

JUDGES

The chaos of sin and the grace of God

Integrated sermon, kids program
and Bible study series

18 June – 30 July 2017

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WELCOME

The book of Judges is full of memorable stories, moments of optimism, dark comedy, confronting stories of sin and great tragedy. It traces the downward spiral of God's people Israel into some of the most confronting stories of sin in the whole bible. The conclusion is that "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit" and what they saw fit to do is shocking.

Yet amidst this dark backdrop we see the surprising grace of God time and again as he persists with His people. There are some encouraging flickers of faith in the human participants in the story. The great tragedy is that the people of God get to the point where they no longer call out, nor seek God.

We're a church committed to teach all the Bible. After studying Judges for some months now I do think Judges asks some very timely and necessary questions of the church today including Trinity Inner South. We may not be entirely comfortable with either the questions or the honest answers to them but that's okay and I'd encourage you to embrace the challenge.

I'm prayerfully optimistic that we'll look back on the series as a very important moment in our life together as a church and of great spiritual benefit. Please join me in praying for a really helpful series.

Your brother in Christ,



Matt Lehmann
Senior Pastor



OUR SEVEN WEEKS IN JUDGES

We'll cover off nearly all of Judges in the seven week series if you follow along both the sermons and bible studies. We'll look at how it fits into the wider Biblical storyline and how we think about it as Christians today. Our prayer is that by the end of the series you'll love Judges and be much better equipped to read and apply it both individually and corporately as a church.

These studies are written mostly for group settings with the assumption that most groups will have a mid year break in the middle of the series. On those weeks the studies have been written for personal reflection.

	DATE	PASSAGE
Group study 1	Week commencing 12 June	Judges 1:1-2:5
Sermon 1	Sunday 18 June	Judges 1:1-2:5
Group study 2	Week commencing 19 June	Judges 2:6-3:6
Sermon 2	Sunday 25 June	Judges 2:6-3:6
Group study 3	Week commencing 26 June	Judges 3:7-31
Sermon 3	Sunday 2 July	Judges 4:1-5:31
Group study 4	Week commencing 3 July	Judges 7:1-8:35* ^{swap}
Sermon 4	Sunday 9 July	Judges 6:1-40* ^{swap}
Personal study 5	Week commencing 10 July	Judges 8:29-9:57
Reading notes	School holiday period	Judges 10:1-12:15
Sermon 5	Sunday 16 July	Judges 13:1-25
Personal study 6	Week commencing 17 July	Judges 14:1-15:20
Sermon 6	Sunday 23 July	Judges 16:1-31
Group study 7	Week commencing	Judges 17:1-18:31
Sermon 7	Sunday 30 July	Judges 19:1-21:24

OUR SEVEN WEEKS IN JUDGES

BIBLE STUDIES

Regular Bible study in small groups is a great way to grow as a Christian. If you are able to join one of our community groups and haven't done so yet, please consider it in the next few weeks. The easiest way to get into a group is to chat to Karl Forsyth our Associate Pastor who oversees our groups.

If you aren't able to make a group the studies can be done personally. Even better though perhaps find someone else who lives near you to go through the studies each week - over breakfast or a coffee for example. I'm sure you get the picture now, we think regular Bible study is really helpful.

JUDGES FOR CHILDREN

Our children's programs at Trinity Inner South are for children between the age of three up to year six at school. Our pre school kids group from age three (Mini's) won't be studying Judges. Our kids programs from reception to year two (R-2's) and from year three to six (3-6's) will. Our youth group have a head start on us all as they've already commenced studying Judges.

We'd love all our kids to grow up strong in their faith in Jesus, well disciplined so that they are prepared for a life of loving God, other people and sharing the gospel of Jesus. This is a key responsibility for all Christian parents and as a church we want to support, partner and equip parents for this task.

All kids talks and programs will be dealt with in age appropriate ways and there are some sections in Judges we won't cover directly with the kids such as the last three chapters, due to their adult content.

