

Judges



DailyLife
Five Oaks Church

Week 3: November 14-20, 2015

Day 1

November 16



Pray | Thank God for the undeserved blessings he showers on you every day.

WHEN WE IGNORE the instruments of God’s grace, we despise God, the giver of that grace.

Immediately upon the death of Gideon, an honored and revered leader, Israel turned back to worshipping false gods. It’s as though Gideon had single-handedly connected Israel to the one true God. This quick turn showed the lack of depth of Israel’s honor for Gideon and for the God who sent him. The true desires of their corrupted hearts surface rapidly.

God, in wisdom and justice, responds to Israel’s corrupt heart and dishonor of Gideon by handing them over to a ruthless and shallow leader directly from the line of Gideon. Notice the familiar words “God raised up a new leader” are not present for Abimelech. His three-year rule is marked by deception, murder, and chaos. It’s as though God left Israel to their own devices for those three years, an image of life lived separately from the true God.



Read | Judges 8:33–9:57



Reflect / Choose one or more of the following questions for reflection.

What human instincts or characteristics might cause someone who receives unexpected deliverance from a desperate situation to resent, or even despise, the source of the delivery?

The process of selecting Abimelech as the leader of Israel was not done in the open and was filled with deception. The results were clearly terrible. What lessons can be learned about the proper process that should be used to select great leaders?

Commentator Dale Ralph Davis reminds us that one of the lessons of Judges 9 is “there is no fellowship in evil,” and “evil has no lasting cohesion.”¹ Reflect on these words. Does this stir hope for any particular situation in your life or for the world in general? Explain.

1. Dale Ralph Davis, *Judges: Such a Great Salvation* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2006), 125.

Day 2

November 17



Pray / Thank God for his nearness, even if you aren't sensing it.

THOUGH WE OFTEN go our own way, God remains faithful.

After Abimelech's death, we see that God brings a time of peace to Israel. The short narrative on Tola's leadership does not imply unimportance. He is raised up to "save" Israel—a common theme for God's people, both then and now. Jair then comes on the scene with apparent prosperity, but no oppression or suffering for Israel is mentioned.

Forty-five years pass, and Israel again turns to false gods. Another generation unfamiliar with oppression or who had never experienced the dramatic salvation of the Lord began to disbelieve Yahweh. God, perhaps to engrave repentance on their hearts and thus preserve Israel, says he will "save them no more." However, his grace is dramatically apparent when, after Israel repents and places themselves in his hands, he can no longer endure their suffering.



Read / Judges 10



Reflect / Choose one or more of the following questions for reflection.

If you have experienced God's saving grace, how can you help prevent the next generation from forgetting and turning away from the true God who wants to be active in their lives, helping them experience his goodness and know his saving grace?

Have the extravagant lifestyles of a few prominent Christian leaders (possibly what Israel saw in Jair) ever caused you or someone you know to struggle with unbelief? What might be an appropriate response to this dilemma?

God brought Tola on the scene to save Israel. Take an account of your life. The Scriptures make it clear that we all sin and fall short of God's goodness. In what ways do you need a Savior? Turn to Christ and put your trust in him and what he has done for you. Turn from the things that build a wall between you and him.

Day 3

November 18



Pray / Thank God for his Word, the Bible, and the truth within.

DON'T MAKE PROMISES you can't keep. God doesn't.

Similar to Abimelech from Judges 9, Jephthah, the next judge is Israel, is not said to have been “raised up” by God. Unlike Abimelech, we see that Jephthah has an excellent knowledge of the history of Israel and recognizes the role that God played in that story. After Jephthah's thorough and passionate argument with the king of Ammon, we see that the Spirit of God came upon Jephthah, and ultimately God uses Jephthah to defeat the Ammonites.

Jephthah's enthusiasm at being used by God gets the better of him, and in his excitement to serve, he makes a tragically rash vow to God. This vow ultimately puts Jephthah in a situation like the one in which Joshua found himself, needing to choose between two bad options. Jephthah chose to honor his vow to God—a tragic end to a great story of salvation.



