

JUDGES

Opening the Dialogue on Violence and Salvation in the Old Testament



Gustav Doré. *A Levite finds a Woman's Corpse.*
(Judges Chapter 19)

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Overview

THE PARTICIPANTS: Summit Fellowship, a college-and-career fellowship associated with the Edmonton Chinese Alliance Church.

THE SETTING: The workshop will take place at the annual fall retreat. It has two segments: a 3 ½-hour workshop on Saturday morning and a 1-hour devotional time on Sunday morning.

THE CONTENT: We will take a broad look at the story of salvation as it is played out in the Old Testament and then focus in on the book of Judges as a window onto the issue of biblical violence. Finally, we will explore ideas on how to address violence in the Old Testament from a Christian perspective and how we can share this with others.

THE GOAL: By the end of this workshop, participants will be aware of the issue of biblical violence and how this issue has been interpreted in the past. They will be able to place the events of Judges within the larger narrative of salvation and to interpret these events through a Christian lens. They will be able to discuss these issues with others, both Christian and non-Christian, in a sensitive manner.

OBJECTIVES: By the end of this workshop, the participants will have:

- **mapped out** the major events of Israel's history from creation to King David
- **identified** and **described** broad themes in the salvation narrative
- **discussed** the place of Judges within these broad themes and the salvation narrative as a whole
- **asked questions** of Judges 19
- **discussed** others' questions as a group
- **illustrated** Judges 19 and God's place within the passage
- **articulated** a personal interpretation of Judges 19
- **identified** issues of interpretation with respect to biblical violence
- **analysed** and **argued** an unfamiliar viewpoint on biblical violence
- **created** and **facilitated** a 10-15 minute devotion or discussion on the themes discussed in the workshop

Welcome and Introduction

A Let's **open in prayer**.

B Overview of our time together:

1. *The Story of Scripture* (30 min):

We will look at the overarching narrative and themes of the Old Testament and discuss the place of the book of Judges within that framework.

2. *Judges 19: A Case Study* (1 hour):

We will review and discuss various interpretive traditions of Judges 19 and you will have an opportunity to creatively illustrate a personal understanding of this text.

3. Coffee break (15 min)

4. *Violence in the Old Testament as a Whole* (1 hour):

We will apply the themes and interpretive principles we discussed in the first 2 sections to the Old Testament in general.

You will discuss a different passage in light of a specific interpretive tradition, analysing the benefits and limitations of this interpretive tradition. These analyses will be shared and discussed in the large group.

5. *Carrying the Conversation Forward* (15 min):

Finally, you will create a devotion using the ideas explored in this workshop that you can use to open the dialogue on the issue of biblical violence with someone in your life.

6. *Debrief and Closing* (15 min):

We will close in a time of reflection on the day's events and prayer for one another and for the world.

What questions do you have?

C Some of the topics we will be covering today are of a sensitive nature and may be uncomfortable or distressing for members of this group. Together, let's **compile** some ground rules for discussion.

The Story of Scripture

- A With a neighbour, **identify** one Old Testament passage you have asked someone (e.g. your pastor, a friend) to clarify.

How was your question answered?

In your mind, what made this a satisfactory or unsatisfactory response?

Let's hear 1 or 2 examples in the large group.

- B In groups of 4 or 5, using the sheet of paper provided, **create** a map or diagram that you could use to explain the major events from Creation to David's anointing as king of Israel.

Present your map to the large group, briefly identifying your criteria for including or excluding specific events.

What is coming to mind for you?

What themes and/or structures do you notice?

- C Israel's history is the story of the fulfilment of God's covenant with Abraham (Gen 12:1-3). Three of the overarching themes of Genesis – 2 Kings are:

- God's faithfulness in tension with Israel's unfaithfulness
- Nationhood and kingship
- God's love and mercy juxtaposed with God's anger and judgment

On your own, **review** Judges, keeping in mind these themes and your observations from task B above. With your small group, **discuss**:

Which of these themes are present? Which are absent?

What other themes do you observe?

What problems do you foresee in interpreting this book?

What questions arise for you?

Let's hear a few observations in the large group.

- D **Identify** one observation you would like to investigate further in the future.