JUDGES INTRODUCTION

HOW JUDGES HELPS US KNOW GOD

In Judges we encounter God's presence throughout the book. We're challenged to think through who God reveals Himself to be in His words and actions. The vast array of characters in Judges help us think through how we relate to God and how God works through our actions, faith and sins to accomplish his purposes in our world.

The careful explorer finds that Judges interprets these great stories from a religious, prophetic perspective. Many times we see behind the curtain of the visible world to see God in action during chaotic times. We see that the people suffer because they forsake the one true God and worship others. God in His kindness sends judges because he takes pity on His people and persists with them amidst a downward spiral of turning from Him.

As with any part of the bible, when we read it, it shapes our understanding of God, our theology. Our theology shapes how we interpret the bible and so the cycle continues. Judges is an excellent example of this, "It is not theological in a systematic, abstract way but in a dynamic, highly relational way. Judges is a narrative work, and its theology is narrative theology. To access its theology, we have to read it as narrative. Its theology emerges gradually as the story progresses."¹

So enjoy getting to know God better through Judges, as you'll see there is no-one more surprising, challenging and gracious than the God of Scripture.

¹ B. G. Webb, *The Book of Judges* (NICOT; Grand Rapids/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2012), 53.

JUDGES INTRODUCTION

THE STRUCTURE OF JUDGES

It's helpful to understand that Judges has a very intentional structure which we'll get more as we work through it. Katy Smith summarises it as follows:

1. The Prologue: The Beginnings of Canaanisation in Israel (1:1-2:5)

- a. An ominous continuation of the conquest (1:1-36)
- b. The explanation: Israel has violated the covenant with YHWH (2:1-5)

2. Centre: YHWH's Response to the Canaanisation of Israel (2:6-16:31)

- a. The thesis statement- the cycle of apostasy and deliverance outlined (2:6-3:6)
- b. The cycle of Aram-Naharaim and Othniel (3:7-11)
- c. The cycle of Moab and Ehud (3:12-30)
 - Parenthesis: The judgement of Shamgar (3:31)
- d. The cycle of Canaan and Barak (4:1-5:31)
- e. The cycle of Midian and Gideon (6:1-9:57)
 - Parenthesis: The judgements of Tola and Jair (10.1-5)
- f. The cycle of Ammon and Jephthah (10:6-12:7)
 - Parenthesis: The judgement of Ibzan, Elon, Abdon (12:8-15)
- g. The cycle of the Philistines and Samson (13:1-16:31)

3. Epilogue: The Degeneration of Israel When YHWH No Longer Responds (17:1-21:25)

- a. The ethical and spiritual degeneration of Israel: Example A (17:1-18:31)
 - i. The spiritual corruption of an Israelite household (17:1-36)
 - ii. The corruption of the priesthood (17:7-13)
 - iii. The spiritual corruption of a tribe (18:1-31)
- b. The ethical and spiritual degeneration of Israel: Example B (19:1-21:25)
 - i. The rape of a Levite's wife (19:1-26)
 - ii. The Levite's response and that of Israel (19:27-30)
 - iii. The whole of Israel unite against Benjamin (20:1-48)
 - iv. The grief over the loss of Benjamin and the rape of many women (21:1-25)

JUDGES INTRODUCTION

THE LANDSCAPE OF JUDGES (from the Crossway ESV Study Bible)

Some appreciation of geography helps us ground the story in history.



THANKS AND FURTHER RESOURCES

THANKS KATY

Katy Smith is the Old Testament lecturer at Bible College SA and like all great academics she is first and foremost a servant of God's church. Her assistance in helping us prepare for this series with the staff training and leading our recent Sunday training for all, has been invaluable.

OTHER RESOURCES

While not agreeing with every point, I'm very thankful to St Helen's Bishopsgate London for Paul Clarke's sermon series on Judges. Lee Gatiss produced a bible study companion from this that I've also found helpful. You can find both at www.st-helens.org.uk/resources/media-library.

