent, your children are constantly watching you, picking up life lessons from the things you do and say.
4. In Judges 17, Micah's mother obviously forgot about the importance of her influence on her son. As a result, Micah witnessed a couple of significant failures in his mother's life. First of all, he witnessed:

#### **A. Her loss of control**

1. In verse 2, Micah comes to his mother and recounts an incident that had taken place in their home. Verse 2 says, *"And he said unto his mother, The eleven hundred shekels of silver that were taken from thee, about which thou cursedst, and spakest of also in mine ears..."*
2. Apparently, some of this mother's money had come up missing. The evidence indicated that someone had stolen it, and in the heat of the moment Micah's mother cursed the thief.
3. We don't know exactly what she said, but it appears that she spoke a phrase of judgment or calamity upon the person who had wronged her.
4. This pronounced curse was the predecessor to our modern cursing or swearing. Much as today, it was something someone did in anger and as a means of retaliation.
5. Rather than keeping her cool and handling the situation with patience and trust in the providence of God, this mother "blew up", and cursed in the presence of her son.
6. Thomas Jefferson said, "When angry , count [to] ten before you speak; if very angry, [to] one hundred." Mark Twain's advice was a bit less helpful. He said, "When angry, count [to] four; when very angry, swear."
7. Neither one of those are really options for the person who knows Christ. We won't *lose* control if we have already *given* control over to the Holy Spirit. He never loses His temper *or* ours when it is under His sway.
8. In Galatians 5:23, Paul lists "temperance" as one of the fruit of the Spirit. It is literally, "self-control", or more precisely, Spirit-control.
9. This mother showed a loss of control to her son. Notice further that the failure he saw in her was not only her loss of control, but also:

## B. Her lack of consistency

1. In the text in verse 2, we find Micah's mother cursing. Then, in that same verse, we find these words coming from her mouth: "*Blessed be thou of the LORD, my son.*"
2. We are reminded of the words of Bro. James in the New Testament. James 3:10 says, "*Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.*"
3. Here was a woman with a Jekyll and Hyde tongue. She spoke like a saint with one breath, and swore like a sailor with the other.
4. As a parent, this kind of hypocrisy and duplicity will be obvious to your children, and will do more to turn them from Christ than all the evil influences of the world combined.
5. Jim Heche was a worship leader, and committed Christian who made sure his family was in church every single Sunday. He even helped to start a new church along with some other like-minded families.
6. However, in 1983, Jim became one of the first men in New York City to die from AIDS. It turned out that through all the years that Jim had been a public Christian; he had also been a private homosexual.
7. The real impact of Jim Heche's inconsistency can be seen in the life of his famous daughter, actress Anne Heche, who was once publicly involved in a lesbian relationship with Ellen Degeneres.<sup>iii</sup>
8. The inconsistency of Micah's mother in Judges 17 may not have been as drastic as Jim Heche's, but it still surely had an adverse affect on her son.
9. Every mother will at some time or another lose her cool, and no one is without inconsistencies, but a good mother seeks by the grace of God to guard her testimony before her children.
10. Notice something further we see in the life of Micah's mother. We see here not only *the failures she showed to her son*, but notice also further:

## II. THE FUTURE SHE SHAPED FOR HER SON

1. The text is not completely clear as to when this incident with the silver actually occurred. The chapter opens by describing Micah as "a man", but that does not necessarily mean that this story took place after Micah was grown.