Judges 19: A Case Study

A **Listen** as I read Judges 19 aloud, following along with Schedule A if you choose.

As you listen, take note of any questions and/or issues of interpretation that arise for you with regard to this passage.

In your small groups, **discuss** your personal observations. As a group decide on three questions and **write them down** on a separate sheet of paper. I will redistribute the lists of questions between groups.

As a group, **discuss** the questions you receive. You do not need to decide on an answer to each question – you may wish to focus on how you might approach the question, or identify barriers you would anticipate encountering in addressing it. **Select** one question and **present** your group's thoughts to the large group.

B **Read** the descriptions of various interpretative frameworks below:

Feminist: Focuses on male-female power dynamics.

The concubine was given to the men of Gibeah because in a patriarchal society concerned primarily with protecting lines of inheritance, homosexual rape is a worse crime than heterosexual rape.

The Levite's attitude toward his wife is cold and self-serving: he thrusts his wife out the door to save himself and in the morning, he is sharp and unfeeling when he finds her dead on the threshold.

An allegorical interpretation from Josephine Butler in the 19th C is that the concubine represents "fallen women" in her contemporary society. Judges 19 illustrates the Church's failure to help women in need, who are often blamed for situations in which they are the unwilling victim.

Womanist: A perspective put forward by black women in response to feminism

Victimization is a process that affects men and women. Power dynamics run between classes, ages, races and sexes (not just between men and women, but also between women of higher and lower status).

The oppressed are forced to use what resources they have at their disposal to make their voices heard. E.g., the Levite butchers his concubine to send a message to Israel that there is something wrong with their society.

Patristic Commentators (pre-4th C; e.g. Josephus, Ambrose)

They used the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint), in which 19:2 states that the concubine "became angry" with her husband, eliminating the reference to adultery. They also tended to ignore the reference to homosexual rape, focusing instead on the feminine virtues of modesty and shame. They suggested that the woman was seized by her attackers, rather than offered by her husband.

Early Commentators (post-4th C)

They used the Hebrew text, in which 19:2 makes reference to adultery. They asked the question of why the woman was not stoned – after all, the punishment for adultery is made clear in Deuteronomy. They suggested that the woman's gruesome end was divine judgment, as Israel was not being diligent in their adherence to their divine laws when her husband and father neglected to punish her. The blame is often (but not always) placed squarely on the woman.

What stands out to you from these summaries?

What are the strengths and limitations of these viewpoints?

What questions do you have?

With a partner, **discuss** how you would explain this passage to someone else. **Write down** a brief personal interpretation of this passage below (3-5 sentences).

- C Take 10 minutes to **illustrate** this passage in any way you choose (e.g. draw a picture, write a poem or short story, prepare a dramatic presentation or interpretive dance), keeping the following questions in mind:

Where do you feel that God is in this passage?

Where do you, as a Christian, stand in this scene?

How does Christ fit into this passage?

If you wish, you may present your illustration to the group.

- D **Name** one person in your life who you would like to share this study with.

Violence in the Old Testament as a Whole

- A We have discussed issues of interpretation and some possible approaches within the context of Judges. There are many other difficult passages in the Old Testament, such as the imprecatory ("curse") Psalms (e.g. Pss 35:7-8; 58:6-9; 69:22-28; 109; 137:8-9), the accounts of God's instructions to the Israelites and the actions of this Israelites toward the Canaanites during the conquest of Canaan in Joshua, and highly sexualized and violent imagery used in prophetic literature (e.g. Hosea 2:9-10, 13:7-16; Ezek 23).

How have you heard these or similar passages addressed in sermons or bible studies?

What questions might a non-Christian have about these passages?

How might someone with a personal history of violence or abuse react to these passages?

- B In your small groups, **familiarize** yourselves with the interpretive viewpoint you have been given.

What do you find helpful?

What limitations do you observe?

Read Numbers 31:1-20 as a group (Schedule B) and **discuss** how you would explain this passage using the interpretive viewpoint you have been provided. **Jot down** your thoughts below:

Present your position to the large group and **listen** to the other groups' presentations. Should you wish to follow along, a list of all of the viewpoints is attached to this design as Schedule C.

What elements do you find helpful? What elements do you disagree with?

Which viewpoint(s) can you see yourself using in future studies?