HELPFUL COMMENTARIES

1. **Judges: Such a great salvation** (Dale Ralph Davis)
Christian Focus Publications, 2000, Ross-Shire
An easy read for anyone at church with great pastoral insight.
2. **Judges and Ruth: God in Chaos** (Barry G. Webb)
Crossway, 2015, Illinois
A good commentary geared at apply the text well to the church today.
3. **The book of Judges** (Barry G. Webb)
Eerdmans, 2012, Cambridge
One of the best technical commentaries geared more academically but still suprisingly readable for most.
4. **Judges** (J. Clinton McCann)
Westminster John Knox Press, 2011, Kentucky
Gets you thinking about the text, geared more academically.

BIBLE STUDY – WEEK 1

TITLE: Approaching Judges

PASSAGE: Judges 1:1-2:5

PLACING JUDGES IN THE BIBLICAL STORYLINE

1. Read Joshua 21:43-45
2. What does this tell you about God and what He has done for His people?
3. Read Joshua 24:1-28
4. What do you make of 24:19-24, do you think the people will obey God?
5. What does God say He'll do if they turn from Him & worship other Gods?

GETTING UNDERWAY IN JUDGES

6. As Judges commences, the people are in the land, God has shown Himself to be faithful to His promises, yet the conquest is incomplete. Read Judges 1:1-7, how do things kick off?
7. Have a look at the following passages and discuss together why God is helping the Israelites conquer the land and destroy its inhabitants.
 - Leviticus 18:1-5 and verses 24-25
 - Deuteronomy 9:4-5 (their wickedness) and 18:9-13

BIBLE STUDY – WEEK 1

8. Read Judges 1:8-36
9. What strikes you about the passage:
 - What is unexpected?
 - What questions would you like to ask Israel at this point?
10. How would you describe the military situation at the end of chapter one:
 - Who is in control?
 - What appears to have gone wrong?
 - Is God not strong enough, why would iron chariots be an issue (v.19)?
11. What is God's explanation of events? Read Judges 2:1-5

CORPORATE APPLICATION

12. As a local church, like all churches, we're called to go and make disciples (evangelism) and teach people to obey all God has commanded us (grow to maturity) [Matthew 28:19-20]. Do you think our obedience to God's word affects our "success" at doing this today?

BIBLE STUDY – WEEK 1

13. Do you think we as a church pursue wholehearted obedience to God, or are we content to tolerate certain levels of sin and disobedience?

14. If you think we don't pursue wholehearted obedience, why do you think this is the case, what do you think we can do about it?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

15. Read Ephesians 4:17-24

16. How do you reconcile the salvation Jesus has won for us on the cross with such a clear call to obedient Christian living?

17. What can we do on a personal level to put sin to death in our lives?

18. How can we encourage others to do so in a grace driven way so that our love for Jesus grows, we help each other repent and avoid legalism?

19. PRAY FLOWING OUT OF TODAY'S PASSAGE AND DISCUSSION

BIBLE STUDY – WEEK 2

TITLE: The emergency of our faith

PASSAGE: Judges 2:6-3:6

1. In today's passage, there's a bit of a time thing going on, the technical term is analepsis (there's a big word you've never needed to know) but what you do need to know is that they're used to highlight a central point. It steps out of the flow of time in Judges and draws in the end of Joshua to make the point that while Joshua and the elders lived, the Israelites served God, after that however ... well read on!
2. Read Judges 2:6-15
3. How would you summarise what happens after Joshua dies from verses 10-15, why such a change in behaviour from the people?
4. God had warned them about how He would respond to such behaviour back in Joshua 24:19-20 (have a quick read of it). Given what God had promised what would you expect to happen next in the story?
5. Read Judges 2:16-3:6
6. What is the surprising new initiative from God here, why did he do it?

BIBLE STUDY – WEEK 2

7. How effective is the solution God provides? How does the cycle work?
8. What does God do, or actually stop doing in response to this and what is the purpose of leaving the people in the land?
9. How does chapter 3:5-6 summarise the downward spiral of Israel?
10. This analepsis (still a great word for the day) then shows us the premise, or God's interpretation of what happens in the rest of the book. How do you think this slippery slope of sin might play out in the church today?

