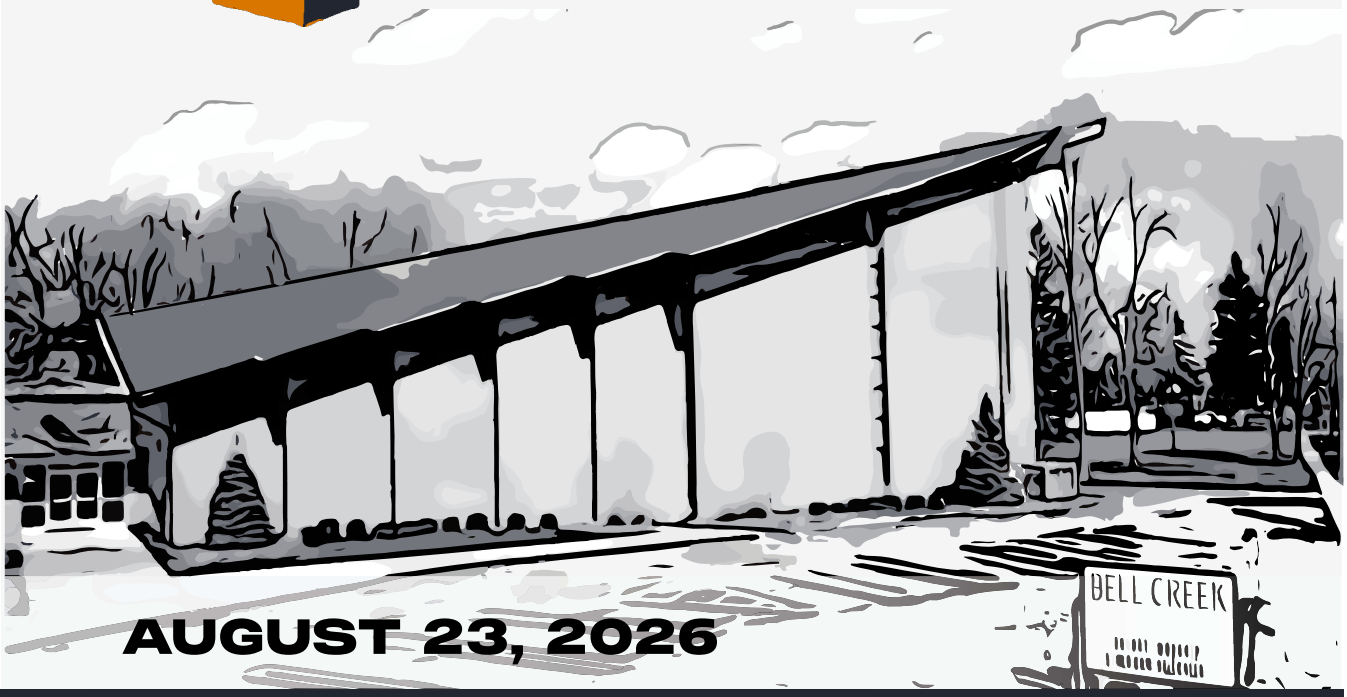
WELCOME TO

BELL CREEK
Community Church



AUGUST 23, 2026

HANDMADE GODS
JUDGES CHAPTERS 17–18

SERMON BY: PASTOR FRED WRIGHT

CURRENT SERMON SERIES:
JUDGES—THE GOD WHO DELIVERS

HANDMADE GODS
JUDGES CHAPTERS 17—18

Handmade gods make us feel in control

Handmade gods cannot save us

We need the True God and King

FOR NEXT WEEK

Read Judges Chapters 19-21. Be prepared, it's a tough read! In those days there was no King in Israel...

DAILY CHRONOLOGICAL BIBLE READING

AUGUST 23: JEREMIAH 49-50
AUGUST 24: JEREMIAH 51-52
AUGUST 25: LAMENTATIONS 1:1-3:36
AUGUST 26: LAMENTATIONS 3:37-5:22
AUGUST 27: EZEKIEL 1-4
AUGUST 28: EZEKIEL 5-8
AUGUST 29: EZEKIEL 9-12

UPCOMING AT THE CREEK

AWANA

Our Awana Ministry begins on Wednesday, September 2 from 6:30-7:45 PM. The last chance to sign up is August 30. If you would like to save your child's spot, please visit the Awana table in the back of the gym today.

YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

Our Young Adult group is now open for adults 18-30 years old! Our next gathering will be today, after the second service in the Prayer Room. Join us for lunch, fellowship, games, and encouragement in our faith. Other gatherings and outings will be planned for various times throughout the year. Join us as we gather and build friendships with other young people in a fun and laid-back environment!

BETWEEN TWO TREES

Our Between Two Trees study will meet to discuss *The Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan on Sunday 9/13 at 9:15 AM in the prayer room. Please contact Pastor Dylan if you have any questions (dylan@bellcreek.org).

THE GOOD FIGHT MEN'S BIBLE STUDY

Men, there is an exceptional opportunity to attend The Good Fight Bible Study - God's Plan for Every Man. This study focuses on what God's word teaches concerning the daily challenges every man faces, and how to experience a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. Ron Peavler and Don Henderson will co-lead this Bible study. We will meet Thursdays from 6:30 – 8:30 PM for eleven weeks. Our first meeting will be September 10. To attend, contact Don Henderson at don.h@healinghearts.org or 734-837-5024

SERVING SUNDAY

Join us in the gym on Sunday, September 13 after both services to meet the team members of Bell Creek's Ministries and learn how you can get involved!

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

PRAYER MEETINGS

WEDNESDAYS 6:30 - 7:30 PM
FRIDAYS 12 NOON

AWANA

WEDNESDAYS 6:30 - 7:45 PM
SEPTEMBER-MAY

PRE—TEEN & MIDDLE SCHOOL BIBLE STUDY

WEDNESDAYS 6:30 - 7:45 PM
SUNDAYS AFTER WORSHIP
2ND SERVICE

HIGH SCHOOL BIBLE STUDY

SUNDAYS 11:00 AM

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES AND EVENTS AT BELLCREEK.ORG

OUR MISSION

MATTHEW 22:37–40

He said to him, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the greatest commandment. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the law and prophets depend on these two commandments.”

MATTHEW 28:19–20

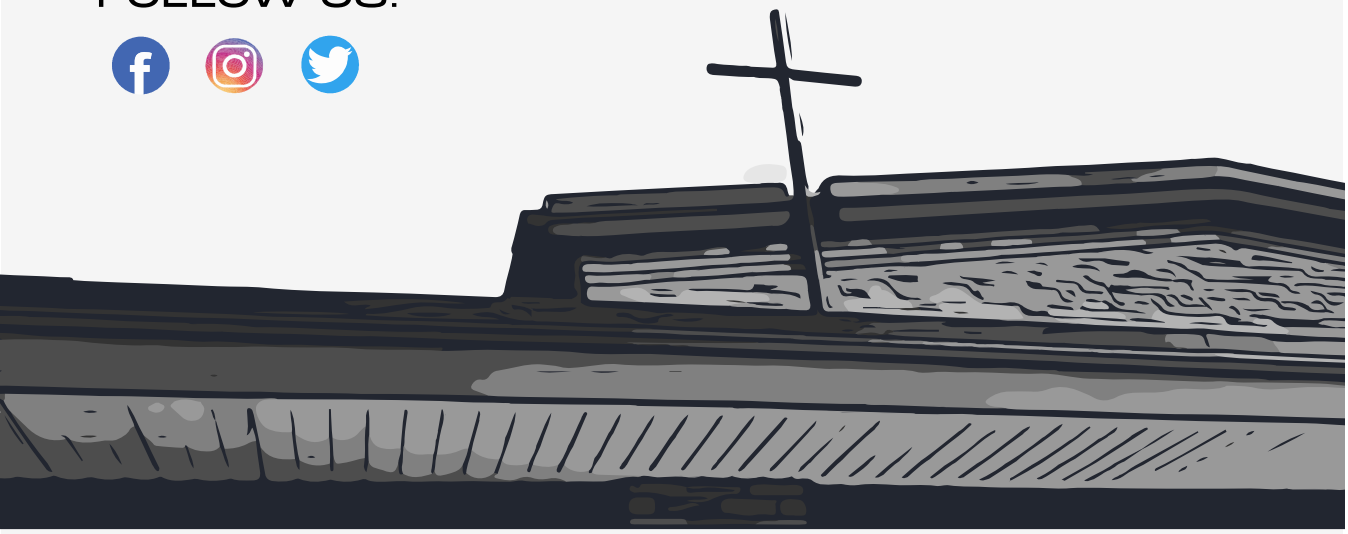
Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember that I am with you always to the end of the age.