Carrying the Conversation Forward

- A Take a few minutes to **reflect** on the topics we have covered today.

How do the book of Judges and other problematic texts fit into the themes of God's faithfulness, love and mercy and of nationhood and kingship that we discussed in the Story of Scripture?

How do these texts point to the New Testament?

- B Alone or with a partner, **create** a short (10-15 min) devotion you could use to approach this topic with someone who is struggling with the issue of violence in the bible.

Tomorrow morning, you will have an opportunity to work through your devotion with someone else in the group.

Debrief and Closing

- A Take a moment to **reflect** on the day's events.

What is one thing we did today that you found particularly helpful or surprising?

What is one thing you would have liked to spend more time on?

- B Let's **close in prayer**. With a partner, **pray** for one another and for any situation in your community or in the world that has come to mind through this workshop. I will call you back to the large group in 5 minutes or so to close.

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Schedule A: Judges 19

In those days, when there was no king in Israel, a certain Levite was sojourning in the remote parts of the hill country of Ephraim, who took to himself a concubine from Bethlehem in Judah.² And his concubine was unfaithful to him, and she went away from him to her father's house at Bethlehem in Judah, and was there some four months.³ Then her husband arose and went after her, to speak kindly to her and bring her back. He had with him his servant and a couple of donkeys. And she brought him into her father's house. And when the girl's father saw him, he came with joy to meet him.⁴ And his father-in-law, the girl's father, made him stay, and he remained with him three days. So they ate and drank and spent the night there.⁵ And on the fourth day they arose early in the morning, and he prepared to go, but the girl's father said to his son-in-law, "Strengthen your heart with a morsel of bread, and after that you may go."⁶ So the two of them sat and ate and drank together. And the girl's father said to the man, "Be pleased to spend the night, and let your heart be merry."⁷ And when the man rose up to go, his father-in-law pressed him, till he spent the night there again.⁸ And on the fifth day he arose early in the morning to depart. And the girl's father said, "Strengthen your heart and wait until the day declines." So they ate, both of them.⁹ And when the man and his concubine and his servant rose up to depart, his father-in-law, the girl's father, said to him, "Behold, now the day has waned toward evening. Please, spend the night. Behold, the day draws to its close. Lodge here and let your heart be merry, and tomorrow you shall arise early in the morning for your journey, and go home."

¹⁰ But the man would not spend the night. He rose up and departed and arrived opposite Jebus (that is, Jerusalem). He had with him a couple of saddled donkeys, and his concubine was with him.¹¹ When they were near Jebus, the day was nearly over, and the servant said to his master, "Come now, let us turn aside to this city of the Jebusites and spend the night in it."¹² And his master said to him, "We will not turn aside into the city of foreigners, who do not belong to the people of

Israel, but we will pass on to Gibeah.”¹³ And he said to his young man, “Come and let us draw near to one of these places and spend the night at Gibeah or at Ramah.”¹⁴ So they passed on and went their way. And the sun went down on them near Gibeah, which belongs to Benjamin,¹⁵ and they turned aside there, to go in and spend the night at Gibeah. And he went in and sat down in the open square of the city, for no one took them into his house to spend the night.

¹⁶ And behold, an old man was coming from his work in the field at evening. The man was from the hill country of Ephraim, and he was sojourning in Gibeah. The men of the place were Benjaminites.¹⁷ And he lifted up his eyes and saw the traveler in the open square of the city. And the old man said, “Where are you going? And where do you come from?”¹⁸ And he said to him, “We are passing from Bethlehem in Judah to the remote parts of the hill country of Ephraim, from which I come. I went to Bethlehem in Judah, and I am going to the house of the Lord, but no one has taken me into his house.¹⁹ We have straw and feed for our donkeys, with bread and wine for me and your female servant and the young man with your servants. There is no lack of anything.”²⁰ And the old man said, “Peace be to you; I will care for all your wants. Only, do not spend the night in the square.”²¹ So he brought him into his house and gave the donkeys feed. And they washed their feet, and ate and drank.

