

JUDGES

**Man's Unfaithfulness and God's
Faithfulness**



March 2021

Day 1

When you think of the greatest victories that God's people experienced what would be your top three?

1.

2.

3.

What are 5 things that God has done in your life you do not want to forget about?

One of the greatest victories was Joshua taking the Promised Land and defeating just about all the people who resided there. They did this because God was the one giving them the victory. They learned a lot about their sovereign God. They learned a lot about how they were powerless to do anything on their own. They learned a lot about their own sin and rebellion. God did many things in his people in the time of Joshua. Those are lessons that God's people would never forget, right? I mean if you or I were in their shoes we wouldn't forget all the awesome things God has done in our lives and not tell others. Well that brings us to the book of Judges. Ask God to grow your faith as you study God's Word today.

Read Judges 1

Was a leader named to succeed Joshua to lead the people? Why not? What was God about to do in the life of his people?

Who did Israel's victory belong to? What verses or phrases show that?

What further victories did the people of God enjoy in this chapter?

How is verse 19 a possible foreshadowing of all that is going to happen in the book of Judges?

What does not happen in verses 27-36?

This chapter sets us up for the rest of the book of Judges. Israel would forget about God, do their own thing and pay the price for their actions. The rest is their story. Have you been faithful to God? Explain.

PRAYER – Ask God to show you how to be faithful to Him.

Day 2

What are three important things your parents have shared with you?

1.

2.

3.

If you are blessed with children one day, what are some important things that you want to be sure to communicate to them?

Are you a Christian? I hope one day you will share with your children how God brought you to faith in Jesus Christ and how he continued to work in your life in a variety of ways. Share with them how he answered prayer, how he grew you through various circumstances in your life, the things you have learned through reading and studying His Word, experiences in missions and service and the list goes on. You need to share these things with your children. Why? Well read today's scripture passage and you will see what happens when we do not share what God has done in our lives. Ask God to open your eyes to his truths and help you to respond to them.

Read Judges 2:1-10

God was faithful to his people, he made them victorious, then brought them into the Promised Land. How did the people repay God's faithfulness in verses 1-2?

What does God say will be the penalty? How do the people react?

What important event happened in verses 8 and 9? Why was this a pivotal event for Israel? (Peek ahead to see what Israel starts to do and become.)

What does it mean the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua and the elders who saw the great work of the Lord? Would they be faithful to God?

What happened to the next generation of Israelites according to verse 10?

How could a generation not know God after he did so many awesome things for Israel?" Great question! How did the next generation grow up not knowing about God or anything He had done? Where did the blame lie?

What are two ways this verse challenges you when it comes to sharing your faith with people God puts in your life?

1.

2.

Who are 2 people you need to share your faith with?

PRAYER – Boldness to share our faith; 2 people above; confess your sin.

Day 3

Describe a person in your life who seemed to be a Christian but at some point, started living a sinful life and did not care about what God thought.

What are ways you, your family or other Christians tried to encourage them in the importance of following Jesus?

I had a family member who seemed to make a profession of faith in middle school. A series of bad things happened in our family that led them to say the heck with God. He must not be real. They started a life of sin that has continued to this day. There were plenty of times that family members shared God's word, encouraged them in the faith we held to and took them to church. They have dealt with a lot of hardships in their life due to their sinful choices. This is the picture of Israel. Yesterday we saw that the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua and the elders who saw the great things God had done in their lives. That seems to hint at that they would not be faithful as soon as those people were gone. We shall see today if that is true. Ask God to reveal your own sinful attitudes and actions as you read the Bible today.

Read Judges 2:11-15

What did the Israelites do according to verses 11-13? List them all.

Look back to verse 10. Why did they start to do these sinful things?

Think about that, if we don't hear about God or share about God, that sin follows. What immediately pops into your heart and mind as you hear that?

What does God do as a result of Israel's sin in verses 14 and 15?

What does this show us about how serious God takes sin?

Take a minute and list your sins from the last week. Think hard. Then go back and circle the ones you know you asked forgiveness for.

PRAYER – Confess your sin. Ask God to help you be faithful to Him.

Day 4

List 3 sins that you see a lot of in America today. Next to each one describe how it has negatively impacted our country.

1.

2.

3.

In what ways have you seen the church approve and plunge into sinful patterns in our country today? (List as many as you can think of)

There are many churches in our world that are not living according to God's Word but doing their own thing. They approve of same sex marriage, approve of gender transformation, don't take seriously divorce, believe that social action is more important than Gospel proclaiming, and the list can go on. This is not good. Yet many Christians stand back and do and say nothing. As you read today ask God to open your eyes to the way your church serves and teaches about the Lord in all that it does.

Read Judges 2:16-3:6

What words would you use to describe the Israelites from this passage?

What are some attributes we see of God in these verses?

What did God stop doing for his people in verses 21 to 23? Why do you think God would use godless, evil nations to come in and defeat Israel? What point do you think God was trying to make to His people?

Read Romans 1:18-25. What do we see about man's sinfulness?

How were the Israelites from Judges trading the truth of God for a lie? Who was there to tell them the truth?

It almost seems like God has lost control of His people. How do we see in these verses that in fact God is very much in control?

Make some observations about yourself when you think about Romans 1 and what the Israelites were doing. What truths are you trading for a lie?

PRAYER – God would help you know the truth and live it out every day.

