I. The Judges
   A. Who were judges?
      1. Charismatic leaders raised up by God
      2. A picture of grace
      3. An answer to prayer
      4. They pointed to the True King
   
   B. Why judges instead of a king?
      1. God always wanted to be seen as the King of Israel
      2. God knew that kings would oppress the people

II. A Book about Worship, Freedom, Grace, and Leadership
   A. We were programmed to be worshipers
      1. God writes through His authors of the Bibles as a spurned husband
      2. God’s mercy and grace always triumph over judgment
   
   B. When people become God worshipers, they walk in freedom
      1. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty
      2. When I am His worshiper, I stay far from oppression
   
   C. God used the judges as tools of His grace
      1. Leadership affects others profoundly
      2. How do I lead as a God worshiper?
         - Husband
         - Parent
         - Boss
         - Co-worker
         - Friend
Read Judges 3

Question One:
In Judges 3:1, God demonstrates his intention to test Israel.
Why did God intend to test Israel?

Question Two:
The idea of testing implies difficulty and adversity.
Describe a time when you were tested.

Question Three:
God was testing Israel to refine it.
How can God’s testing help refine and grow us?

Question Four:
The ultimate result of being approved after testing is the reward of His kingdom.
In this chapter, how did God show his faithfulness to the nation of Israel?

III. The Minor Judges, Othniel, Ehud and Shamgar

A. Othniel
1. Defeated the armies of Aram
2. The land had peace for 40 years

B. Ehud
1. Defeated the king and armies of Moab
2. A left handed man
3. Used his left hand to kill the king of Moab
4. The land had peace for 80 years

C. Shamgar
1. Defeated the Philistines
2. Great warrior

IV. God Prefers Weak People

A. Strong people don’t need His grace

B. God uses weakness to reveal His grace
Life Group Questions for November 2-3, 2013

Message = The God Squad

Ice Breaker: What is your favorite family memory as a child?

Have three or four people read through Judges 3.

1. What do you observe about this passage?

2. Do you think there is significance to the fact that the Holy Spirit would come upon the judges enabling them to lead the people? How is this relevant to us today?

3. Can you see God’s grace in the judgment He would pass down upon Israel? (Leader - God used the misery of slavery and oppression to bring the people back to Himself.)

4. Can you see how God has used miserable circumstances in your past to bring you to Him or back to Him? Please tell one such story.

5. Have someone read Revelation 14: 6-7. What is the essence of the Gospel according to this passage?

6. As a group, define what you think giving God glory looks like in the daily life of a believer.

7. Judges is a book about worship. What gods do you think are the primary gods of our culture today? How do these gods affect your life?

8. Pray for one another.

Table Talk

Focus: Leaning on God
Scripture: Proverbs 3:5-6

Day 1 - What does it mean to depend or lean on someone? Find a partner, stand back-to-back and lean back against each other. Now slowly move away from your partner to see if he/she can stay in the leaning position without falling. How far can you lean or stand up? If you didn’t fall over when your partner moved away, were you really leaning on him/her? Why or why not? When you couldn’t stand up after your partner moved away, it show how much you were depending or leaning on him/her. When we make choices every day, we can show how much we depend or lean on God. Read Proverbs 3:5-6.

Day 2 - Look through magazines and newspapers and find articles about successful people. What makes this person successful? Is this person successful because of his or her actions or appearance? Does this article give you any clues about whether or not this person is depending or leaning on God’s wisdom? It’s not wrong to be successful in some of the ways we’ve read about, but whether or not a person leans on God’s wisdom is the measure of true success.

Day 3 - Saul, the very first king of God’s people, forgot to lean on God’s wisdom. He made some wrong choices. Let’s find out what happened next and who God chose to take Saul’s place. (Read 1 Samuel 16: 1-13). What do you think it means to say that David was a man after God’s own heart? How can you show that you are leaning on God’s wisdom? Who do you know who leans on God’s wisdom? What does that person do or say?
Day 1: Read Psalm 100: 4-5
Talk about the three reasons why we should say “thank you” to God that are mentioned in the reading. (He is good, His love never runs out, and He keeps his promises, even to children.) Share some examples from your life of God being good, loving, and keeping His promises.

Day 2: Psalm 100: 4-5 again
Ask your child(ren) to tell you what they are thankful for. Talk about being thankful for parents, church, school, Jesus, health, etc. Some children in other countries are not allowed to go to church, they do not have schools, they may not know anything about Jesus, they may not have access to doctors, and/or they may not live with their parents. This should remind us to have thankful hearts for all the good things God has given us. We can also use those good things to help others. Share how you can help others with your thankful heart.