²² As they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, worthless fellows, surrounded the house, beating on the door. And they said to the old man, the master of the house, “Bring out the man who came into your house, that we may know him.”²³ And the man, the master of the house, went out to them and said to them, “No, my brothers, do not act so wickedly; since this man has come into my house, do not do this vile thing.²⁴ Behold, here are my virgin daughter and his concubine. Let me bring them out now. Violate them and do with them what seems good to you, but against this man do not do this outrageous thing.”²⁵ But the men would not listen to him. So the man seized his concubine and made her go out to them. And they knew her and abused her all night until the morning. And as the dawn began to break, they let her go.²⁶ And as

morning appeared, the woman came and fell down at the door of the man's house where her master was, until it was light.

²⁷ And her master rose up in the morning, and when he opened the doors of the house and went out to go on his way, behold, there was his concubine lying at the door of the house, with her hands on the threshold. ²⁸ He said to her, "Get up, let us be going." But there was no answer. Then he put her on the donkey, and the man rose up and went away to his home. ²⁹ And when he entered his house, he took a knife, and taking hold of his concubine he divided her, limb by limb, into twelve pieces, and sent her throughout all the territory of Israel.³⁰ And all who saw it said, "Such a thing has never happened or been seen from the day that the people of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt until this day; consider it, take counsel, and speak." (*Judges 19, English Standard Version*)

Schedule B: Numbers 31:1-20

¹The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Avenge the people of Israel on the Midianites. Afterward you shall be gathered to your people.” ³So Moses spoke to the people, saying, “Arm men from among you for the war, that they may go against Midian to execute the LORD's vengeance on Midian. ⁴You shall send a thousand from each of the tribes of Israel to the war.” ⁵So there were provided, out of the thousands of Israel, a thousand from each tribe, twelve thousand armed for war. ⁶And Moses sent them to the war, a thousand from each tribe, together with Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, with the vessels of the sanctuary and the trumpets for the alarm in his hand. ⁷They warred against Midian, as the LORD commanded Moses, and killed every male.⁸They killed the kings of Midian with the rest of their slain, Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian. And they also killed Balaam the son of Beor with the sword. ⁹And the people of Israel took captive the women of Midian and their little ones, and they took as plunder all their cattle, their flocks, and all their goods. ¹⁰All their cities in the places where they lived, and all their encampments, they burned with fire, ¹¹and took all the spoil and all the plunder, both of man and of beast. ¹²Then they brought the captives and the plunder and the spoil to Moses, and to Eleazar the priest, and to the congregation of the people of Israel, at the camp on the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho.

¹³Moses and Eleazar the priest and all the chiefs of the congregation went to meet them outside the camp. ¹⁴And Moses was angry with the officers of the army, the commanders of thousands and the commanders of hundreds, who had come from service in the war. ¹⁵Moses said to them, “Have you let all the women live? ¹⁶Behold, these, on Balaam's advice, caused the people of Israel to act treacherously against the LORD in the incident of Peor, and so the plague came among the congregation of the LORD. ¹⁷Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known man by lying with him. ¹⁸But all the young girls who have not known man by lying with him keep alive for yourselves. ¹⁹Encamp outside the camp seven days. Whoever of

you has killed any person and whoever has touched any slain, purify yourselves and your captives on the third day and on the seventh day. ²⁰You shall purify every garment, every article of skin, all work of goats' hair, and every article of wood." (Num 31:1-20, *ESV*)