Day 5

Describe somebody who is a judge in our country. What are important decisions that those judges make every day in America?

God called many judges to serve Him. What is different about the judges we are going to look at in this book compared to judges in our society today?

The perfect judge is observant, firm, discerning, compassionate, lover of truth, fair, impartial. If a judge does this then justice will be done, and it will be good and right. The problem is that we live in a culture today that is politically motivated, and we are looking out for the people who are on our side. Judges fall into this. They care more about pleasing a political party and getting elected again, that they do not do a lot of the things listed above. God raised up Judges in the life of Israel. Today we start to read about these judges. Ask God to help you read, understand and apply His word to your life today.

Read Judges 3:7-31

We come to the first judge of Israel, Othniel. He was raised up after 8 years of Israel's servitude. What do we learn about Othniel from verses 7 to 11? Caleb was his older brother. Why is that important? (See Numbers 13)

What was the result of Othniel's service of the Lord as a judge?

Israel had 40 years of rest. What happened after those 40 years in verse 12?

After 18 years of servitude to Eglon, God raises up Ehud, the next judge. How would you describe Ehud from verses 12-30?

What was the result of Ehud's service of the Lord?

Eglon's death is pretty graphically described to us here. Why do you think God thought it important to include it in the Bible?

After 80 years of peace we are left to assume that Israel did evil again. Then the 3rd judge, Shamgar, was raised up. Shamgar likely not an Israelite, but was most likely a Canaanite. What do we learn about him in verse 31? By seeing his actions, what judge is he foreshadowing? How?

What is something you can take away from these judges today?

PRAYER – Pray for those people you know are not living for God today.

Day 6

Name 3 important women in the Bible and why they were so important.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What are some reasons why women in ministry and serving in Christ's church is still a hot topic today?

Ove the last 100 years as a culture we have wrestled with the role of women in the workplace, family, community, and the church. Some paint a picture that women are servants to men and others have elevated men to the point that pictures all men as oafs. God used many great women in the Bible to carry out his will and serve him in a variety of ways: Rahab, Esther, Ruth, Proverbs 31 woman, Mary, Priscila and the list goes on. Today, we come to Debora the 4th judge of Israel whom God called to deliver his people after 20 years of cruel oppression. Ask God to give you a heart of understanding today.

Read Judges 4

How would you describe the power of the nation of Canaan who oppressed the Israelites?

What are the various roles that Deborah served the Lord in? (At least 3)

How do we see that Barak had great respect for Deborah?

How do we see that not only was Deborah a judge but a prophetess? What prophecy came to pass?

What is neat about verse 15, when we think about Israel at that time, but also when we think about our lives today?

How do we know that this was not a victory of man, but could have only come from God? (Think about what Israel had done to get into this situation.)

Who is a “judge” that God has put in your life, who serves the Lord by helping you and speaking the truth to you? How would you describe that person?

PRAYER – Pray for that person who boldly speaks the truth to you.

Day 7

What is the best song? Write down some of the best lyrics of that song here.

Think about that song, what message was the artist trying to communicate?

One of the classic songs is *Eye of the Tiger* by Survivor. This song is used by many when getting pumped up for a big game or when dealing with a hard situation. It is a song that says you can have victory over whatever problem or situation you are facing. Who does not want to hear that kind of message? God gave Israel an incredible victory over a powerful enemy through Deborah and Barak. It was so incredible and life transforming that Deborah and Barak break out in song. Ask God to instruct your heart through their song today.

Read Judges 5

Look at verses 2 to 5, what were Deborah and Barak saying about the true and living God whom they served?

How did they reflect on the state of Israel before their victory in verses 6 to 8?

According to verses 10-11, who needs to be praising the Lord?

Verses 13 to 18 is where they reflected on the battle that brought them victory. What are some ways in which they described the victory in verses 19 to 23?

How is victory attributed to God in those same verses? What imagery do they use to show this was God's victory and not their own?

How is Jael described in their song, the heroine of the battle in verses 24-27?

What were Deborah and Barak communicating to us in their ending about God? About us?

Write lyrics of your own song when you think about your relationship with God.

PRAYER – Praise God for his power, grace and faithfulness.

Day 8

What are two hard questions people ask about God? Write a situation that could lie behind someone asking that about God.

1.

2.

Parents get a divorce, a friend dies, you are diagnosed with a chronic disease, terrorists bomb a crowded area, a natural disaster destroys a community and the list goes on. It is in times like this that people ask some pretty tough questions about God's character, his power and his love for the people he has made in his own image. When you read through scripture you see men and women of God at times asking those hard questions about who God is, what God is doing and how do we make sense of it all. Today we come to one of those people, Gideon. Ask God to open your eyes to His truths and help you apply them to your life.

Read Judges 6:1-27

Israel enjoyed 40 years of peace before they rebelled against the Lord again. How would you describe the situation in Israel in verses 1 to 10?

In verse 7, when the Israelites cried out to the Lord, what did he remind them in regards to the way they were living their lives in verses 8 to 10?

What were Gideon's questions to the angel when he said the Lord is with you?

The angel says that Gideon would save Israel. What does Gideon say that shows he doubts what the angel said to him? What excuses does he use?

What would it take for Gideon to believe that the Lord was really the one saying he would deliver Israel? (Look at verses 19-22)

Gideon realized it was the Lord who spoke to him and he was ready to die. You could not live if you stood in the presence of the Lord. God promises Him he would live. What two things does Gideon do next to show his commitment to serve the Lord and be a warrior for him?