STAY CONNECTED

WE HOPE TO SEE YOU HERE!

WWW.BELLCREEK.ORG/CONTACT–US

FOLLOW US!



BELL CREEK
Community Church

30000 FIVE MILE RD.
LIVONIA, MI 48154

Sermon Series | Judges – The God Who Delivers

Sunday, August 23, 2026 | "Handmade gods"

Judges Chapters 17–18

Where we've been so far…

"And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done for Israel. And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals." (Judges 2:10–11, ESV)

"And they abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed down to them. And they provoked the LORD to anger. They abandoned the LORD and served the Baals and the Ashtaroth." (Judges 2:12–13, ESV)

Handmade gods make us feel in control

"There was a man of the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Micah. And he said to his mother, "The 1,100 pieces of silver that were taken from you, about which you uttered a curse, and also spoke it in my ears, behold, the silver is with me; I took it." And his mother said, "Blessed be my son by the LORD." And he restored the 1,100 pieces of silver to his mother. And his mother said, "I dedicate the silver to the LORD from my hand for my son, to make a carved image and a metal image. Now therefore I will restore it to you." So when he restored the money to his mother, his mother took 200 pieces of silver and gave it to the silversmith, who made it into a carved image and a metal image. And it was in the house of Micah. And the man Micah had a shrine, and he made an ephod and household gods, and ordained one of his sons, who became his priest." (Judges 17:1–5, ESV)

"In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes." (Judges 17:6, ESV)

> Note that Micah and his mother are not rejecting Yahweh outright. That is what makes this situation even more detestable! This is *syncretism (*adding the LORD's name to the worship of other gods and creating your own religion mashup).
>
> Micah makes a "shrine," literally a "house of gods." Then, he makes his own gods! To worship these gods, makes an ephod (a breastplate with 12 stones representing the 12 tribes of Israel) and household idols, and installs his own son as "priest."

"Now there was a young man of Bethlehem in Judah, of the family of Judah, who was a Levite, and he sojourned there. And the man departed from the town of Bethlehem in Judah to sojourn where he could find a place. And as he journeyed, he came to the hill country of Ephraim to the house of Micah. And Micah said to him, "Where do you come from?" And he said to him, "I am a Levite of Bethlehem in Judah, and I am going to sojourn where I may find a place." And Micah said to him, "Stay with me, and be to me a father and a priest, and I will give you ten pieces of silver a year and a suit of clothes and your living." And the

Levite went in. And the Levite was content to dwell with the man, and the young man became to him like one of his sons. And Micah ordained the Levite, and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah." (Judges 17:7–12, ESV)

"Then Micah said, "Now I know that the LORD will prosper me, because I have a Levite as priest."" (Judges 17:13, ESV)

Micah believes that because he has assembled the right religious implements and the right rituals, he will secure God's favor (by "favor" he probably means health, wealth, and safety). A large portion of the world and family members, friends, and neighbors tend to think that if they just do the right religious rituals they can get God's blessings. Note that when we operate this way we're trying to control our "gods." We're not much concerned about a relationship with God or asking questions like, "How can I *know* God, and is there anything hindering me from knowing Him, like sin?" We're just ticking the boxes hoping that we will get what we want.

But the God of the Bible doesn't operate that way. He can't be bought off by ticking the right boxes. He wants a relationship with us and He wants it on HIS terms.

"The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."" (Acts 17:30–31, ESV)

"Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6, ESV)

Handmade gods cannot save us

"In those days there was no king in Israel. And in those days the tribe of the people of Dan was seeking for itself an inheritance to dwell in, for until then no inheritance among the tribes of Israel had fallen to them." (Judges 18:1, ESV)

> What's the tribe of Dan doing wandering around? Don't they have an allotted portion of land. Yes! They did! But they failed to trust the Lord and take their inheritance from the Amorites, so now they're homeless. Remember this? **"The Amorites pressed the people of Dan back into the hill country, for they did not allow them to come down to the plain." (Judges 1:34, ESV)**

"So the people of Dan sent five able men from the whole number of their tribe, from Zorah and from Eshtaol, to spy out the land and to explore it. And they said to them, "Go and explore the land." And they came to the hill country of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, and lodged there. When they were by the house of Micah, they recognized the voice of the young Levite. And they turned aside and said to him, "Who brought you here? What are you doing in this place? What is your business here?" And he said to them, "This is how Micah dealt with me: he has hired me, and I have become his priest." And they said to him, "Inquire of God, please, that we may know whether the journey on which we are setting out will succeed."" (Judges 18:2–5, ESV)

"And the priest said to them, "Go in peace. The journey on which you go is under the eye of the LORD."" (Judges 18:6, ESV)

The Danites encounter the Levite, receive an encouraging (and lame) "religious word."

