

OKOTOKS EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

SHINING A LIGHT ON AUTHENTIC CHRISTIANITY
LIVING FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS (JUDGES 2:6-23)

APRIL 15, 2018



SERMON OUTLINE

What do I need to do with what I have heard today?

MAIN POINT

When people reject God, God gives them what they want—a life without Him. Yet God did not leave His people without hope. When the people got their way, He pursued them still.

THINKING THINGS THROUGH

Connect the sermon to the study.

1. Who has helped you to distinguish between right and wrong in your life? What are key lessons you have learned along the way?

2. Imagine you find yourself in a situation where right and wrong are not so clear. Where do you look to find the answer?

3. If you are a follower of Jesus, how does this ability grow and diminish depending on your relationship with Jesus?

Leader: Throughout the Book of Judges, the author wrote, “Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” This is the problem in Judges—and in all our lives. We have tried to find our own way apart from God, only to find out it didn’t work out quite as well as we had hoped. If you are familiar with this book you might be asking, “Where exactly is the gospel within the book of Judges?” Amidst the failure of God’s people, God had mercy and raised up heroes to rescue them. These imperfect heroes point to the true hero of Scripture, Jesus Christ. Within the biblical story of redemption, the darkness of sin in Judges makes the light of the gospel that much brighter.

DIGGING DEEPER

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JUDGES 2:6-10.

4. This section of Judges includes the shocking claim that, within one generation, the people of Israel forgot the Lord and the works He had done for Israel. What failures had to happen for a shift like this to occur (see Leviticus 10:11 and Deuteronomy 6:4-9)? What did it mean that they did not know the Lord?

Leader: For faith to continue, it must be passed down. God designed that faith would be transmitted to the next generation in two ways—through the Levitical Priesthood and the home. Both work together to produce a people who know God and worship Him. The statement that they did not know the Lord doesn't mean they didn't know who He was or what He had done; rather, they had ceased to worship Him and revere Him as God. The author of Judges doesn't tell us whether or not this failure happened because the previous generation abdicated the responsibility of teaching faith, or the new generation simply had hard hearts. The reality is probably some combination of the two.

5. Prior to the events of Judges, Joshua gave the Israelites a charge as they entered the land (see Joshua 24:19-20, 23). What did Joshua call on them to do? Why was this something that needed to be stressed to them?

6. The drift we see in Judges is certainly not limited to that place in time. What must we do if we want to keep our families and successive generations from drifting away from the Lord?

Leader: No one drifts toward godliness; it must be pursued (see 1 Timothy 6:11). The shift that occurred probably wasn't even a shift that was felt by the people experiencing it. Sometimes distancing ourselves from God is intentional, but much of the time it comes from a lack of diligence. Clear expectations were laid out for the good of the Israelites, but they did not attend to them. We have a responsibility to communicate our faith to the next generation of believers. All disciples are disciple makers, and we are all called to live sent. When we don't, we—along with those who come after us—will drift away from godliness.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JUDGES 2:11-15.

SERMON BASED GROWTH GROUP

7. What were the “Baals” and the “Ashtoreths”? What piece of God’s wisdom did Israel neglect in order to follow these idols?

8. What fruit resulted in the Israelites’ lives as they continued to do what was right in their own eyes?

Leader: After Joshua’s death, the Jews rebelled against God and His leadership in their lives. Instead of driving the people out of land, they became like the people of the land. Baal is the Canaanite word for “lord” and Astarte (plural, Ashtoreths) was his female companion. After being delivered from slavery and wilderness wandering and being given a land to call their own, the people broke the First Commandment and worshiped foreign gods. These gods were made out of materials God created and made by human hands. Because of their worship, “the LORD’s anger burned against Israel.”

> [HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JUDGES 2:16-23.](#)

9. Even at the depth of sin and darkness, what hope did God extend to His rebellious people? Who are the Judges, and what did God use them to do?

Leader: God loved His people so much that He responded to their “terrible distress.” God raised up Judges to rescue them. At the time, there was no king in Israel; therefore, a Judge was a hero of Israel, appointed by God, to protect God’s people from themselves. Out of grace and compassion, God does not leave us where we have led ourselves; He provides a deliverer. However, the Judges were limited in their affect. The limited Judges are points on a map that eventually reveal the bigger picture of a Savior. The Judges lead us to recognize our need for a better and more complete Savior, whom God would give us in Jesus Christ.

DOING LIFE TOGETHER

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

10. What things act like idols in your life that threaten your allegiance to God?

11. The community of faith is meant to be the place where faith is transmitted. In this church community, who are you responsible to teach to love the Lord with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength? How are you teaching them? If you aren't, where or how can you start?

Leader: Don't leave this discussion of transmitted faith only at natural family relationships (parents with children). Extend also to spiritual family relationships in the church community.

12. We live in a world that is filled with darkness. Some of these scenes from Judges would not be out of place in our newsfeed. How can we point others to our need for a Savior while standing firm in this darkness? What obstacles stand in the way of you achieving that?

PRAYER

Confess to God all the ways that you have pursued your joy in something other than Him. Receive His forgiveness and ask Him to help you move forward in righteousness. Thank Him for the gospel of grace and the true and better Savior we have in Jesus.

MEMORIZE

²⁵ In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit. - Judges 21:25

SPOTLIGHT ON THE PASSAGE

SERMON BASED GROWTH GROUP

JUDGES 2:6-23

2:6-13 This paragraph is a flashback summarizing the beginning of the book of Judges. Baal was the Canaanite god of storm and rain, while Ashtoreth (also known as Astarte) was his consort, the goddess of love and fertility. Both of these deities were worshiped under a variety of local manifestations and were perceived as the key to agricultural success in the land of Canaan.

2:14-15 The consequence of Israel's covenant unfaithfulness was the covenant curse (Dt 28:48). Instead of the Lord fighting for Israel and handing their enemies over into their power, the Lord gave them over into the hand of their enemies, and they suffered greatly.

2:16-19 Because of their distress, the Lord raised up judges for Israel, and they saved them from the power of their marauders. There is no mention of repentance by the people; the judges were raised up as the result of the Lord's pity on their groaning. In relenting from the punishment He had imposed on His people, the Lord showed Himself to be "a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in faithful love and truth" (Ex 34:6). The judges typically governed Israel (or part of it) and sought to lead them in the ways of the Lord during their lifetime—a ministry that is most evident in the life of the final judge, Samuel. Yet their influence on the people was limited, and after each judge died Israel invariably reverted to their idolatrous ways. This period of Israel's history was a downward spiral, with each generation acting more corruptly than their fathers. The judges slowed rather than stemmed the rising tide of iniquity.

2:20-23 It was a mark of the Lord's anger that He no longer referred to Israel as "my people" but as this nation. Since they refused to drive out the Canaanites, the Lord would leave the Canaanites among Israel as a test of their faithfulness. Each generation would now have to demonstrate its own faithfulness to the Lord in a hostile environment.