How do we see that Gideon still struggled with a fear of man? Why do you think he struggled with this fear?

What are ways in which you “doubt” God can use you in serving Him and building His kingdom? Why do you doubt?

PRAYER – pray for your doubts; ask God to strengthen, teach & encourage you.

Day 9

What is something right or good that you have done that people were not happy about? Why were they not happy? How did you respond?

There are going to be many times in your life when you know there is something that you need to do that is good or right, that people will not like. It might be standing up for somebody who is an outcast and is being made fun of. It might be betraying a confidence because a friend is hurting themselves or threatening to hurt themselves. It might be calling out the wrong actions of a group of friends. At times it will not feel like you did what was right or good but in the end you did. You had a chance to point them to Christ. Gideon is dealing with the consequences of his good actions in today's story. Ask God to help you see the ways you need to be standing up for God as you read his word today.

Read Judges 6:28-35

What was the people's reaction when they see their idols and Asherah poles destroyed? What do you think was going through their minds?

Who is the only one who defends Gideon? How does he call the people out on their sin?

If you were Gideon, why would that be encouraging?

What is the irony here as the men were ready to kill Gideon for destroying their altar and poles? (Think what was going to happen to them)

What do we see about Gideon in verse 34? What does that mean?

As Christians we are all clothed with the Spirit of the Lord. Think about Gideon's situation and us today, what are 3 ways you can tell a person has been clothed with the Spirit of the Lord?

1.

2.

3.

How are you struggling to show Christ in all you do?

PRAYER – Ask for boldness and strength to show Christ at all times.

Day 10

What are things you would love or would have loved to have a sign for before you acted so you would do the right thing? Try to think of 3 or 4.

What are we afraid of that we are tempted to ask for a sign?

Here is my list of things I asked or wanted to ask a sign for before I acted? Choosing a major and a college, whether I was supposed to go on that mission trip, whether I should pursue a dating relationship with that girl, choosing my future wife, which job should I take, and the list goes on. Sometimes we have all these options before us, and we want to know which one is the right one because we don't want to mess up the decision and our life. If you have not been there, you will be at some point. If only God would give us a neon sign that is clear, and we will never miss. Please God, just this once. Gideon had a similar situation. We read about it today. Ask God to reveal your heart as you read his word.

Read Judges 6:36-40

How do we see Gideon's reluctance to lead his people into battle? How do we see he is struggling in his faith to some degree?

How do we see Gideon is humble before God amid his doubts?

Read Deuteronomy 6:16. How was Gideon on dangerous ground with what he did? What could have happened to him as a result of his request?

What does God do for Gideon in his two requests?

How would this encourage and embolden Gideon?

In light of Deuteronomy 6:16, what do we see about God's grace and mercy?

What is something you know you need to do for the Lord that you are having a hard time doing because you are afraid? Why are you afraid?

PRAYER – For boldness in serving the Lord; help to not be afraid.

Day 11

What is something that you have been asked to do in the past or maybe even the present that you felt would be impossible to do?

How did it turn out?

There are times when God asks His people to do things that seem impossible from a human perspective. We see it throughout scripture. We read about it from the testimonies of missionaries. We see it in our churches today. What is God asking me to do? What is God asking us to do? Impossible! There is no way we will ever be able to do that. Have you ever found yourself asking or saying these things? We come to the part of Gideon's story, where if we found ourselves in Gideon's shoes, might want to utter some of these questions. Ask God to reveal the attitude of your own heart as you read and study His word.

Read Judges 7

The day after Gideon casts the fleece and knows for sure the Lord wants him to go into battle and be the leader, what does God do? (Look at verse 2).

Two times Gideon let men go and not fight. What are the two things that dismissed people from fighting?

Why did God want to reduce the fighters down to 300? What was his point?

Now if you are Gideon, who has already shown weak faith up to this point, what questions or doubts are now going through your head?

How does God anticipate that doubt and fear in verse 10?

Gideon did not fully trust God. He had to creep down to the camp. What does Gideon hear that strengthens his faith and emboldens him to go into battle?

In verse 15 what was Gideon's response to hearing the dream? Why do you think he did this?

Summarize the battle and its results.

God took 32,000 men and reduced them to 300. We have no account of those 300 men questioning Gideon. They trusted him. They trusted he was following the commands of the Lord. They followed Gideon to victory. They knew that the victory belonged to the Lord. Do you believe the Lord will grant you victory over the struggles you are facing? Only He can give you victory.

PRAYER – Praise and thank God for how He provides all things for you.

Day 12

Name some people that you would consider noble. Next to each name write why you think that person is noble.

Boromir from the Lord of Rings books was a noble man. He was a mighty warrior who attained great victories for the people of Gondor. He turned back the enemy at many turns. Then he was picked to represent men for a Fellowship, to see the ring of power destroyed in the fires of Mount Doom. He wanted to see the ring destroyed at first but then as the mission wore on, he was consumed with lust for power and to own the ring to bring victory to the men of Gondor. He tries to take it away from Frodo because he wanted to do things his own way. It was no longer about the Fellowship but about victory and prestige for his people. Gideon has had some incredible things happen in his life. He had doubts and fears and God granted him and the Jews great victory. But Gideon became full of himself and things turned for him. We see that turning point in our passage of study today. Ask God to help you understand who He is and his word today.