"Then the five men departed and came to Laish and saw the people who were there, how they lived in security, after the manner of the Sidonians, quiet and unsuspecting, lacking nothing that is in the earth and possessing wealth, and how they were far from the Sidonians and had no dealings with anyone." (Judges 18:7, ESV)

"And when they came to their brothers at Zorah and Eshtaol, their brothers said to them, "What do you report?" They said, "Arise, and let us go up against them, for we have seen the land, and behold, it is very good. And will you do nothing? Do not be slow to go, to enter in and possess the land. As soon as you go, you will come to an unsuspecting people. The land is spacious, for God has given it into your hands, a place where there is no lack of anything that is in the earth." So 600 men of the tribe of Dan, armed with weapons of war, set out from Zorah and Eshtaol, and went up and encamped at Kiriath-jearim in Judah. On this account that place is called Mahaneh-dan to this day; behold, it is west of Kiriath-jearim. And they passed on from there to the hill country of Ephraim, and came to the house of Micah." (Judges 18:8–13, ESV)

The Tribe of Dan discovers a vulnerable people, and a vulnerable territory, and everything seems to fall into place.

This is kind of a parody, a sick imitation of what happened when Israel first spied out the promised land. Remember when the people of Israel left their slavery in Egypt and walked up to the promised land? When they first saw the land, they could be confident that it was what *God was giving them, because He had promised it to them*. And the people who they saw in the land looked frightening and formidable. Moreover, these people were Amorites, under the judgement of God, and their time was up. They were *supposed to take the land God had promised them.*

But this case, the Tribe of Dan is eyeing land that God *has not promised them*, and the inhabitants of this land are peaceful, unsuspecting, not looking for trouble, just trying to make their way in a dangerous world. Here's the irony: Micah thinks circumstances prove God is blessing him. The Tribe of Dan thinks the fact that there's an opportunity to take somebody else's land proves God is blessing them. Yet the narrator of Judges regards this entire enterprise as corrupt.

This is an important warning for us! Success is *not* necessarily proof of God's approval. And failure (or hard times) is *not* necessarily proof of God's disapproval! We must lean on the Word of God more than our circumstances.

"Then the five men who had gone to scout out the country of Laish said to their brothers, "Do you know that in these houses there are an ephod, household gods, a carved image, and a metal image? Now therefore consider what you will do."" (Judges 18:14, ESV)

"And they turned aside there and came to the house of the young Levite, at the home of Micah, and asked him about his welfare. Now the 600 men of the Danites, armed with their weapons of war, stood by the entrance of the gate. And the five men who had gone to scout out the land went up and entered and took the carved image, the ephod, the household gods, and the metal image, while the priest stood by the

entrance of the gate with the 600 men armed with weapons of war. And when these went into Micah's house and took the carved image, the ephod, the household gods, and the metal image, the priest said to them, "What are you doing?" And they said to him, "Keep quiet; put your hand on your mouth and come with us and be to us a father and a priest. Is it better for you to be priest to the house of one man, or to be priest to a tribe and clan in Israel?" And the priest's heart was glad. He took the ephod and the household gods and the carved image and went along with the people. So they turned and departed, putting the little ones and the livestock and the goods in front of them." (Judges 18:15–21, ESV)

The Tribe of Dan steals Micah's "gods" and religious objects and then steal his priest. Note something here: Micah originally "took" his mother's silver; now the Danites "take" Micah's gods. Micah's homebrew religion born in theft is itself stolen!

And how about that Levite? Micah regarded having a Levite as proof that God would bless him, yet the Levite happily leaves when a better opportunity comes along!