BIBLE STUDY – WEEK 2

CORPORATE APPLICATION

11. Read out the following big words that end with shun (“tion”)

Salvation: is being saved from the penalty of sin

Sanctification: is being saved from the power of sin

Glorification: is being saved from the presence of sin

12. If you were to rank from 1 to 3 what we focus on the most in churches like Trinity Inner South (1 being what we focus on the most) how would you rank them and what evidence would you give to support it?

13. What are some of the dangers in being a bit weak as a church community on one or more of the above?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

14. Read Philippians 2:12-13

15. Who is working here?

BIBLE STUDY – WEEK 2

16. Read 2 Peter 1:5-11

17. From these two readings it's perfectly biblical to work (and work hard) at our sanctification but we have to do this dependant on God knowing that Jesus has won our salvation and we can never earn that. As my ministry coach (a great guy called Dave Kraft) puts it, there are three possible scenarios when we think about sanctification:

- (a) God initiates and we respond, in the power of the Holy Spirit
= God honouring obedience
- (b) God initiates and we choose not to respond
= Wilful disobedience (exactly what Israel did in Judges)
- (c) We initiate on our own
= Sinful independence: Which in my opinion (Matt's), always ends up in legalistic, performance based Christianity with people getting mixed up and start trying to earn their salvation!

18. How then can we respond at a personal and corporate level to respond to God's initiative in working in us by the power of the Holy Spirit?

19. PRAY FLOWING OUT OF TODAY'S PASSAGE AND DISCUSSION

BIBLE STUDY – WEEK 3

TITLE: Three surprising deliverers

PASSAGE: Judges 3:7-31

1. Recall briefly from last week's study and sermon the cycle of how things are going to go down in the book of Judges.
2. Read Judges 3:7-11
3. What cues show us that our analepsis (sorry I had to use that word one more time) has ended and we're now into history?
4. We see a full cycle here with not much in terms of a story, what do you think are meant to be the main take away points?
5. Because we've been told in 2:6-3:6 how Judges is going to work, the death of Othniel alerts us to expect the worst from the people, read Judges 3:12-30 to see our next cycle.
6. Share with each other some of the things that make this such a great story (dark comedy, suspense, Ehud's 007 skills).

BIBLE STUDY – WEEK 3

7. No comment is made on Ehud's ethics here but if you'd been oppressed for eighteen years and Ehud had just led the nation to a great military victory (verses 27-30) how do you think the Israelites would have responded recalling it around the campfire afterwards?

8. The Shagmar episode (v.31) is very brief, who is he, is he an Israelite? His name suggests he may not be but we don't know for sure. The point is though, that God uses him too to save Israel with a cattle prod! It seems to punctuate the previous stories with an exclamation mark "God saves!"

CORPORATE APPLICATION

9. Some assume there is repentance shown by Israel when they cry out to the Lord (3:9 & 15) yet this doesn't seem present in the text, it reads simply like a cry of anguish directed at God. Yet God takes pity on his adulterous, sin loving people and the cycle of bringing salvation and rest occurs again and again. Are we so familiar with God's gracious character that we read these stories and yawn or do we praise God for His grace? If we have a problem here, what can we do about it?

BIBLE STUDY – WEEK 3

10. Read Romans 5:6-11 and spend some time praising God for His gracious character shown in Judges and to us in Jesus.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

11. God could have brought a quick end to His people in Judges, He could have left them languishing in their sin too. Yet he chooses to discipline them by giving them over to foreign rulers, then saves them via a judge. As we saw last week, as Christians, Jesus has won our salvation for us yet the power of sin still reeks some havoc in our lives both personally and corporately as a church. What role does God's discipline play in the Christian life today do you think?

12. Read Hebrews 12:4-13

13. A harvest of righteousness and peace sounds pretty good, how can we be trained by God's discipline, personally and corporately without falling into the trap of linking every struggle we have with some specific sin?