2. It could be that the writer is relating an incident from Micah's earlier life in order to give some background for his conduct as a man.
3. Regardless of when it occurred, Micah's actions in this story, and the response of his mother shed light on the kind of parent she was.
4. *What* we teach our kids and *how* we teach our kids will largely shape the kind of people they are going to be in the future. The fingerprints of our influence will remain on them for the rest of their lives.
5. I think we see evidence of this in the story of Micah and his mother. She was shaping a certain kind of man. Consider this with me. First of all, she had obviously created:

**A. A man for whom covetousness was motivation**

1. Micah makes a confession to his mother in verse 2. He says, "*The eleven hundred shekels of silver that were taken from thee...I took it.*"
2. Here was a boy who saw something he wanted, and he took it. The money was his mothers, but that did not seem to bother him until he was afraid he would end up on the wrong end of his mother's curse.
3. We don't know, but it very well could have been that Micah was raised, like a lot of kids today, in a home where whatever Micah wanted, Micah got.
4. It is possible that Micah was an indulged and spoiled child who carried with him a sense of entitlement, who really believed that if there was something he desired he could have it, no matter the cost. There is at least some evidence of this later in Micah's life (cf. v. 10).
5. The last of the Ten Commandments is "Thou shalt not covet". Covetousness is the desire for that which you do not have and is not yours.
6. We are living in a generation who spends the vast majority of their lives trying to get all the things they do not have, and keep up with those who do have them.
7. For some, covetousness is the fuel that drives their lives. Far from being what they would consider a sin, it is the motivation for much of what they do.
8. And where did this generation get its possession obsession? Much of it came from parents who granted every wish and bought every toy and trinket under the sun.
9. Could it be that this mother's missing silver was a crime she had contributed to herself, by raising a son for whom covetousness was motivation?

10. Notice something further about the future this mother shaped for her son. She had apparently raised not only a man for whom covetousness was motivation, but also:

**B. A man for whom consequences were minimal**

1. Look again at what happens in verse 2. Micah confesses to having stolen his mother's money, and rather than rebuking him in any way, she says, *"Blessed be thou of the LORD, my son."*

2. Where is the discipline? Where is at least a word of correction? There is nothing but a blessing for this thief of a son.

3. Proverbs 23:13 says, *"Withhold not correction from the child..."* Proverbs 22:15 says, *"Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him."*

4. In the New Testament, we find that discipline and correction are the way God deals with His children. Hebrews 12:6 says, *"...whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."*

5. A parent may say, "I don't discipline my child because I love them too much." That is simply a lie. If you don't correct and chasten your child, you don't care about them or their future.

6. Discipline and correction teaches a child that there are consequences for their actions. It communicates the biblical and theological truth that sin has a price.

*7. Mommy won't tell Johnny "no",  
She wants him to be free to grow,  
Johnny screams to get his way,  
Mommy just says, "That's O.K."*

*Johnny thinks he runs the show,  
Mommy will not tell him "no",  
When he misbehaves, she shuts her eyes,  
"He just hyper," she says to justify,*

*Now Johnny's grown, and in some trouble,  
He burst his mother's foolish bubble,  
She never gave him consequences,  
So now he's got a prison sentence.*

8. That poem is a little extreme, I know, but it nonetheless illustrates that the future of our kids will be shaped by our discipline of them, or lack thereof.

9. There is a third thing I believe we can observe in the life of this Old Testament mother who was not so good at motherhood. Notice not only *the failures she showed to her son*, and *the future she shaped for her son*, but consider lastly, and probably most importantly:

### III. THE FAITH SHE SHARED WITH HER SON

1. "Wait a minute," you say, "I thought sharing your faith with your children is what a *good* mother does." Well, that depends on the kind of faith you share with them.
2. In Judges 17 we have a home described where the mother curses and the son steals. Yet, this same home is one where the name of God is spoken and the worship of God is promoted.
3. When the stolen silver is returned to the mother, she speaks a blessing in the name of the Lord, and also declares that the silver had been dedicated to the Lord on behalf of her son.
4. This was not a pagan home. No, this was a family who knew the one, true God. Were they living today, they would probably have a "Jesus fish" on their SUV, and a "Prayer of Jabez" plaque somewhere in their house.
5. This mother passed her faith on to her son. The only problem was that the faith she passed to him did him more harm than good. Consider the faith she shared with her son. It was, first of all:

#### A. A diluted worship of God

1. Look at the text and notice verse 4. Listen to the statement this mother makes. She says of the stolen silver, *"I had wholly dedicated the silver unto the LORD from my hand for my son, to make a graven image and a molten image."*
2. She says that she had dedicated this money to "the Lord", and the name she uses is "Jehovah", the covenant name of God.
3. Had she stopped there, it would have been alright. But she goes on to say that her gift to the Lord would be in the form of an idol she would have made for Micah.
4. If you understand anything about Jehovah and His people, you know His first command to them involved idolatry, and the prohibition against "graven", or carved images.

