A Series on the Book of Judges
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Not much of this material is original or unique since we are striving to present historic Christianity to the 21st Century world. Therefore, we are building on the shoulders of those who have gone before us. Please feel free to use this material in discussions with others and even in other Bible studies. Feel free to adapt and modify for your own purposes.

All Scriptures come from the English Standard Version, Crossway. Used by permission.

City Presbyterian Church is a missional community that seeks to worship Christ and serve Oklahoma City. Our goal is to Love God, Love People and Love the City.
You can learn more about us at citypresokc.com.

Sources for this study include: sermons by Rev. Tim Keller and Rev. Fred Harrell, among many others.
The Gospel

At City Pres, the gospel is our greatest treasure – it truly is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes, and that continues all throughout our Christian lives. However, in our day and culture, there is confusion as to just what the gospel is. The following article, adapted from an article written by Pastor Tim Keller of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, clearly defines the gospel.

The Third Way of the Gospel

The Gospel means “good news.” It is the basic message that: “God made (Christ), who had no sin, to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21). The gospel says that we are so sinful, lost and helpless that only the life and death of the Son of God can save us. But it also says that those who trust in Christ’s work instead of their own efforts are now “holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation” (Colossians 1:22-23).

The gospel tells us that our root sin is not just failing in our obedience to God but relying on our obedience to save us. Therefore, the gospel is a “third way,” neither religion nor irreligion. The religious person may say, “I am doing the right things that God commands” and the irreligious person may say, “I decide what is right and wrong for myself.” But both ways reject Jesus as Savior (though they may revere him as Example or Helper). Both ways are strategies of self-salvation – both actually keep control of their own lives. So the gospel keeps us from legalism and moralism on the one hand and from hedonism and relativism on the other.

The Gospel’s Power for Change

The gospel is not just the ABC but the A-Z of the Christian life. The gospel is not just the way to enter the kingdom but is the way to address every problem and is the way to grow at every step. If we believe we can find our own worth and meaning through performance, then we will become either proud or disdaining of others (if we reach our goals), or else discouraged and self-hating (if we fail our goals). But the gospel creates an entirely new self-image.

The Gospel tells us that we are more wicked and sinful than we ever dared believe but more loved and accepted in Christ than we ever dared to hope – at the same time.

In fact, if the gospel is true, the more you see you sin, the more certain you are that you were saved by sheer grace and the more precious and electrifying that grace is to you. So the gospel gives us enormous power to admit our flaws. Then secondly, the knowledge of our acceptance in Christ makes (for the first time) the law of God a beauty instead of a burden. We come to use it to delight the One who has enriched us so mightily, instead of using it to get his attention or win his favor. The first way makes the moral and sacrificial life a joy; the second way makes it a burden.

Therefore the gospel changes everything. It brings down racial barriers by melting away facial pride or inferiority. It brings down psychological problems by melting away self-inflation or self-hatred. It brings down personal facades, for we are free to admit who we are. It effects the way we do everything… how we motivate people, how we help them work through counseling problems, how we worship, how we take criticism.

1 “Our core problem, say St. Augustine, is that the human heart, ignoring God, turns in on itself, tries to lift itself, wants to please itself, and ends up debasing itself. The person who reaches toward God and wants to please God gets, so to speak, stretched by this move, and ennobled by the transcendence of its object. But the person who curves in on himself, who wants God’s gifts without God, who wants to satisfy the desires of a divided heart, ends up sagging and contracting like a little wad. He desires are provincial. ‘There is something in humility which, strangely enough, exalts the heart, and something in pride, which debases it.’” - Cornelius Plantinga, Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be, p. 62, (at the end quoting Augustine, The City of God)
How to Do This Bible Study

With those important preliminaries aside, we’re excited that you have decided to join us in exploring some of the foundational truths of the Christian faith. Whether you are investigating Christianity or have been a believer for as long as you can remember, we hope that this study will be fruitful for you. You may come with lots of questions or even with some apprehensiveness. Whatever the case, we earnestly desire this to be a time where you can honestly ask questions and explore the foundations of Christianity.