Read Judges 8:1-21

The men of Ephraim were upset that they didn't get the call to fight the Midianites. What does Gideon do to soothe their anger?

In verses 4-9 and 13-17 how do we see Gideon starting to turn and do things in his own power and strength?

When you think about Gideon's life and victories, what one important figure is strangely absent in this part of Gideon's life?

Why is God absent now? What is Israel starting to do again starting with Gideon?

Gideon and his men captured the kings of Midian. What do the two kings question about Gideon in their exchange?

How does Gideon react to the question of his manhood?

After reading the wonderful things that Gideon did, why is this shocking? What does it show us about man and our sinfulness?

What are some things you are doing in your life right now that are not honoring to the Lord?

PRAYER – Pray that you would honor the Lord in all you do; confess your sin.

Day 13

You pick up the paper and read in the headlines that the pastor of your church was arrested because he stole money from the church and tried to flee out of the area. What would be your initial reactions to this story as you think about the pastor of your church?

Why do we often place the leaders of our churches on a pedestal of “can do no wrong”?

Pastors and elders are men of God. They are not supposed to lie, cheat on taxes, have affairs with other women, talk unkindly to their children, etc. Right? Wrong! We are all sinful and fall short of God's glory. We can only serve God and live out our faith by the grace of God. Gideon seemed to be a real man of God and did some wonderful things for the Lord in his life. Yet as we started to read in the last chapter of Judges, we saw Gideon starting to fall into a pattern of sin. Would he break the sin? Would he repent and turn things around? That brings us to the last chapter in Gideon's life. Ask God to help you apply His word to your life today.

Read Judges 8:22-35

In verses 22-23 how does it seem that Gideon is turning back to the Lord?

But then in verses 24 to 27, what does Gideon do?

How did creating this ephod become a snare to Gideon and his family?

What did the Israelites start to do after this ephod was created?

How is this starting a spiral downwards for the Israelites?

In verses 29-32 what other ways was Gideon unfaithful to the Lord?

What did the people of Israel do as soon as Gideon died?

What is an “ephod” or idol you have in your life, something that has or is a snare to you in your walk with Christ? What do you need to do with that “ephod”?

PRAYER – God to take the “ephod” or idol away and to worship him alone.

Day 14

What are some classic stories or movies where somebody killed those closest to them to either come to power or make sure that they stayed in power?

Why are people willing to do anything to be in power whether it is the stories of scripture, of those in power or people in corporate America today?

History is full of people who were so drunk with power that they feared they would lose that power. They would become so paranoid that they would kill those closest to them to ensure there was no plot afoot to overthrow and kill them. Nero killed sons, Herod killed brothers, and Pharaoh killed all the baby boys of the Jewish people. The list goes on. Some men when they taste power, they do not want to lose that power and will do anything to make sure they keep it. That brings us to our story today as we look at the family of Gideon after he died. Ask God to help you learn something you can apply to your life today.

Read Judges 9:1-21

How many sons did Gideon have?

Who is the son who wanted to be the most powerful?

What does he do?

When you think about Abimelech's mother, what set her apart from all his other brother's mothers?

Not only did Abimelech have almost all his brothers killed, but what other extents did he go to so he could become king?

Who was the one person who opposed him? What did he say about Abimelech and the Israelites choosing him as king in his parable in verses 7 to 15?

Summarize Jotham's curse to the Israelites in verses 16 to 21.

The church has acted like the Israelites in our culture today. Why have we anointed men "kings" in the church who should not be leading the church?

PRAYER – Pray for the church and that she would seek Godly men to lead her.

Day 15

Can you name some bad people or group of people (real or fictitious) that you have found yourself rooting to lose in a big way? Put next to each person or group of people why you rooted against them?

Baseball is one of America's great past times. There is so much great history. You have Murderer's row, Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig and others who hit so many home runs for the Yankees. There is Hank Aaron who hit the most home runs, breaking an amazing record. Cal Ripken played the most games in a row without missing causing a nation to follow him to see if he would play another game. But a new and darker era entered baseball in the last 10 years, the steroids era. You had men who broke records from long ago by hitting more home runs, winning more games as a pitcher. They were records that had stood for many years. Then it came out that many of these players used performance enhancing drugs. They cheated. All of a sudden a whole society was rooting that they men would lose their records, be thrown in jail and never be admitted to the hall of fame. Most of them have asterisks put next to their names, and none have been admitted to the hall of fame yet. I love baseball and I found myself rooting against these men. I found myself wanting them to get what they deserved. This brings us to the last sad chapter in the family of Gideon as we look at his son Abimelech. Ask God to convince you of his truths today.

Read Judges 9:22-57

Jotham pronounced a curse as we saw yesterday on Abimelech and the people of Shechem, that Abimelech would destroy Shechem and then he would be destroyed himself. Summarize how Abimelech destroyed the city of Shechem.

How did the people of Shechem rise up against Abimelech?

Who was destroyed in the city of Shechem?

How did Abimelech get a little full of himself after destroying Shechem? What did he start to do?

What happens to Abimelech in Thebez?

How do we see God was totally in control during this dark time of Israel's history in verses 56 and 57?

How serious does God take sin? Why does he, we are just human?

What sin in your life do you need to take more seriously?

PRAYER – Confess that sin you just listed to the Lord.