5. Understanding the mixed-up nature of this mother's religion, is it any wonder we read in verse 5, *"And the man Micah had an house of gods..."*?
6. This woman shared with her son a faith that had a little of the true God, alongside a lot of the other gods of their world. That sounds a lot like the Christianity practiced by most people in our day.
7. Most people worship a Jesus who fits comfortably into their lives alongside all the other things to which they devote themselves.
8. Like Micah, they have a house full of gods, from their HD, flat-screens to their designer blue jeans. They have, at best, a diluted worship of Jesus.
9. In Luke 9:23, Jesus said, *"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."* Most Christians in our day think that means nothing more than giving up an hour or two on Sundays.
10. Unfortunately, that is a diluted worship of God. Notice further, the faith she shared with her son was not only a diluted worship of God, but it was also:

#### **B. A displeasing worship of God**

1. Look at this text as a whole. You have a mother and son who call on the name of the one true God, even while breaking most of His commands.
2. The son appears very religious, even having his own temple, complete with his own "style" and "brand" of worship.
3. The writer of the Judges sums up the whole scene in verse 6, when he says, *"In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes."*
4. This mother, along with her son, did what was right in their own eyes. They lived a life with enough spirituality to ease their religious conscience, and enough sin to maintain their personal comforts.
5. What's the problem with this kind of convoluted, compromised religion? It completely displeases God!
6. In Revelation 3, Jesus dictated a letter to a church that functioned in this diluted sort of way. He told them that He would prefer them to either be on fire for Him, or completely cold to Him, rather than some of both.
7. He says in verse 16 of that chapter, *"So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."* Literally, Jesus said, "You make me sick."

8. The Lord Jesus will never be satisfied when we offer a diluted worship. He will never be pleased to share the love of our hearts with a thousand other idols of our world.

9. Micah's mother shared with him her faith. I am not sure it was much of a gift though.

1. In Ayelet Waldman's book, *Bad Mother*, she mentions a few notoriously bad moms. She mentions Andrea Yates, who drowned her own children in a bathtub.

2. She references the madness of pop-star Britney Spears, who lost custody of her children after being declared an unfit mother.

3. These, and many more, could be pointed out as examples of mother's gone bad. However, truth be told, they are exceptions to the rule.

4. Most mothers do their best to care for their children, and love them like they are supposed to.

5. I imagine if we had asked her, I am sure that Micah's mother would have said she was trying to be a good mother.

6. The reality is, however, by her broken testimony in the home, through her lack of healthy discipline for her son, and weakened, watered-down faith, she stands as an example of when motherhood was not so good.

7. I pray that our mothers can learn from her bad example, and ask God to help them to be the kind of mothers that Mother's Day is all about.

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<sup>i</sup> Waldman, Ayelet, *Bad Mother*, (Doubleday, 2009), *amazon.com* sample, accessed 5/6/10, [http://g-ecx.images-amazon.com/images/G/01/randoEMS/Wald\\_9780385527934\\_5p\\_ch1\\_r2.pdf](http://g-ecx.images-amazon.com/images/G/01/randoEMS/Wald_9780385527934_5p_ch1_r2.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> Rogers, Adrian, *Adrianisms*, (Love Worth Finding Ministries, Memphis, TN, 2006), p. 89

<sup>iii</sup> Adapted from: Farrar, Steve, *Gettin' There*, (Multnomah Publishers, Sisters, Oregon, 2001), p. 28