You may have been in a Bible study before, or you may be joining us for the first time. I want to make a note on our method of study. In each of the texts before us, we will use the simple O-I-A method of study: Observation – Interpretation – Application.

**Observation**
We simply want to know what the text actually says. The answers are sometimes so obvious that you may feel like it’s a trick question, but it’s not. In observing the text, we want to ask, “What does the text say?”

**Interpretation**
This admittedly is the toughest part of studying the Scriptures. Usually, we’ll be comparing Scripture with Scripture. We are interested in how the Scripture speaks to us, not in what we may want it to mean. Here, we are asking, “What does the text mean?”

**Application**
This is where the rubber meets the road. Sometimes in observing the text and understanding its meaning, the application flows naturally. Sometimes, we will need to do some discussing to work it into our lives. Having understood and accurately interpreted the text, we now ask, “So what?” How does this affect my beliefs, my words, my actions, my community?

**Attendance**
If you are working through this study in a group, please commit to coming each week. Not only will you benefit by this commitment, but the other people in your group will by your presence. It can be really discouraging for each week’s study to be only optionally attended. While coming each week is by no means a badge of righteousness for you, it will mean something if you put this as a priority in your week’s schedule and make every effort to be there.
Read Judges 1-2
Underline, highlight, and/or circle anything that stands out to you or that you might have questions about.

Opening Questions
What do you think God’s children and God’s church should be like?
Do you know of any unruly, terrible children who have great, godly parents?

Judges 1-2
Consult a study Bible to get an overview of Judges. Consider who wrote it and especially why the situation is.
What book came before Judges? Why does this matter?
What is the “big question” of Judges?
What was God’s people supposed to do?

The Way We Are
What are some of your first reactions when you read these first few chapters of this book? Is it what you expect? Why or why not?

Can you find any encouraging news about God’s people in these chapters?

Write out a definition of “sin.”

Judges 1:19 gives an assessment. What has God’s people forgotten in this verse? (something big that happened in Joshua)

Has there been big things that have happened in your life that you have tended to forget? Like what?

Read Judges 2:1-4. Put these verses in your own words.

So God’s people were not faithful to his covenant. What were they doing instead? See 2:11-13.

Why is this so bad? Consult a study Bible to read about Baal and Ashteroth.

God gives his assessment in 2:17. What is shocking about this verse? What do you think it means?

So in a sense, this is a new definition of sin. What do you think this picture of sin does for our understanding of sin?
One of the ways sin works is God Plus. What ways might you see God Plus in your life?

What does God’s people continue to do? Judges 2:19

What happens we move from befriending sinners to befriending sin itself?

How does this affect us as we try to Love the City?

How do you see yourself in these chapters of Judges?

The Way God Is
How does God judge his people in these chapters? What does he say about them?

What does he do to them? Have you ever witnessed something like that? What?

Do you like to think of God as a judge? Why or why not? Why do you need him to be a judge?

God also saves. See 2:16. How does God save?

What would God be like if he only saved and didn’t judge?

What would God be like if he only judged and didn’t save?

How can God both save and judge? Where do you best see that?

Can you list some ways Jesus both saved and judges?

What should that do for us, since we are Sons of Anarchy? How can we live in light of this grace?
Read Judges 3
Underline, highlight, and/or circle anything that stands out to you or that you might have questions about.

Opening Questions
Who was your favorite super hero growing up and why? Who was your favorite obscure super hero and why?

Judges 3
The Cycles
There is a definite repeated cycle that continues to happen in Judges. Write down your title for each section.

Cycle 1 – 3:12a
Cycle 2 – 3:12b
Cycle 3 – 3:15
Cycle 4 – 4:1

Consider some of the God Plus areas in your life. What would it look like or how would it read if we had a book or movie of your life? Have you ever seen cycles like this in your own life? Write down a few of them here.