Memory Verse:
“Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.” - Psalm 100: 4

Day 3:
Talk about how thankful hearts and hands always respond. When our hearts appreciate what God has done for us or even for others, we should always do something to show that attitude. Discuss some ideas on how to show you have a thankful heart. (Prayer, serving others, writing thank you cards, sharing what God has given you, taking good care of your health and the things you have, etc.) Pray together with thankful hearts for all the good things God has given you.

Activity: Trace your child’s open hand on a piece of colored paper. Cut out the hand and then write, “I am thankful for...” in the palm of the hand and then help write on each finger what they are thankful for.

Personal Devotion Pages

The following pages are designed to help you enjoy a regular time alone with God. We have divided up the curriculum to help us grow wherever we are at in our relationship with God and in our knowledge of His Kingdom.

LEVELS: Since we are a Colorado church, we use skiing imagery to communicate the different levels of intensity and time involved in relating to God.

BEGINNER: If you are new in your relationship with God, we encourage you to try the exercises under this symbol:

INTERMEDIATE: If you have walked with God for some time and would like a little more challenge and more time involvement, try the exercises under this symbol:

ADVANCED: These exercises are for people who have walked with God for some time and display maturity in their relationship with Him.

These exercises provide a practical way to encounter God and His truth on a regular basis. There are no rules here. Please don’t hurry through the process. Slow meditation and memorization seems to soak in better than cramming.

Enjoy!
Day One

1. Take some time to praise the Lord for who He is and enjoy thanking Him for what He has done in your life lately.

2. Read Judges 3 slowly and deliberately.

3. Write down any observations you see in this passage.

Memorize I Corinthians 1: 26-27.


Memorize I Corinthians 26-31.

Day Five

But when Israel cried out to the LORD for help, the LORD raised up a man to rescue them. His name was Ehud son of Gera, of the tribe of Benjamin, who was left-handed. The Israelites sent Ehud to deliver their tax money to King Eglon of Moab.

~Judges 3:15, NLT

I love playing Where’s Waldo with the Old Testament. What I mean is this: I like looking for pictures of Jesus and pictures of grace in the brutal pages of the ancient history.

Judges chapter 3 introduces us to the first three minor judges of the Israelites. Ehud, the second judge, was left handed. Did you see Waldo there? The author is giving us a picture of grace. Left handed people in early times were considered weak and possibly cursed. God is about to use a weak and supposedly cursed man to free the people from their slavery and give them freedom for over 80 years!

That seemingly insignificant left hand of Ehud will wield a surprise dagger for Eglon, the king of Moab. Ehud will cut off the head of their oppressors, the Moabites, then lead the people in a route of their forces.

The grace picture is this: God uses my weaknesses, not just my strengths, to influence others with the power of the Gospel. When I am weak, He is strong. When I am authentically vulnerable and needy, I invite Him to use my weak mortality to influence others with His grace.

God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful.

~Corinthians 1: 27
Day Five

1. Take some time to praise the Lord for who He is and enjoy thanking Him for what He has done in your life lately.


3. Write down in this space any sin strongholds (sins that always seem to defeat you) in your life. Ask God to break down the walls and set you free.

4. Finish your Bible memorization today.

Day One

Then Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of 110. They buried him in the land he had inherited, at Timnath-serah in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.

After that generation died, another generation grew up who did not acknowledge the LORD or remember the mighty things he had done for Israel.

~Judges 2:8-10, NLT

The generation of Joshua has seen God do amazing miracles on their behalf. Their children stayed back at camp and in the background while God worked miracles through their parents. The new generation has now matured and they have not experienced God for themselves. This passage illustrates the need for each generation to experience God for themselves. We can teach our children all about God - and we should! However, at some point they must have a personal encounter with Him that goes beyond Sunday school cognitive understanding.

The generation following Joshua’s had never experienced God for themselves. The parents may or may not have taught them about God’s great power and love - but they did not internalize it for themselves. Thus, the tantalizing lure of the local gods overcame them.

Following God requires me to lay down my life and follow His direction. It requires selfless devotion and death to my selfishness.

Worshiping the local gods is not about following; it’s about manipulating. I can be the one in charge and get the gods to do my bidding. It also involves promiscuous sex and the promise of great increase.

If I don’t know God intimately and if I have never experienced His awesome kindness, I will find myself caught up in idolatry. As humans, we are made to worship. If I have not yet become His worshiper, then I will default to worshiping other gods. In our culture today, that other god is usually SELF.

Father, remove my need to be in control as I place you in the driver’s seat of my life.
Day Two

1. Take some time to praise the Lord for who He is and enjoy thanking Him for what He has done in your life lately.

2. Read Judges 3 again today.

3. Take time to ask God to make you a passionate worshiper of His.

4. Take time to repent of sin and idolatry. Allow the Holy Spirit to release you from the sins that captivate you. Ask Him if He would like you to change some of your habits.