14. PRAY FLOWING OUT OF TODAY'S STUDY AND DISCUSSION

BIBLE STUDY – WEEK 4

TITLE: The man who wouldn't be king

PASSAGE: Judges 7:1-8:35

1. This week we've changed things around a little and the sermon coming this week is going to cover Judges 6 and we'll look at chapter 7 briefly today but focus most of our time in chapter 8.
2. In chapter six God picks Gideon from one of the weakest tribes and the weakest in his family (6:15) and promises to be with him. Gideon breaks down the Baal's altar and Asherah poles but out of fear does it at night. Gideon takes some convincing by God but as we get to chapter 7 he is prepared to lead his men to military victory. Read Judges chapter 7.
3. It's a great chapter with some cunning military planning but what is the reason given (verses 2-7) for God whittling down the army?
4. Read Judges 8:1-9
5. How do you feel about Gideon's flattery of Ephraim and his threat to punish his own people, as unhelpful as they were when he returns?
6. Read Judges 8:10-21
7. Do you think this is part of God's initial direction to Gideon or is Gideon pursuing his own vendetta do you think?

BIBLE STUDY – WEEK 4

8. Do you think this is part of God's initial direction to Gideon or is Gideon pursuing his own vendetta do you think?

9. Read Judges 8:22-35

10. Including all of chapter 8 plus what we've just read, what do you think Gideon did that was good, bad or unsure and any comments made about him in the text that give us insight into this:

Good	Unsure	Not good

11. The people had 40 years rest during Gideon's lifetime but upon his death ... you guessed it, they prostituted themselves like we were told would happen and it keeps getting worse.

BIBLE STUDY – WEEK 4

CORPORATE APPLICATION

12. The story of Gideon has shown us that spiritual highs, God using him for His glory and to deliver His people, and lows (the ephod/idolatry incident) can come alarming close together. How can we be on guard as a church to ensure good things like; church growth, people coming to know Jesus, people growing in maturity aren't accompanied by pride and bad decision that cause sin and degradation in our community?

13. Gideon after some great victories took some glory to himself (v.24) and was even professed theological correctness (v.23) as he did so. How can we keep God's glory our greatest concern?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

14. Gideon is also an example, in his better moments, of someone quite weak by heritage, in his family and in his faith but was still used to do many good things for God's people (see Hebrews 11:32-34 if you're unsure of this). How does Hebrews 12:1-3 encourage us to apply this personally?

15. PRAY FLOWING OUT OF THESE LESSONS FROM GIDEON

PERSONAL STUDY – WEEK 5

TITLE: The son of the king

PASSAGE: Judges 8:29-9:57

1. Last week we saw that Gideon was somewhat of a mixed character, with some great moments, some pretty bad ones and others which are a little hard to interpret. Today we get to see how he spends his retirement and what comes next for God's people. Read Judges 8:29-35 again.
2. Jerub-Baal was kind of Gideon's nickname, it means "let Baal contend with him" which we learned back in 6:32 when Gideon broke down the Baals. How are we told he spends his later years, does it sound positive?
3. Names are important in the Hebrew language, the name of Gideon's son whom he had with the concubine, Abimelek, means "my father is king". That'd be in the "not so wise" column for Gideon and it was a cue to the Hebrew readers of this to expect that this rather mixed legacy of Gideon is not going to end well. Read Judges 9:1-6 to see.
4. The only surviving son of Gideon, Jotham preaches a pretty 'fiery' sermon against the citizens of Shechem for making Abimelek king. Read Judges 9:7-21. What would be your one line sermon summary?
5. The ensuing battle is a long one with lots of names and places, try to get your hear around it by giving a one sentence summary of what happens in the following passages:

PERSOAL STUDY – WEEK 5

9:22-25

9:26-29

9:30-33

9:34-41

9:42-46

9:47-49

9:50-55

6. Then read out all your one sentence summaries in order, to get the flow of the battle and the key points. Note the irony that Abimelek didn't want to be the guy killed by a woman and people have been reading about it for thousands of years.
7. Read verse 23 again and then verses 56 and 57.
8. What is the theological interpretation of all that is going on?