The Situation
Consult a study Bible. Who is Eglon? What do we know about him?

What situation is God’s people in with Eglon and the Moabites?

How can you relate to that situation?
Think of ways you are trapped or feel caught or something you can’t escape from.

What about our society or culture? Can you think of ways we are in a situation of oppression and bondage?
Do you think God cares about these things? Why or why not?

What would it mean for you to “cry out” to him?

**The Savior**

Reread Judges 3:15. What are key words from this verse that you notice. Write those out and define them below.

What is something unexpected about Ehud? Why is that unexpected?

Go through the story in Judges 3 again. What stands out to you as exciting, cool, gross or disgusting?

Does this story help you to believe the Bible more or less? Why?

We’re trying to make connections with Judges and Jesus. Can you see any ways that Jesus shows up in this story? How is he also an unexpected Savior/Judge/Avenger/Defender/Messiah? List some ways that Jesus was not what the people expected or what we expect still today.

Judges 3 is a messy scene and situation. Yet God shows us in the midst of it. What does that mean for us? What does that mean for you?

Can you think of a story or illustration where someone enters into a messy situation in order to rescue and save? How does that story point to Jesus?
Read Judges 4-5
Underline, highlight, and/or circle anything that stands out to you or that you might have questions about.

Opening Questions
Is there something normal in your life to you that actually isn’t normal or wouldn’t be to other people?

Judges 4-5

Jabin and Sisera
Who are Jabin and Sisera? Look them up and write a few sentences about them.

What is the situation for God’s people?

How this situation a picture of sin in your own life?

Is there any place in your life where you feel stuck/captured/enslaved?

Deborah
What happened in 4:3?

What did God do? (4:4)

Who is Deborah and what did she do?

What do you most appreciate about Deborah?

How does the story and life of Deborah challenge some of our cultural assumptions?

How does Deborah lead differently than the men around her and other prophets and judges?

Jael
What does Jael do in this story?
What do you most appreciate about Jael? What scares you about her?

**Barak**
What does Barak’s name mean? Who was he?

What does Barak think about Deborah’s plan?

What does Barak want to have happen?

What did God do in the situation? How did God save the day? (Read chapter 5)

Who is the hero of this story and why?

Who do you most relate to in this story?

What does this story show us about God?

Define the word “sovereignty.” How does this story show God’s sovereignty?

What do you think God’s sovereignty might mean to you in your life right now?

God is shown as a Warrior in this passage. How was Jesus a warrior?

Think of some ways being a son or daughter of Jesus the Warrior is different than being a son or daughter of anarchy. Write a few of those down in the space below and be prepared to share them with the group.
Read Judges 6
Underline, highlight, and/or circle anything that stands out to you or that you might have questions about.

Opening Questions
What are some of your most trivial fears? What are some of your most common fears? Some of your biggest fears?

Judges 6
What pattern or cycle do you note from the last verse of chapter five and the first verse of chapter six?

What is Gideon doing?

Gideon’s Fears
How or why does Gideon fear for his safety?

When have you feared for your safety?

How or why does Gideon show his insecurities? When he talks to the angel of the Lord he seems to reveal some of these.

What are you insecure about?

6:27 says Gideon was afraid of his family. How might your surroundings or environment or friends or family make you afraid?

What is Gideon’s deepest fear from 6:13?

Can you relate to this fear? How and why?

God’s Answer
What does God send to Gideon?

How does God answer Gideon in ways that speak of justice and judgment?

How does God answer Gideon in ways of mercy and grace?
Gideon’s Fragile Faith
What does God promise Gideon in 6:16. Why is that important?

What does Gideon finally realize in 6:22? What is his response when he realizes this?

What does God say to Gideon in 6:23?

Take some time and look up the word “peace.” Write out a definition below.

Can you think of any times when God or Jesus is described as “peace”?

How does someone get peace?

Gideon deserved judgment but he got peace. Why? How?