Schedule C: Interpretations of Violence in the OT

- 1 The Bible includes violence as part of divine judgment and order. Some instances of violence seem to be sanctioned within the biblical text. Therefore, we are sanctioned (in some cases, even commanded) to use violent means to further God's kingdom.
 - Crusades: the Bible contains many instances of war against unbelievers;
 - Colonialism: Christendom has a divine mandate to conquer (like the Israelites conquered Canaan)
 - Slavery: the cursing of Canaan, son of Ham (Gen 9:25 "... lowest of slaves he shall be to his brothers"); Lev 25:44-46
 - Violence against women (Gen 3, Jer 13:22-27)
 - Violence against children (Gen 19, 22; the "rod" in Prov 22:15, 23:14, 29:15)
 - Some violence interpreted as "virtuous", such as David's war-making (because David is often represented as a paragon of virtue), or the Flood, which killed many people – but the righteous ones were saved.
- 2 Now that Jesus has provided atonement for God's wrath, the violent texts in the Old Testament are obsolete. After all, God "hates the lover of violence" (Pss 11:5) and many prophetic texts routinely condemn violence (e.g. Ezek 8:17; Jer 22:3; Joel 3:19; Obed 1:10; Hab 2:8). Reading the violent texts also distorts the image of God as loving and merciful, so we should avoid general use (e.g. how many people loved the story of the fall of Jericho in Sunday school? Did you ever discuss Josh 6:21?)
- 3 Jesus tells us that the two greatest commandments (which, by the way, summarize the Ten Commandments) are to love God and to love your neighbour. We need to engage the Old Testament through this lens. Therefore, any reading that causes us to oppress or condemn others, i.e. that does not cause our love for God or others to increase, is an unfaithful reading and needs to be re-examined.
- 4 The final forms of many of the early Old Testament texts, especially Genesis through Joshua, were compiled at a much later date by editors who held certain ideological and theological understandings of the events of the texts and of the events of their own times. We need to examine the historical context for the writing of these texts before we can dissect their meaning.
- 5 The violence in the Old Testament should be read allegorically. It is meant to lead us to a greater understanding of the final judgment of the righteous and the wicked. The question we should ask of these texts is "what does this tell us about Christian life today?"

- 6 God's violence is a response to human violence. Because violence is inherent in humanity, God must descend to our level in order to save us from our sins and the sins of others against us, many of which are violent in nature. God employs violence for the purposes of judgment, often using non-divine agents as mediators (such as natural disasters, or human armies), or salvation (e.g. drowning the Egyptians in the Red Sea not only punished the Egyptians for their sins against Israel, but also caused Israel to be saved).
- 7 Humans sometimes misinterpret God's commands and go overboard. Then, when events are re-told, we may attribute the cause of our actions to God, even when he didn't really sanction them.

Appendix A: Reflection

I designed this workshop primarily to address the issue of biblical violence at an introductory level. My hope is that this workshop can be adapted for use with different Christian college/career groups that either have difficulty engaging biblical texts from different angles or have not been exposed to the idea that OT violence is an issue in evangelism and mission. That being said, the specific group for which I designed this workshop is very familiar to me; I have been part of it long enough to have a sense of the power dynamics that tie it together as well as the ways that different people tend to go in thinking about the Bible and theology. For instance, because they are mostly conservative in self-expression, I tried to avoid extended role-play or other activities that would take them out of their comfort zone in front of others. However, I do know that there is a handful that are much more outgoing, so I made sure that they had the option of illustrating Judges 19 dramatically, rather than on paper. The goal identified in the workshop overview addresses the conservative theology of the group, my hope being that they will learn to ask questions of any text they are given, rather than asking only “What does this text say about *my life?*” and/or going straight to the Christocentric interpretation and ignoring potential issues the actual text calls to mind.

The content of this workshop falls primarily into the cognitive and affective learning domains, as the desired change is a conceptual understanding of different ways of interpreting biblical violence and an increased sensitivity to this and similar issues. Most of the bible studies I have participated in have been great at anchoring the content with a learner’s prior knowledge and giving an “away” in the form of an application question at

the very end. The new knowledge tends to be the text itself and the questions asked are usually phrased in such a way as to guide participants to read the text from a very specific angle, rather than encouraging authentic engagement and questioning of the text. In light of this and the change I am trying to affect, I tried to weight the learning tasks towards application of the more cognitive skills of analysing and using interpretive frameworks. The new content I am presenting is less a set of data that participants need to remember and more a snapshot of the great wide world of biblical interpretation. To address the affective domain, I have used many open questions to encourage reflection on how this topic relates to each participant's life and personal understanding of their faith. The two major tasks of this workshop, the illustration of Judges 19 and the devotion on violence in the OT, are also aimed toward promoting deep personal reflection and analysis of the content while creating something which can be shared with others.