PERSONAL STUDY – WEEK 5

9. Whether he meant it or not Gideon at least spoke truly when he said back in chapter 8:23 “I will not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you. The LORD will rule over you”

CORPORATE APPLICATION

10. In Jesus God has provided for us the king we as his people really need and He is the head of our church today. We do appoint overseers in church and they go by many names, elders, pastors, leadership teams, community group leaders or priest (the worst name of all to use). What characteristics do we often use to choose these ‘leaders’ (when we get it wrong) and what characteristics should we use?
11. Have a think about some of the things that have gone horribly wrong in the church when Jesus kingship hasn’t been openly acknowledged and celebrated. What goes wrong when ‘leaders’ take glory, power and prestige upon themselves?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

12. How can you, in an encouraging way, seek to always acknowledge and promote Jesus kingship in our church and in our lives.

13. PRAY

PERSONAL READING

TITLE: Going for a cycle on your own

PASSAGE: Judges 10:1-12:15

OVERVIEW

After being in the book of Judges together as a church for five weeks now this section of the booklet is designed to see how you go reading and applying the book of Judges yourself. Most Community Groups will be on break for a couple of weeks during the winter school holidays. Why not set aside some time each day for a week to do the readings each day and have a think about the question I've posed.

1. Day 1: Read Judges 10:1-5
2. After Israel's brief but disastrous flirtation with having a human king, what do you think Tola and Jai are supposed to illustrate for us?
3. Read Judges 10:6-14
4. What is the disturbing new development here?
5. Day 2: Read Judges 10:15-18
6. What's good about what happens here, what are you uncertain about?
7. Day 3: Read Judges 11:1-12
8. Much like their relationship with God, Israel rejects Jephthah until they are in trouble and need him, then they turn to him. How do many Christians do that today, how can we protect against it?

PERSONAL READING

9. Day 4: Read Judges 11:12-28

10. Jephthah seems to stake it all on God's unrivalled supremacy will win the day. It's likely this is what justifies his inclusion in Hebrews 11:32-33. When we think of troubling world affairs, do we think like this?

11. Day 5: Read Judges 11:29-40

12. In a tragic twist Jephthah makes an completely unnecessary vow to God who had already given him the Spirit and victory. What does this reveal to us about Jephthah's character flaws? Do we bargain with God?

13. Day 6: Read Judges 12:1-7

14. Jephthah shows us our capacity for great acts of faith and the sin and pain that can flow from our character flaws. How should we think about this in our own lives, what should we do when our sins and flaws hurt our brothers and sisters in Christ?

15. Day 7: Read Judges 12:8-15

16. How has the cycle of Judges broken down here, what hope does there seem to be for Israel at this point?

PERSONAL STUDY – WEEK 6

TITLE: Mr. right?

PASSAGE: Judges 14:1-15:20

1. As we saw on Sunday the mode of God's provision of a saviour for Israel was impressive. A childless woman, an angel of the Lord, a child set apart from birth and (13:25) the Spirit of the Lord began to stir.
2. Read chapter 14
3. How would you describe Samson's character, what appear to be the main things driving his decisions?
4. What are we told God is doing behind the scenes (v.4), does that change your view of Samson himself or just how God might use him?
5. Read chapter 15:8
6. Given what God said he'd use Samson to do in (14:4), how would you say God's plan has worked out?
7. Read chapter 15:9-13
8. How would you describe people of Judah's actions here? What does this say about the spiritual state of the people?

PERSONAL STUDY – WEEK 6

9. Read 15:14-20

10. God's purposes are certainly achieved, but what do you make of Samson and his heart for God, do you think he seeks God's glory or his own?

11. We'll see the conclusion to Samson's life on Sunday. So far however, what evidence do you see in the text that would you'd consider positive for Samson or a negative in terms of his character? List them below:

Positive	Negative

12. Do you agree with the following statement and think why or why not?
“Samson was a holy man; Israel was a holy nation. Samson went after other women; Israel went after other gods. In his extremity, Samson called out to God to save him (15:18, 16:28). In its extremity, Israel too cried out to Yahweh, as we have seen again and again in Judges. Samson was finally taken down to exile in Gaza. Israel was handed over to the Babylonians and taken away in exile to Babylon. Both outcomes were ..”

PERSONAL STUDY – WEEK 6

“.. tragic, and both could have been avoided if other choices had been made.”²

CORPORATE AND PERSONAL APPLICATION

13. REFLECT: If God will provide salvation through such a fallen man and provide for His people, how much more can we rejoice and be confident in the salvation He has won for us in Christ.