Gideon’s Actions
What are Gideon’s responses to this grace he’s received?

What does God ask Gideon to do? How might he be asking you to do something similar in your life?

Gideon asks for a sign from God with a fleece. God graciously answers when he doesn’t have to. What are ways God gives us signs today, and how might we take ahold of them?

What do you think about Gideon after studying this passage? What do you think about yourself?

What do you think about Jesus? How can we see Jesus more clearly because of Judges 6?
Judges 7

Read Judges 7
Underline, highlight, and/or circle anything that stands out to you or that you might have questions about.

Opening Questions
When you think of the greatest upsets you’ve heard about or watched or even seen, what comes to mind? Where are you personally facing great odds in your life?

Judges 7
It may be good to review Judges 6 to familiarize yourself with Gideon and his context and history.

Gideon’s Awesome Upset
Read 7:19-25.
Gideon wins the battle. How does he win the battle? Be able to tell this story. What were the odds (the ratio) for this battle? You need to look at 8:10 to see the opposing side’s numbers.

What do you think about this victory?

God’s Humble Arrangement
Read 7:1-8
How many soldiers did Gideon start off with?

Who made the first cut? Why did some go home?

How many are left now? What do you think about these odds now?

God isn’t finished. He has one more culling to make. How does he make the army smaller?

How many are left now?

What is the quality of the men? What is their character?

What is the point of how small the army is? What is on the forefront of God’s mind? See 7:2.
Where in your life do you boast in things that God has given you or done for you? Where are you tempted to boast?

What does God want?

What does God want from you?

God's Assuring Assistance
Who are good leaders you know or know about?

What are some of their key qualities?

Does Gideon display those qualities? How would you describe Gideon?

Read 7:9-15. What does God do for Gideon and why does he do that?

What affect does it have on Gideon?

Read 1 Corinthians 1:27-31. How does this relate to our passage? How does this relate to you?

How do we see Christ in Judges 7?
Where and how did Jesus achieve an awesome upset?
Where and how was Jesus a part of God's humble arrangement?
How does Jesus achieve an assuring assistance?

Where do you face what feels like death in your life?
Where in your life do you need to see Jesus as victor?
Read Judges 8
Underline, highlight, and/or circle anything that stands out to you or that you might have questions about.

Opening Questions
Has a hero ever let you down? What are some examples?

Judges 8:22-35
It may be good to review Judges 6 & 7 to familiarize yourself with Gideon and his context and history.

Gideon’s Revenge
Read 8:1-22

In chapter 7, Gideon’s army went where God told them. Who leads the army now?

Gideon executes two kings. What do you think about that?

Gideon asks for some of the spoils to make a memorial for himself. Who is getting glory?

Earlier in Gideon’s story, he was a doubter, now he appears confident. What do you make of that?

Where does Gideon’s confidence lie now?

When can self-confidence be a bad thing?

Gideon’s Descent
Read 8:24-31

What are contradictions you see in Gideon’s life?

Does Gideon accept the kingship?

Does he live like a king? If so, in what ways?

What do you make of the ephod? Why would that be a problem?
What are times that we have appeared contradictory?

_Gideon’s Example_
Read 8:24-35

How does Gideon’s snare affect others?

Why is your example important?

Tell a story about a bad example you’ve seen?

Abimelech means “son of the king.” What do you make of that?

The writer of Hebrews tells us that Gideon is a man of faith. How do we reconcile that?

Where was Gideon’s ultimate trust?

How does this story show us Jesus?
Read Judges 9
Underline, highlight, and/or circle anything that stands out to you or that you might have questions about.

Opening Questions
Who is the most evil person you have known of (in a book or movie or the news)?
Who is the most evil person you know personally?

What are ways we see people make sense of evil?

Judges 9
It may be good to review Judges 8 to familiarize yourself with Gideon and his context and history.

The Heart for Evil
Read 9:1-22
Why was it wrong for the people to make Abimelech king?