Day 16

What is a certain sin, when you look at the consequences, you hope you would learn from it and never commit again?

Why do many “Christians”, though they know the consequences, find themselves committing the same sin over and over again?

I am a pretty competitive person. I know that surprises many people who may be reading this. I used to do anything to win. As a child I used to distract my dad so I could move the checkers so I could jump several of his guys at one time. In high school and college I used to show no mercy and never let people even get close to winning if I could help it and I had world class attitude whenever I would lose or be losing. I had to win. It was not until I first got into ministry when I got close to punching a student because he laid a hard foul on me during basketball. I realized at that point that I needed to get my competitiveness under control or it could end up undermining my ministry. That doesn't mean I don't want to win anymore but it is much more controlled than it was when I was 22. I kept struggling with sin that stemmed from my competitiveness over and over. I am so glad that God is patient and still continued to work in and through my life. The story we will read today brought to mind that struggle of my past. Ask God to expose your sin as you read the Bible today.

Read Judges 10

What does God tell us about the Judges, Tola and Jair?

Why do you think they are even included in the book of Judges if we are told of nothing they did? Nothing is included without a reason. Speculate here.

We have covered many judges. I hope you have seen the Israelites pattern throughout this book. What sin did Israel fall back into after Jair was judge?

What does God do to his people in verses 7 to 9?

What does God remind the people about him and about them in verses 10-13?

What does God tell them to do in verse 14? Why? What is his point?

What do the people do? What do you think drove them to put away their gods at that point?

Think of the sin you listed earlier. What would it look like if God gave you over to that sin and did not help you overcome it? What might be the consequences?

PRAYER – The sin you are dealing with that you have described today.

Day 17

Who is a leader you know, that at first appearances would not seem like a very good leader? What are some of the things that make you say this? What makes them a good leader?

Théoden is the king of Rohan in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. When we first meet Théoden, he is a king who is ashy looking, with a raspy voice and is not very emotional that he has allowed many of his men to die in battle or be exiled for opposing him. His own son died, and he did not go to his funeral. Not a very good king at first look. Then you realize that some bad magic has him possessed by Saruman, a bad wizard. When Saruman's grip is loosened, Théoden kicks Wormtongue out and ultimately leads his armies to fight against the forces of Sauron for Middle Earth. He models a broken, humbled and yet compassionate king for his people. Ask God to help you think about your leadership or the leaders in your life as you read the word today.

Read Judges 11:1-28

Jephthah was the next judge. What about his family life in verses 1 to 3 would make him seem to be an unlikely leader of God's people?

Who did Israel turn to in their time of great trial with the Ammonites?

Why did they want him to lead them even though they had rejected him earlier in his life?

How do we see that Jephthah was a man of God in these first 11 verses?

After Jephthah was made leader of Israel, did people support him in his campaign to defeat the Ammonites? How was he rejected?

How was his rejection a good thing when it came to the people needing to see who their God was?

How did Jephthah try to reason with the king of Ammon to surrender? Did he surrender?

How does Jephthah point us forward to who Jesus Christ would be as the king over His people?

PRAYER – Ask God to help you trust him alone in your struggles and not others.

Day 18

In the heat of an intense moment, whether a conflict with somebody, or a sports game, have you ever made a promise to God that was really hard to keep? What was the situation and what was the promise?

Why do Christians as well as non-Christians make those kinds of vows or promises to God, that they would have a very hard time keeping, if they could keep them at all?

I can remember when I was young, there was a certain sin that I would struggle with on a regular basis and I can remember saying to God, if you would just help me overcome this sin, this time, then I will never commit this sin again. It didn't work. I have heard people pray that if God would just help them get a job or help them win the lottery then they will give God a big chunk of their money. Most people don't follow through on this one either. I think we are so quick to make these promises because there is a part of us that is trying to manipulate God into doing and giving us what we want. And if we make this kind of vow or promise then God will give it to us because after all he will get something out of the deal too. We don't think about the power of our words. We don't stop to think if we could ever actually follow through on those vows. That brings us to part 2 of the life of the Judge Jephthah. Ask God to help you learn and grow from this tragic story.

Read Judges 11:29-40

How do you know Jephthah was probably going to win according to verse 29?

What vow or promise does Jephthah make with the Lord? Was this a wise or foolish vow? Explain.

Why do you think he even made this vow, when **HE KNEW** the Lord was going before him in the battle against the Ammonites?

Jephthah leads Israel to victory. He goes home and what is the first thing that came out of his door? What would this mean for Jephthah?

The thought that comes to mind is what did he think was going to come out of the door of his home? Certainly he had come from places before and knew his daughter would be excited to see him and come bounding out to him or his wife missed him and wanted to see him. He had to know that a human being was going to be the one he would sacrifice when he made this rash vow before the Lord. There should be happiness, joy and jubilation after such victory. What was the mood and tone upon Jephthah's return home?

How could Jephthah have rationalized why he did not need to fulfill that vow that he made? What did he do? What does this show about him as a man?

What does this story show us about how serious God takes our vows?

What are some vows that you have made and will make in your life before the Lord that you will need to take seriously? (Think about your whole life.)

PRAYER – Help to make only promises you can keep and fulfilling them.

Day 19

What are the consequences when a country endures a civil war?

What are good things that can come out of a country that endures civil war?