As mentioned above, I have worked to preserve safety by limiting obligatory uncomfortable self-expression in the learning tasks; I also make extensive use of small groups for discussion and analysis of what might be uncomfortable content for some. This is also a matter of respect, as there is a core group of very vocal people and a periphery of very quiet people in this fellowship and working in small groups will help to even out the amount of airtime for each person. I have laid out the objectives and the schedule very clearly at the beginning and have included a rundown of the schedule within the learning time so that everyone knows where we are and where we are going. While the learning tasks focus primarily on the more well-recognized intelligences (kinesthetic, logical, verbal, visual), because this workshop is designed within the context of a weekend retreat with worship and a variety of optional activities, there will be opportunities outside the

workshop for the nature-, music-, people-, and self-smart participants to recharge in whatever way is best for them. That being said, there will be the option of groups working outside, weather permitting, and I have directed the facilitator to have background music playing during the coffee break.

As part of my LNRA (attached as Appendix B), I will distribute a survey to determine a) how knowledgeable the participants are on this subject and b) what their comfort level is. If it turns out that many people have a limited knowledge of the Old Testament, more time may be needed for the mapping exercise in the “Story of Scripture” section and time could be taken from the case study. I do not anticipate this to be a big problem for this group, but as this workshop will take place in a retreat setting, there may be some newcomers or seldom-comers who have had less exposure to Scripture and/or church culture. This is also one of the reasons that I have stipulated groups of 4 or 5 for this activity – the group is still small enough for voices to be heard, but there will hopefully be enough people to fill in gaps in one another’s knowledge. If there are any participants for whom this subject matter is distressing or uncomfortable, I would try to meet with them beforehand and go over the workshop design to see if there is anything that needs to be changed to help them feel safe and respected; there is also a note in the facilitator guide to spend a few minutes laying ground rules regarding joking comments and sensitivity in general.

Appendix B: LNRA Plan

Prior to finalizing the workshop design, I would distribute a survey (attached as Schedule A) to the prospective participants with the aim of discovering:

- a) their level of familiarity with the Old Testament in general; and
- b) if any of them have been exposed to the theme of biblical violence, and if so: in what context? How was the issue treated?

I would also attempt to discern whether this is a difficult issue for any participants on a personal level – either in their own lives or someone close to them. I would do this by:

- a) introducing the topic in advance and inviting questions or concerns either by direct email to me, or through an anonymous comment system (either setting up a temporary email that participants could log into to send me an email, or by setting up a forum with anonymous comments enabled); and
- b) discussing the topic in advance with the fellowship executive and small group leaders to determine any difficulties they foresee.

Schedule A to LNRA Plan

Pre-Workshop Survey Questions

1. What special needs do you have that I should know about (learning, physical, etc.)?
2. Please rank your knowledge of the content of the Old Testament on a scale from 1 to 10, 1 being 'very little' and 10 being 'I not only know the books by heart in order, but I could give you a summary of each.' If you wish, you may explain your ranking below.
3. What is your favourite bible story (or what was it as a child)? Why?
4. What questions do you have about the Old Testament (thematic, content, theological, historical, etc.)?
5. What is the first thing that comes to mind for you when you hear the phrase "biblical violence"?
6. Have you ever heard a sermon, attended a bible study, read a book/article, or otherwise been exposed to the topic of violence in the bible? Yes / No
7. If yes, what was the context (sermon, bible study, etc.)? How was the issue addressed?
8. Do you have any questions or concerns you would like me to be aware of before you participate in this workshop? (If you prefer, you may contact me by phone at ***-***-****, or if you wish to submit these anonymously, you may email me using the email address _____@_____; password is _____)

Appendix C: Facilitator Guide

THE PARTICIPANTS: Summit Fellowship, a college-and-career fellowship associated with the Edmonton Chinese Alliance Church.

Summit consists of anywhere from 20 to 40 people at full capacity, who are all between the ages of 20 and 40. The fellowship is based out of a Chinese Alliance Church, so most members are of Chinese descent and have attended church for a number of years, if not from childhood. The church's theology is relatively conservative and most members of this group are also from culturally conservative families. Many of these have parents, or at least grandparents, who speak little or no English.

There are exceptions to the above: a few members are non-Chinese and/or are from other religious backgrounds, either other Christian denominations or non-Christian homes (mainly atheist or Buddhist). Overall, they are at various stages of maturity in their faith.

The majority of members have at least a Bachelor's degree. A few have, or are in the process of attaining, a second degree, either an after-degree program (e.g. Law or Medicine) or a Master's degree. Their degrees are in a variety of disciplines and those who work do so in a variety of fields. There are, however, a large proportion of medical professionals (doctors and nurses), accountants and engineers.