God told Israel to wait for his king, why do you think they wanted one?

What are ways you have seen good desires go bad?

What consequences to their wrong desire do you see in this chapter?

The Evil Heart
List a couple bad things you see Abimelech do.

What do you make of Abimelech putting salt in the ground after destroying Shechem?

Can we live in a way to always escape evil? Why or why not?
What evils have you seen in this world?

*God's Heart Against Evil*

Why do you think God curses Abimelech?

Do you find Abimelech's ending humiliating? How does it feel?

How do you feel when you see evil destroyed?

Do you think God cares about evil?

List some evils Jesus faced.

How will evil finally and ultimately be destroyed?

How does Jesus’ submission to evil help you face it when you encounter it?
Read Judges 10
Underline, highlight, and/or circle anything that stands out to you or that you might have questions about.

Opening Questions
Do you think God can use messy people? Why or why not?

When have you tried to clean yourself up before approaching God?

Judges 10-12

Israel’s Repentance
Read Judges 10:6-18.

What do you think of the conversation between God and Israel?

What are ways Israel repents?

What do you think it means when the text says God “grew impatient over the misery of Israel?”

The rest of the story tells us that God rescued Israel. Did their repentance fix things right away?

Do we expect change right away?

Israel’s Rescue
Judges 11:1-33

Would you pick Jephthah to be your hero? Why or why not?

Does Jephthah seem to know God’s word?

Does Jephthah seem like a good guy? What are his flaws?

How does a bandit get to be a hero?
Did Jephthah clean up before doing God’s work?

Do we have to clean ourselves up before God can use us?

How is God gracious in this part of the story?

Can you think of another Bible hero who was rejected by his people and then he saved them?

Confused Zeal
Read Judges 11:34-12:7.

What do you make of Jephthah’s vow?

Should we bargain with God? How do we bargain with him?

Should Jephthah have kept his vow?

Does God require us to make bargains with Him?

We see Ephraim judged on accents and Ephraim upset they were not included. How does all this infighting make you feel?

Both the Old and New Testament point us to love as the marker for God’s people. How do we see that not happening?

Did Jesus come for perfect people or flawed ones?

Why does Paul call messed up people in churches, “saints” in his writings?

How does that help you understand Judges?
Read Judges 13-14
Underline, highlight, and/or circle anything that stands out to you or that you might have questions about.

Opening Questions
Is there a leader who has let you down? Why and how did that happen?

Judges 13-14

Samson’s Plunge

What does Judges 21:25 mean in the history of God’s people in this passage? How do you see this verse realized here?

God’s people have been crying out for help and have received it. Where do you see God’s people crying for help in this passage?

God’s people are drifting away. How do you see that here?

Israel doesn’t seem oppressed. Are they?

Can you think of ways where freedoms actually entrap or enslave people?

Can you think of a way or two where freedom has entrapped or enslaved you?

Does more freedom necessarily make you happier? Why or why not?

Was Samson free? How did that help him?

Samson’s Plight
What do you think of the story we read about in Judges 14?

What’s the deal with this Nazirite vow? Use a little research in a study Bible and record your findings below.

In what ways did Samson break this vow?

How does Samson show disobedience in this chapter?

In what ways is Samson ignorant in this chapter?
In what ways do you see Samson’s sensuality gone wrong in this chapter?

How does Samson seem lonely in this chapter?

How do we see a lack of any sort of bigger picture or legacy?

Can you think of one or two ways where you could see yourself like Samson in those ways?

Samson’s Picture
Why do you think Samson is in the Bible?

1&2 Samuel and 1&2 Kings come after Judges. What are those books generally about?

Kings make peace and kings go to war. Where do we see God going to war in this passage?

Read 14:4. What does this mean and how do we see this working itself out?

Go back to chapter 13. Write out below the ways that this chapter is similar to Matthew 1&2 and Luke 1&2.

How do we see Jesus using his real and true freedom?