In America we know about Civil War. We had one that was fought over states sovereign rights, slavery and a host of other issues. It was a bloody, horrible conflict that saw many of our nation's brightest die at the hands of each other. In some cases it was brothers against brothers, cousins against cousins, people who went to school fighting against each other. Many knew somebody they admired and cared about fighting on the other side. Yes, there were some good things to come out of the Civil War but there is also a deep seeded bitterness that you can still see and hear about in our country today. Today we look at a time in the Judges where a Civil War broke out in the nation of Israel. Ask for help to learn and understand the principles of God's Word today.

Read Judges 12

What was the Ephraimites issue with Jephthah?

How was this an ongoing issue with the people of Ephraim? Look at 8:1-3.

How did Jephthah try to discourage the Ephraimites from fighting?

What was the result of this Civil War?

How was pride the downfall of the Ephraimite people?

We are then introduced very briefly to the 9th, 10th and 11th Judges. Next to each of their names write what you learn about them from the little that is written about them.

Ibzan – verses 8-10

Elon – verses 11-12

Abdon – verses 13-15

What do you think God is trying to communicate to us here about his people and about Himself when you reflect on this chapter?

What has challenged your faith most up to this point in the study of Judges?

PRAYER – Ask God to help you be humble and look to Him in all things.

Day 20

What are the top 5 stories you can remember studying in Sunday School?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Samson is a story we read a lot as children in Sunday School. Take a moment and write down all the things that come to mind when you think about Samson?

Here are the things for me that come to mind about Samson: killing men with a jawbone, Delilah a wicked woman, long hair, blindness and crumbling a temple by pushing two pillars. As we read about this historic character, we will see a man who was incredibly blessed by God but also who forgot those blessings by acting selfishly and recklessly, doing what he wanted to do and forsaking the Lord. Ask God to help you see yourself through the story of Samson.

Read Judges 13

What is the state of the people of Israel as we are introduced to Samson?

Think about Samson's parents, how was his birth miraculous?

What are the important requirements of a Nazarite vow in verses 5 to 7?

Usually a Nazarite vow was taken voluntarily and was only for a short amount of time. How do you see here that Samson's Nazarite vow was different?

Describe the angel of the Lord who visited Manoah and his wife?

What are a couple of things that the angel is not willing to do that Samson's parents wanted to know or do?

Manoah knew they had seen the Lord and said now they would die. How was his wife the voice of reason, knowing in fact they would live?

What important things do we see about Samson in verses 24 and 25?

What ways have you seen the Lord stir in you? In other words, how have you seen him work in your heart? Give at least 3 things.

PRAYER – Ask God to stir in your heart, to move you to serve Him.

Day 21

Who is a person, famous or a regular Joe, who is a picture of contrasts? They do great things on one hand that benefit many people but on the other hand they are mean spirited, selfish and think only about themselves. Think about two people and write next to them why you put them down.

1.

2.

Lance Armstrong was a man who accomplished incredible things. He won many Tour De France's which is the toughest bike race in the world. He raised millions of dollars for cancer research and cancer victims. He was an inspiration to so many of what it meant to go on living after a huge fight with cancer. Then there is the other side. He was a man who took performance enhancing drugs to help him win all those races. The people who stood up to call him out on his doping; he sued and made their lives miserable, ruining many people's reputations. He denied any wrongdoing only to confess it all in an interview with Oprah Winfrey. How can people be so incredibly good and also so incredibly bad? These are people that leave us scratching our heads and wondering who we can trust. Samson is one of those characters which we will start to see in our story today. Ask God if you are one of those people as you read today's story.

Read Judges 14

What 3 things in this story was the Lord prompting and moving Samson to do?

1.

2.

3.

How do we know that these things could only be from the Lord?

How do we see that Samson was very focused on himself in verses 3 and 7?

How do these phrases parallel how the Israelites have been acting over and over again during the time of the judges?

How did Samson break his Nazarite vow in verses 8 to 9? (see 13:4) What does this show about him as a person?

What does Samson's wife do to Samson during the time of the riddle game?

How does Samson react to what she and the men of Ashkelon did? What does he say about his wife in verse 18? What is his point?

What are some things that you are doing because they are right in your eyes but are probably not pleasing to the Lord?

PRAYER – Pray about what you just listed in the last question.

Day 22

List three relationships that you have had in your life that at one point had become strained. Next to the relationship write what the cause of the strain was.

1.

2.

3.

As you think about those relationships, what action or actions did you take to try to reconcile the relationship?

How did those relationships turn out? We live in a sinful world which means in our relationships we will act sinfully and strain a relationship. We will talk back or challenge our parents, call our siblings a mean name, not listen to a spouse, take advantage of a friend, not listen to a youth leader, etc. It happens and if we care about the relationship, we will try to make it right. After all God is the best example that when we strained our relationship with him due to sin, he sent Jesus that through faith in Him we could be restored to Him. Ask God to remind you of what he has done in your life as you read this chapter in Samson's life.

Read Judges 15

We left yesterday with Samson calling his wife a cow, leaving his home and going back to live with his parents and then his wife being given to another man. How do we see that Samson was ready to be reconciled with his wife?

What is his father-in-law's response to Samson's request? What does he say about his oldest daughter?

What does Samson do because he cannot have his wife back? What is the Philistine's reaction?

The people of Judah, the Israelites, were afraid and tell Samson they don't want to hurt him but they want to bring him to the Philistines. Samson agrees to go to the Philistines. Why?