The group is a fairly even mix of people who are single, in relationships or married. One couple has a small child.

THE FACILITATOR: Ideally, the facilitator will be someone with a basic background in theology and who has a passion for engaging Scripture with a critical eye.

THE SETTING: The workshop will take place at Summit's annual fall retreat, which normally takes place at a camp/convention centre with access to a large central meeting area as well as outdoor space. Very little is needed in the way of furniture. Any chairs and/or tables should be set up to facilitate small groups of 4-5 people, forming a larger circle to allow for an easy transition back to large group discussion.

MATERIALS: Ideally, each participant will receive a hard copy of the workshop design. It may be printed double-sided to save paper, or alternatively, it could be emailed out with the retreat booklet for participants to print themselves. In this case, have several extra copies on hand for those who forget to bring a copy.

Print out a copy of the attached Schedule A to this Facilitator Guide and cut the interpretations apart on the lines. Distribute one to each group for Learning Task "B" in the "Violence in the OT" segment. There should be one group for each viewpoint; groups may need to be redistributed to accommodate this. If there are more than 30 participants, create two groups for each viewpoint.

One (1) poster-sized sheet of paper should be provided for each group (plan for groups of 4-5 people, depending on how many register), along with permanent markers, for the mapping exercise in the "Story of Scripture" segment. 8 ½ x 11 white paper and pens and/or pencils should also be provided for the illustration exercise in the "Judges 19" segment. Ensure that writing utensils are available at all times for those who wish to take notes or follow along with the readings.

Participants should have their own Bibles, but several extra Bibles should be on hand for participants to use in the interpretive exercises in case they do not have their own copy.

THE TIME AND TIMING: This workshop is set up with two segments: a 3 ½-hour facilitated workshop on Saturday morning (following the workshop design handout) and a 1-hour devotional time on Sunday morning that will be self-led, using the devotions created in the Saturday workshop.

The 3 ½-hour workshop should include a 15 minute break (with coffee/tea and snacks), preferably following the Judges 19 segment. The timing of breaks can be discussed with the large group prior to beginning the workshop.

The recommended timing of each segment is as follows:

1. Welcome and Introduction (10-15 min)
Task A (2 min)
Task B (3 min)
Task C (5-10 min)
2. The Story of Scripture (30 min)
Task A (3 min)
Task B (15 min):
Task C (10 min)
Task D (2 min)
3. Judges 19: A Case Study (1 hour)
Task A (30 min)
Give 8-10 min for each group discussion
Allow 1-2 min per group for presentations

Task B (15-20 min)

Task C (10-15 min)

Allow 10 min for illustration; additional time may be required for presentations

4. Coffee Break (15 min)
5. Violence in the Old Testament as a Whole (1 hour)

Task A (10-15 min)

Task B (40-45 min)

Time should be split evenly between small group discussion and presenting.

6. Carrying the Conversation Forward (15 min)
7. Debrief and Closing (10-15 min)

THE CONTENT: We will take a broad look at the overarching story told by the Old Testament and then focus in on the book of Judges as a window onto the issue of biblical violence. Finally, we will explore ideas on how to address violence in the Old Testament from a Christian perspective and how we can share this with others.

THE GOAL: By the end of this workshop, participants will be aware of the issue of biblical violence and how this issue has been interpreted in the past. They will be able to place the events of Judges within the larger narrative of salvation and to interpret these events through a Christian lens. They will be able to discuss these issues with others, both Christian and non-Christian, in a sensitive manner.