14. Read 1 Peter 2:9-10

15. REFLECT AND PRAY ABOUT THESE QUESTIONS:

“Incredible though it may sound, it’s God’s intention to take the fight to the enemy* through us, reveal his glory to the world through us, and expose its gods for the hollow shams they are. The question for us is, will we embrace that? Will we run with it and find our whole joy and reason for living in being what God has called us to be? Or will we be reluctant saints, as Samson was, always looking over our shoulder and wishing we could be as other people? Will we, too, be led by our eyes and the covetousness of our hearts? Will we serve God because we must or because we love Him ... will the call of God to be his saints and servants still captivate our hearts, still fill us with a sense of wonder and privilege, and nerve us to continue as his faithful servants to the end?”³

* Matt: Spiritually speaking, not physically or militarily (just for clarity)

² Barry Webb “Judges and Ruth: God in chaos” Preaching the Word, Crossway, 2015 p.214

³ Webb “Judges and Ruth” p.214

BIBLE STUDY – WEEK 7

TITLE: Religion without the one true God at the heart

PASSAGE: Judges 17:1-18:31

1. Welcome back to the final community group study. Discuss how you've found the sermon series, what you learned if you did the personal studies and personal reading.
2. We've reached a point in the spiral down in Judges where God no longer intervenes. At Samson's death there was no mention of a period of rest. The cycles have ceased, God doesn't oppress them further so they cry out to Him, God, it seems, no longer intervenes.
3. Read Judges 17
4. List off the disturbing things that happen in this chapter?
5. Why is the mention of the young Levite particularly worrying? What was the Levite's special role amongst the people of God?
(see Leviticus 10:8-11 or back to Exodus 28:1-11)
6. Read Judges 18
7. How is the Danite conquest of Laish different from the conquests of chapter 1? (see especially 1:34)

BIBLE STUDY – WEEK 7

8. Given God is completely silent now, discuss the many ways both Micah and the Danites have a religious veneer on everything?
9. With such disregard for God and “In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit” (17:6) and riffed on in 18:1, were you expecting military success here or defeat?
10. Do you find God’s silence and lack of intervention more troubling than the previous cycle of oppression, crying out to God & raising up a judge?
11. How does the writer drive home just how far the people are now from God in the closing verses here (18:30-31)?
12. If Israel is to have a future, where does their only hope lie?
13. Read 1 Samuel chapters 1-3 before you go to bed to see Israel’s hope.

BIBLE STUDY – WEEK 7

CORPORATE APPLICATION

14. How does the 'pick and mix' style of religion, and 'put a religious veneer on anything' show itself in the church today?
15. This isn't just a problem for churches 'out there', how might we at Trinity Inner South be in danger of making some of the same mistakes?
16. How can we guard against such mistakes and live wholeheartedly for Jesus, His honour, His gospel and His church?

PERSONAL AND CORPORATE APPLICATION

17. The story of the Danites shows us that success is not always a sign of God's favour or approval. "Ambitious pragmatism can sometimes lead us into doing what is easier and leads to apparent success rather than doing what is godly but difficult. How would that apply to us as individuals, and as a church?"⁴

⁴ Lee Gatiss "Study notes Judges" St Helen's Bishopsgate accessed online

FEEDBACK

I'd really appreciate feedback on the series, how helpful you found it and any suggestions for improvement. If you are able please send any feedback via email to: office@trinityinnersouth.org.au

Feedback on each aspect of the series would be helpful:

SERMONS

1. Do you think they were faithful to God's word?
2. How engaging were they?
3. Did you feel they were applicable to your life?

BOOKLET

1. Were the studies helpful?
2. How did you find the personal reading notes?
3. How can we make them better in the future?

OVERALL

1. Did the series help you grow in your relationship with God?
2. Do you have a better understanding of how Judges fits into the bigger picture of the Bible and helps us as followers of Jesus today?

Any other comments would be welcome.

NOTES

TRINITY INNER SOUTH CHURCH A TRINITY NETWORK