What two amazing things does God do in verses 14-19? How do they show that Samson was totally dependent on the Lord?

What are two areas in your life where you need to show that you are totally dependent on the Lord? Write down one way you can show that dependence.

1.

2.

PRAYER – Ask God to help you be dependent on him in all areas of your life.

Day 23

Who were two great men whose fall came because of a woman? Next to each of those men write how the woman was the cause of his fall?

1.

2.

One of my favorite sports movies is *The Natural*. This is a great story of a guy who was on track to be one of the greatest pitchers of all time but a tragedy happened in his life and he was shot by a woman who was killing great sports stars. Many years later he appears on the baseball scene as a hitter. He makes it to the major leagues on a team that was not good at all. The owner wanted the team to not win so he could make great amounts of money. Roy Hobbs wanted the team to be great and they were. The owners of the team introduce Hobbs to a woman who begins to distract him and he stops hitting. She eventually slips him a drink that irritates the gunshot wound he sustained earlier in his life. It lands him in the hospital and the team drops several games. This woman's whole purpose in his life was to see him fall and fail. Now you will have to go borrow the movie to see how it ends. It is good. I promise. Ask God to learn some important truths from this tragic chapter in Samson's life.

Read Judges 16:1-22

Women were a big weakness for Samson. A prostitute tried to trap Samson in the first 3 verses. What does Samson do in this situation?

How would you describe Delilah especially when you think of her relationship to Samson?

In verses 7 to 14, what things does Samson say about how he can be subdued?
Why does he lie to Delilah?

Why did Samson share with Delilah what he did in verses 16 and 17?

What did Samson seem to think was the source of his strength? Was he right or wrong? What was the source if he was wrong?

What life altering event happened to Samson in verse 20? Why would this prove to be important as we look forward to the end of Samson's life?

What are ways you have taken credit away from God for what He has done in your life and around you?

PRAYER – Thank God for Christ's sacrifice to bring us eternal life.

Day 24

What is the most dramatic death scene you have seen in a movie/tv show or read in a book? Describe it. Why makes it so dramatic?

There are so many dramatic death scenes that come mind: William Wallace in *Braveheart*; Darth Vader in *Return of the Jedi*; Iron Man in *Avengers End Game*; Maximus in *Gladiator* and there are so many more. They are dramatic because each death meant life and hope for other people: Scotland, races throughout the universe, Roman citizens and slaves. They are good stories that are sad and bring a tear but also that redeem the story. Samson is that type of character. It is a tragic story that ends in a good way. It brings hope. Ask God to remind you of that hope as you think of Samson's and ultimately Christ's sacrifice for us.

Read Judges 16:23-31

Look back at verses 21 and 22. Describe Samson physically, emotionally, spiritually based on these verses.

What important things do we see in verses 23 to 25 about the Philistines as far as their faith, practices and attitudes?

What stands out to you most about them in this description? Why?

When you think of his words, how did Samson finally understand that it was the Lord who gave him his strength, who blessed him in his life? What did God do through Samson that day?

When you think of that final scene of Samson's life, in what ways does that parallel and point us forward to Jesus Christ?

What are two ways that Samson's life challenges and encourages you in your relationship with Jesus Christ?

1.

2.

PRAYER – Pray about the two things you wrote above.

Day 25

Think about the church in America today? In what ways has the church done what was sinful and thinks it is right in their own eyes? Take time to think of the many different ways and list them here.

What are 3 reasons the church gives for doing what is “right in their own eyes”?

1.

2.

3.

In America we live in a continually tolerant society both from a government standpoint and within the church. I grew up in the Presbyterian Church of the USA. It is a church that in May of 2012 passed that churches could start ordaining homosexuals and lesbians as pastors because they think that is an acceptable lifestyle. There have been several other denominations in America who have followed that pattern. Why when scripture says that is a sinful lifestyle? It is because people are deciding to do what is right in their own eyes. There are many in the church today who are taking their cues from our culture and society instead of the Word of God. We can see that we are becoming like the Israelites in the time of the judges. The next several chapters of Judges are going to show how the people, even after all the incredible acts of the judges, will keep doing what they want to do in their own eyes and will long after men and not God. Ask God to grow you in your faith and understanding today.

Read Judges 17

What do Micah, an Israelite, and his mother make?

How was Micah acting as a king and prophet of sorts in the verse 5?

How is the end of verse 6 a good summary of what is happening in the people of God at that time? How is it a good summary of our time today?

How were Levites important for the people of God? What was their function?

What drew the Levite to abandon what he was called to be as a Levite, to serve in Micah's shrine as his priest? How was he doing what was right in his own eyes and not the Lord's eyes?

What kinds of things are you doing because they are "right in your own eyes"? Be honest.

PRAYER – The church to serve God faithfully; you would do right in God's eyes.

Day 26

How have you seen our nation do what is right in its own eyes? List whatever comes to mind.

When you look at this list, what does this say to you about the nation that you live in and will be a part of for years to come?

This is the world that God has put the church into. Sadly churches like the United Methodists, PCUSA, Lutherans, etc. have decided not to stand up against the wrongs the culture is saying is right but have decided to become more like the culture so to be relevant. In so doing it is hard to distinguish the church from the world. God wants to use His people, His church, to call people to repentance and to desire Him and His Word. It starts with His people. How are you living for God and not the world? That is the question that we need to all ask ourselves. Ask God to show you if you are more like Him or the world as you read today.