"When they had gone a distance from the home of Micah, the men who were in the houses near Micah's house were called out, and they overtook the people of Dan." (Judges 18:22, ESV)

"And they shouted to the people of Dan, who turned around and said to Micah, "What is the matter with you, that you come with such a company?"" (Judges 18:23, ESV)

"And he said, "You take my gods that I made and the priest, and go away, and what have I left? How then do you ask me, 'What is the matter with you?' "" (Judges 18:24, ESV)

> This is divine sarcasm: ""You take my gods that I made and the priest, and go away, and what have I left?"
>
> Uh, a god you have to make is a contradiction. A god someone can steal is not much of a god. A god who cannot save himself certainly cannot save you.
>
> Micah calls them "my gods," but the authof of Judges calls them merely "what Micah had made" or "the image of Micah which he had made." *He refuses to dignify them as gods.*

We need the true God and King

"But the people of Dan took what Micah had made, and the priest who belonged to him, and they came to Laish, to a people quiet and unsuspecting, and struck them with the edge of the sword and burned the city with fire. And there was no deliverer because it was far from Sidon, and they had no dealings with anyone. It was in the valley that belongs to Beth-rehob. Then they rebuilt the city and lived in it. And they named the city Dan, after the name of Dan their ancestor, who was born to Israel; but the name of the city was Laish at the first." (Judges 18:27–29, ESV)

"And the people of Dan set up the carved image for themselves, and Jonathan the son of Gershom, son of Moses, and his sons were priests to the tribe of the Danites until the day of the captivity of the land. So they set up Micah's carved image that he made, as long as the house of God was at Shiloh." (Judges 18:30–31, ESV)

What began as a woman's corrupt religious idea becomes Micah's household religion and finally becomes the established worship of an entire tribe. This is one of the tragedies of false religion: it spreads! Private rebellion against God does not necessarily remain private.

The Tribe of Dan look like tough guys, but note how the author of Judges treats them with contempt. They're just a bunch of thieving thugs, and their great "military achievement" is slaughtering a peaceful, unsuspecting, undefended people. Their "success" is hardly glorious.

"In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes." (Judges 17:6, ESV)

This is the author of Judge's clearest explanation of the whole mess. Israel needs a king, and not just any king, but a king who will remove the false gods and do away with this false worship, and bring the people under the LORD's covenant which is life and peace.

We need a King too! We need someone to teach us what is true rather than leave us to what seems right in our own eyes. We need someone to restrain the evil that destroys us. We need someone to forgive us for our rebellion. We need someone who can provide what our handmade gods promise but can never deliver. We have that King, and His name is Jesus.

Think of an area where are you tempted to take control, manage the outcome, or trust in something you can see and handle instead of resting in the wisdom and faithfulness of God? What would it look like for you to trust Him more deeply in that particular area?

When life is painful, confusing, or disappointing, and your circumstances seem to tell you that God has forgotten you, hold on for a moment. Stop and remember what He has said about His love, His presence, and His faithfulness. Jesus loves us and says "I will never leave you or forsake you."

Have you been trying to approach God on your own terms, or maybe you've been pushing Him away ? Would you be willing to consider that the true God has already come near to you in the Person of Jesus and He invites you to know Him? He loves you and He died to pay for your sins, and mistakes, and failures. And then He defeated death and rose from the grave, and is alive forevermore. There's no god like Him! He is the only true God, King, and Savior. Come to Him!

Sermon Worksheet 08/23/26
Judges – The God Who Delivers
Judges 17-18

Handmade gods

1. What did you think about the sermon "Handmade gods?"

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2. Think of a specific area where are you are tempted to take control, manage the outcome, or trust in something you can see and handle instead of resting in the wisdom and faithfulness of God. What would it look like for you to let go of your own schemes and trust Him more deeply in that particular area?

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3. When life is painful, confusing, or disappointing, and your circumstances seem to tell you that God has forgotten you, hold on for a moment. Stop and remember what He has said about His love, His presence, and His faithfulness. Jesus says "I will never leave you or forsake you."?

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4. Have you been trying to approach God on your own terms, or maybe you've been pushing Him away? Would you be willing to consider that the true God has already come near to you in the Person of Jesus and He invites you to know Him? The false gods cannot save. He is the only true God, King, and Savior. Come to Him and He will not disappoint you.?

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5. Are you ready for the return of the King? Are you looking forward to Jesus' return? He is coming to make everything right and wipe away our tears.?