5. Continue memorizing and meditating on the scriptures for this week.

Day Four

But when Israel cried out to the LORD for help, the LORD raised up a man to rescue them. His name was Othniel, the son of Caleb’s younger brother, Kenaz. The Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he became Israel’s judge. He went to war against King Cushan-rishathaim of Aram, and the LORD gave Othniel victory over him. So there was peace in the land for forty years. Then Othniel son of Kenaz died. Once again the Israelites did what was evil in the LORD’s sight, so the LORD gave King Eglon of Moab control over Israel.

~Judges 3:9-12, NLT

The first judge of Israel was Caleb’s nephew, Othniel. He led the people to victory and into spiritual revival. When he died, the people returned to idolatry. This is the beginning of the roller-coaster spiritual life of the Israelites for hundreds of years. One thing we can learn clearly from the roller-coaster is this: As the leader goes, so goes the people. Solomon says it this way, When the godly are in authority, the people rejoice. But when the wicked are in power, they groan (Proverbs 29:2).

Though God does not see leaders as more important or more special than anyone else, He uses leaders who are yielded to Him to bless a people. The spiritual life of a leader has a profound impact on the people he influences.

Are you a parent, a business owner, or an overseer at your work? God has placed you in power to influence others significantly. As you lay your life down before Him, He uses your submissive spirit to influence people in ways you could never imagine!
Day Two

They abandoned the LORD to serve Baal and the images of Ashtoreth. This made the LORD burn with anger against Israel, so he handed them over to marauders who stole their possessions. He sold them to their enemies all around, and they were no longer able to resist them. Every time Israel went out to battle, the LORD fought against them, bringing them defeat, just as he promised. And the people were very distressed. Then the LORD raised up judges to rescue the Israelites from their enemies.

~Judges 2:13-16, NLT

Even in His judgment, the Lord showed great compassion. As the people of Israel went out to battle, they found defeat at every turn. It caused them pause. They realized that they were in the wrong and began to ask God for mercy.

For you and I, when we find ourselves condemned by our own hearts because of our idolatry and sinful habits, we too look up, praying for mercy and kindness, though we deserve none. Lady Misery is one of God’s finest servants. She has a way of getting our attention. When she comes to us, we find ourselves asking many questions, and for the first time in a long time, we look at our own hearts. When we find frustration at every turn, and loss and defeat meet us at every corner, Lady Misery has begun her work.

All people go through difficulties. We have all met Mr. Murphy, whose law tells us that if something can go wrong, it will. However, Lady Misery comes to us when we have turned away from God. She comes to us with a beloved friend, Conviction.

When we are suffering for the sake of godliness, or for the sake of the Gospel, Conviction stays far away, and our friend, Righteousness, stands up for us.

Father, show me where I have rebelled against You. I ask for Your great mercy!

Day Four

1. Take some time to praise the Lord for who He is and enjoy thanking Him for what He has done in your life lately.


3. What is your equivalent of Ehud’s left hand? What are weaknesses in your life that God can use to influence the world for His glory?

4. Continue meditating on and memorizing the scripture for this week.
Day Three

1. Take some time to praise the Lord for who He is and enjoy thanking Him for what He has done in your life lately.


3. Bring at least three friends or loved ones to the Lord and ask Him to bring them to repentance and faith. Ask Him to show you how you can boldly love them and speak the words of Jesus into their lives.

4. Continue meditating on and memorizing the scripture for this week.

Then the LORD raised up judges to rescue the Israelites from their enemies.

~Judges 2:16, NLT

When we think of Judges leading a people, we think of white wigged, black frocked, sober faced judges who are more acquainted with a court room than with a battlefield. Our perspective is tainted by our own cultural understanding of what a judge is.

However, for the Israelites, a judge was a leader raised up by God to lead the people to victory. If you read chapters 1-3 slowly, you’ll see that judges were always raised up by God in answer to pleading prayers for mercy.

The judges were the world’s first small government leaders. However, unlike the leaders of a democracy, they were not voted in by the people, but rather, they were raised up by God’s hand. They did not typically rule like a king would rule. Their leadership was based on an obvious anointing given them by God and leadership by birthright was rare. Soldiers gathered to them because they believed in them, not because of a draft.

The judges were a picture of grace. They were not typically people you would chose to rule. One of them was left handed, which in their culture implied that he was weak and possibly cursed. Another judge was Deborah, a woman. Their culture deemed women to be worth only half of a man, and many men saw them as possessions rather than as people.

God always uses the weak, the common, and the poor to confound the strong, the noble, and the rich. (I Corinthians 1: 26-30)