Read Judges 18

After reading this chapter how would you describe the tribe of Dan?

How do the Danites persuade the Levite to leave Micah and come with them?

How was the Levite lying and how was he also telling the truth in verse 6?

What are the exploits of the Danites in this chapter?

How do we see that corruption is not just on the individual level (like Micah and his family) but is also on a tribal level?

Where is God in all this? Is He absent? How would you begin to explain this to somebody that might ask that question? Read Daniel 4:34-35 to help.

What are specific things you can pray for regarding our nation in light of reading these verses and the chapter yesterday?

PRAYER – Now pray for those things you just listed.

Day 27

When you think of our country or world, what are some of the issues or events that leave your heart grieving, because it is awful but also because of how far away people are from the Lord? Take some time and think of a couple of issues and write what grieves you next to each one.

I am grieved by many things but two that I want to mention here. Abortion grieves my heart in so many ways. I am a father of 4 beautiful children and the thought that people are aborting babies is heart breaking. The excuses are even more heart breaking – it is not a life yet, this baby is going to ruin or alter my life, I am not ready to be a parent, I have things I need to do in my life before I become a parent and the list can go on. The other issue that grieves my heart as a parent of two daughters is the selling of girls throughout the world into the sex slave industry. Girls are targeted, usually runaways or from hard and broken homes, kidnapped and sold. This is something that has happened a lot in Europe and has made its way to America underground. These girls, daughters and sisters, are used as pieces of property and are not valued as life. These things grieve my heart as a parent, but also as a pastor in Christ's church. Now we come to an especially hard story for us to read, but it is given us in God's Word to point us forward to the cross and to the fact that our only hope is through knowing Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. Ask God to help you understand the message behind this story today.

Read Judges 19

In verse 1 we have a phrase that has been used multiple times in the last several chapters. Why is the author continuing to remind us that there was no king in Israel? Why is that significant?

How do we see in verses 1 to 9, a good example of hospitality?

Why wouldn't the Levite stay the night in Jebus? How is this ironic when we think of how the people of Benjamin are like?

The Levite decided to stay with his people, people from the tribe of Benjamin. How would you describe the hospitality of his own people? What were they like? What did the man of the house do to try to appease the horrible desire of the men of Gibeah?

What was the Levite's response to the condition of his concubine? Why do you think he reacted that way?

He shows no emotion as he cuts her up and sends her to the tribes of Israel. Civil War started against the tribe of Benjamin. What ways has the church become hardened to things that are happening in our country and world?

PRAYER – Pray for the ministry and boldness of the church in our world today.

Day 28

What are some of the reasons that a country might go to a civil war?

Does anything good ever come out of a civil war? What kind of good?

There was some good that came out of the American Civil War amid the horror and destruction. Here are a few from an article I read recently: ambulances and hospitals were started, America was a land of opportunity and immigrants started to come here, technology guides us in how we communicate, in the end we saw we were all Americans. Yesterday we saw a horrible event in the life of Israel. The Benjamites at Gibeah were acting in immoral ways. They killed a Levite's concubine. This single event led to the beginning of a civil war. Ask God to open your eyes to His truths today.

Read Judges 20

What was the reaction of the people to the Benjamites in verses 1 to 11?

In verses 12 to 17, all the other tribes gave Benjamin a chance to turn in the men who killed the concubine. What was the reaction of the tribe of Benjamin?

What do the people do in verse 18? How is this different than what they had been doing in the time of the judges? Why is that important?

How did the first two days of battle go for all the tribes of Israel?

Why would God send them into battle only to get beat two days in a row?

What did God say to do differently on the 3rd day that gave the people great hope to go into battle a third time?

Give a synopsis of this 3rd day of battle?

The amazing thing about this battle is that God uses sinful, disobedient men who only did what was right in their eyes to bring victory for his people. That is a good picture of our relationship with God. We often do things that are right in our own eyes, rebelling against God, and yet it is awesome to see that God does not give up on us. He continues to use us in amazing ways. What things has God done through you that amaze you when you think of your own sin?

PRAYER – Thank God for His grace, mercy and forgiveness.

Day 29

What are some things that you have learned from a study of Judges this month?

What incredible things did God do in the life of his people in the time of the judges?

God provided so many Godly men and women to act as judges over Israel. They came in the time of deepest need and delivered the people from the hands of their oppressors. How could they still openly rebel then? When you think about that fact it just shows us the patience of God. We sin all the time and yet he continues to forgive us. We don't deserve it and yet he does it anyways. How many sins have you committed today? How about this week? Yet you are still alive. God did not strike you dead. Patience. God was really patient with his people and continues to be. Ask God to help you learn and grow in your faith and understanding his grace and mercy as you read today.

Read Judges 21

The tribes of Israel defeated the tribe of Benjamin. They didn't kill everybody. 600 men were left alive. The tribe of Benjamin faced extinction. Why?

How did the other tribes want to have compassion on their defeated brothers?

How were the other tribes honorable in how they provided wives for their fallen brothers?

How were the other tribes dishonorable in how they provided wives for their fallen brothers?

How were the people viewing God's actions in 15? What does that mean?

How does the book of Judges end in verse 25? How does this set up the time of the kings?

How does the book of Judges challenge you in your faith?

PRAYER – Ask God to continue teaching you through His Word.