OBJECTIVES: By the end of this workshop, the participants will have:

- **mapped out** the major events of Israel's history from creation to King David
- **identified and described** broad themes in the salvation narrative
- **discussed** the place of Judges within these broad themes and the salvation narrative as a whole
- **asked questions** of Judges 19
- **discussed** others' questions as a group
- **illustrated** Judges 19 and God's place within the passage
- **articulated** a personal interpretation of Judges 19
- **identified** issues of interpretation with respect to biblical violence
- **analysed and argued** an unfamiliar viewpoint on biblical violence
- **created and facilitated** a 10-15 minute devotion or discussion on the themes discussed in the workshop

NOTES:

- 1 **Instruct participants to read the book of Judges on their own (more than once, if possible) prior to the event.** Give email and verbal reminders one month, two weeks and one week prior to the event. Participants are not required to bring anything for the workshop, but it may be helpful for them to bring a bible.
- 2 Make sure you **check out the workshop space upon arrival at the site** and take note of any furniture re-arranging that will need to be done in order to maximize the potential for dialogue. If possible, do this Friday night so that you will not be rushing Saturday morning.
- 3 Weather permitting, you may **allow small groups to move outside** for certain tasks, such as the mapping exercise, the discussions for “Judges 19” or for “Violence in the OT”. If you do this, ensure that you give specific amounts of time for each task and instruct them to remain within the immediate vicinity of the lodge so that they can be easily recalled.
- 4 The **15 min coffee break** between “Judges 19” and “Violence in the OT” is not obligatory. The timing of breaks should be discussed with participants at the start of the workshop. If possible, have background music playing during the break(s) to provide a change in atmosphere.
- 5 **Ground rules:** Because of the sensitive nature of some of this content, part of the Introduction is the generation of ground rules for discussion. Use a large sheet of paper, or a flip-chart if one is available, to write down guidelines that the participants unanimously agree on. Post it somewhere within the learning space for the duration of the workshop. Please ensure you discuss **making jokes** and **sensitivity** with respect to the content.

Schedule A to Facilitator Guide

Learning Task B in “Violence in the Old Testament as a Whole”

The Bible includes violence as part of divine judgment and order. Some instances of violence seem to be sanctioned within the biblical text. Therefore, we are sanctioned (in some cases, even commanded) to use violent means to further God’s kingdom.

- Crusades: the Bible contains many instances of war against unbelievers;
 - Colonialism: Christendom has a divine mandate to conquer (like the Israelites conquered Canaan)
 - Slavery: the cursing of Canaan, son of Ham (Gen 9:25 “... lowest of slaves he shall be to his brothers”); Lev 25:44-46
 - Violence against women (Gen 3, Jer 13:22-27)
 - Violence against children (Gen 19, 22; the “rod” in Prov 22:15, 23:14, 29:15)
 - Some violence interpreted as “virtuous”, such as David’s war-making (because David is often represented as a paragon of virtue), or the Flood, which killed many people – but the righteous ones were saved.
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Now that Jesus has provided atonement for God’s wrath, the violent texts in the Old Testament are obsolete. After all, God “hates the lover of violence” (Pss 11:5) and many prophetic texts routinely condemn violence (e.g. Ezek 8:17; Jer 22:3; Joel 3:19; Obed 1:10; Hab 2:8). Reading the violent texts also distorts the image of God as loving and merciful, so we should avoid general use (e.g. how many people loved the story of the fall of Jericho in Sunday school? Did you ever discuss Josh 6:21?)

Jesus tells us that the two greatest commandments (which, by the way, summarize the Ten Commandments) are to love God and to love your neighbour. We need to engage the Old Testament through this lens. Therefore, any reading that causes us to oppress or condemn others, i.e. that does not cause our love for God or others to increase, is an unfaithful reading and needs to be re-examined.

The final forms of many of the early Old Testament texts, especially Genesis through Joshua, were compiled at a much later date by editors who held certain ideological and theological understandings of the events of the texts and of the events of their own times. We need to examine the historical context for the writing of these texts before we can dissect their meaning.

The violence in the Old Testament should be read allegorically. It is meant to lead us to a greater understanding of the final judgment of the righteous and the wicked. The question we should ask of these texts is “what does this tell us about Christian life today?”

God's violence is a response to human violence. Because violence is inherent in humanity, God must descend to our level in order to save us from our sins and the sins of others against us, many of which are violent in nature. God employs violence for the purposes of judgment, often using non-divine agents as mediators (such as natural disasters, or human armies), or salvation (e.g. drowning the Egyptians in the Red Sea not only punished the Egyptians for their sins against Israel, but also caused Israel to be saved).

Humans sometimes misinterpret God's commands and go overboard. Then, when events are re-told, we may attribute the cause of our actions to God, even when he didn't really sanction them.