Read / Judges 11



Reflect | Choose one or more of the following questions for reflection.

I think it's fair to say that most everyone wants to be known as a person of integrity. Following through on promises is a key mark of integrity. Is keeping your promises nonnegotiable for you, even if doing so requires sinning?

Jephthah used the story of Israel's journey out of Egypt and God's protection and salvation to try to convince the King of Ammon to change his actions. In the same way, we are called to use the story of our journey through life, and God's impact on our journey, to draw others to him. In many situations your story of the reality of God and his faithfulness is all that is needed to help others take that first step toward God. Do you have your life story ready for delivery? Remember, it's a lifelong story, so you're never really done. Spend a few minutes rehearsing your story today.

Jephthah was the son of a prostitute, rejected by his own father's family. Yet God used him for greatness. Using unexpected people is a common technique that God employs throughout the Bible. Think of a few other examples. What is the message God is sending by doing this?

Day 4

November 19



Pray / Ask God to speak to you and help you learn about him.

YAHWEH SAVES US. However, even as servants of God, we are not immune from trouble in this world.

Jephthah, God's servant, is again troubled, this time from those who were his kinsmen, Ephraimites. Although God is continually delivering Israel throughout Judges, their distance from Yahweh is also continually demonstrated.

Ultimately in God's kingdom, brothers will dwell together in unity and strife will not exist between his people. But in this world it will happen, as Christ promised, "in this world you will have tribulation" (John 16:33), and families will be divided. In contrast to Jephthah's trials, Ibzan and Abdon lived apparently prosperous lives, yet all three served God as judges of Israel. Jephthah had many challenges, yet God gave him the moxy to endure and overcome.



Read / Judges 12



Reflect | Choose one or more of the following questions for reflection.

God has called us to endure and overcome in times of trouble and tribulation, and he will not allow us to go through more than we can endure through him. List some ways you can prepare yourself for times of trouble so that you can endure and overcome. *If you are in a situation where you feel you need help, reach out to a trusted friend, pastor, or small group leader.*

Consider again the contrast between what we know of the lives of Jephthah, Ibzan, and Abdon. Most of us have said, “It just isn’t fair” about something in life. God has called you right where you are. How do you think God wants you to properly handle your situation to glorify him?

If your life seems to align more with Ibzan’s and Abdon’s lives than it does with Jephthah’s in the sense that you are blessed abundantly, hardly experiencing significant trials, or if prosperity is the phase of life in which you find yourself, how do you think God has called you to glorify him?

Day 5

November 20



Pray / Thank God for the promise of heaven, your true home.

IF YOU ARE a follower of Jesus Christ, you are called to be set apart from the world—this world is not your home.

The sad pattern continues. Following the death of Abdon, Israel turned away from God again, and God allowed them to be conquered by the Philistines. After forty years of Philistine rule, the Lord steps in, this time apparently without any prompting from the Israelites, who seem content to be subservient to others at this point.

The Lord, through his angel, reaches out to an Israelite woman and man who have no children and tells them they will have a son who will save Israel from the Philistines. Their son is to be a Nazirite, someone set aside for special service to God. The parents-to-be take some convincing, but they eventually accept that they have been dealing directly with the God of Israel. God's promise comes true, and the woman delivers a son named Samson.



Read / Judges 13



Reflect / Choose one or more of the following questions for reflection.

As a Nazirite, Samson was called to a life of special service to God, a life that was distinctly different from those around him. He could not cut his hair, drink alcohol, or touch anything unclean. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are called to a life of special service to God as well, and we are called to live a life that is distinctly different from the lives of the rest of the world. How is your life as a follower of Jesus distinct from those around you?

Jesus describes his disciples as “not being of this world, as I am not of this world.” The same is true of his followers today. How does this fact impact how you live your life here on Earth?

God reached out to help the children of Israel without their necessarily crying out for help. The same God reaches out to help us as well, often unprompted. What would your life be like if God only helped when you asked for help?

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