How do we see Jesus obedient?

How do we see Jesus’ wisdom?

How do we see Jesus using his body for good?

How do we see Jesus walking in friendship and community?

How do we see Jesus leaving a real legacy?

And yet what happened to Jesus? Why?

What about you and your freedom? Are you truly free? What would true freedom be and look like?
Read Judges 15-16
Underline, highlight, and/or circle anything that stands out to you or that you might have questions about.

Opening Questions
Who is the strongest person you know? Why?

Have you discovered someone you thought was strong was really weak?

Have you discovered someone you thought was weak was really strong?

Judges 15-16
The Philistines’ Strength – Undone
The Philistines keep on winning and then losing. Why do they keep on losing?

What are some of the ways they lose?

Their strength is proven to be weakness.
Where in your life have you thought you were strong but you’ve realized that hasn’t been true?

Samson’s Strength – Stripped and Subdued
Remember Judges 13:5?
How is Samson doing?

What do you think of Samson in these chapters?

What do you think are some of Samson’s problems?

Can you relate to any of these problems?

Who is Delilah?

What is her task and mission?

How does she go about accomplishing her mission?

Samson’s strength gets cut away. Do you think he deserved this? Why or why not?
How can we relate to Samson’s failures?

How can we relate to Samson’s successes?

What might be worse if God gives it to you – failure or success? Why?

The Lord’s Strength – A Revealed Redeemer
Why is 16:20 a very scary verse?

Why is 16:22 a hopeful verse?

Write out 10 adjectives to describe Samson in his state now after being betrayed by Delilah and captured by the Philistines.

Can any of those adjectives describe you in any stage of your life?

Does God work with broken people like Samson?

How does he do it in this case, in this story with Samson?

What does Samson finally want?

How does Samson picture Jesus for us?

How was Jesus weak and strong?

Why does this matter for us today in our spiritual condition and spiritual state?

Why does this matter for us today in our normal lives?

Can you think of and tell a story where weakness proved strong and saved people?

Where are you putting your strength?
Read Judges 17-21
Underline, highlight, and/or circle anything that stands out to you or that you might have questions about.

Opening Questions
Can you think of a small story of something you are particularly not proud of?

Can you think of a small story of something that seemed so right at the time but you later realized was wrong or turned out badly?

Judges 17-21

The Bad Way is Bad
Briefly summarize the events in the chapters 19-21 below:

What are some words that describe how these chapters make you feel?

Does the author give any summary sentences about these chapters? What are they? List them below.

What about your current news? What are some of the bad ways in the news right now?

How are those people who are going their own way, doing what is right in their own eyes?

How can you identify with that, if you can? Where are ways you go your own way and do what you think is right?

Are you a good person or a bad person? Why?

The Good Way is Bad
Look at chapters 17-18. What are some of the good things you notice about Micah and this situation?

What positive words would you use to describe him?
There's something in there though. Why is 17:13 a verse that undoes everything good?

What does 17:13 mean for Micah’s “goodness”?

Can you think of qualities or actions or beliefs in people that are good ones that lead people astray?

Are there areas in your life where you think something is good but it really turns out to be self-serving? What are those?

Reassess. Is the good really good after all?

*The Jesus Way*

The end of Judges paints a pretty bleak picture of these people and of ourselves. How can we have any hope? What do we need?

How does Jesus step into this story for us? How is he connected to Judges?

Why does Jesus matter now? Does he?

How do you think you most relate to Jesus?
I don’t relate to him at all or if I do he is my enemy.
I make my own way and barely consider him.
I am the servant and he is my master.
He is my king and I am his citizen.
He is my father and I am his child.
We’re friends.
We’re lovers.

Most of us move around between several of the above relationships all the time.

Where do you want your relationship with Jesus to be? Why?

What needs to change for that to be so?

Why does grace really matter? Does it?

Write a Judges summary prayer on the back of this page. Be honest and earnest about what you want God to know and hear.