



When we read about the Judges and the times they lived the phrase that continually rises to the top is “everyone did what was right in their own eyes” and this is the condemnation of the philosophy of this period. The people suffered oppression and hardships because they ignored God's commands and faced the consequences of their idolatry. The Judges, the savior-heroes that God provided and supernaturally gifted to bring about temporary peace and leadership were a product of their culture. They did amazing acts empowered by God, yet they just as often failed spectacularly. Each episode is a reminder and a pull to the reader to return and obey the commands of God.

If you read chapter eight and think, “wow, a lot of this could describe some of the things going on today!” You’re right! We too live in a time where personal vision and feelings are valued over what God's revealed will is. We may not be as barbaric, or as oppressed, yet we find ourselves often under the influence of the forces of a culture that seeks to ignore or do away with the word we have from God.

What is the hope of this chapter in The Story? The reassurance that God will further His plan of redemption for His people. While He will work with people where and when they are, there is always a standard of behavior, belief, and adherence to God's way that is the product of God's redeeming work.

Discussion Questions

- 1) What are some practices, wisdom, or beliefs that have been largely ignored from previous generations to today?
 - a) Why do you suppose those have been “forgotten”?
 - b) What would be required to revive those practices (the good ones)?
 - c) Are some of them best left in the past?
- 2) What kept the Israelites faithful to God? Conversely why were they found unfaithful so often?
 - a) What were some of the issues that led to their unfaithfulness?
 - b) What ways were they unfaithful to God?
 - c) What did God promise to do (and follow through with) if they were unfaithful to Him?
- 3) Idolatry is described as “evil” chapter eight (and rightfully so!) We often think in terms of “it's not harming anyone” why then does idolatry receive such condemnation?
- 4) When God raised up a judge what was the main quality that they had in common?
- 5) Deborah was a gifted judge to whom God spoke through. When she told Barak to go and battle Sisera's army he balked and lost out on an opportunity to gain personal glory (and grow in faith as well).
 - a) Have you ever had a time that in hindsight you wished you'd been quicker to believe and act on faith than you did? What did it cost?
 - b) How did God show His faithfulness anyway?
 - c) Did you respond in a different way the next time you had an opportunity to act on faith?
- 6) Why do you think God often use people who are uncertain or weak like Gideon?
 - a) Can you think of times when God has done this in your experiences?
- 7) How does Gideon's story give encouragement to those whom God chooses?
- 8) Were Gideon's fleece requests tests based on faith, uncertainty, or procrastination?
- 9) What was the process that God whittled down the army of Gideon?
 - a) How many were left when God was ready to send them into battle?
 - b) What were the instructions for that battle?
 - c) What encouragement did God give Gideon before the battle?

- d) Why do you think God wanted such a low number of soldiers to defeat the Midianites?
- 10) What are ways God brings about victory for those who are vastly outnumbered today?
- 11) Chapter eight describes what is often called the "Judges Cycle" Why do you think the Israelites kept repeating their downward cycle of sin and rebellion?
- 12) Samson's birth was foretold to His parents, seeing what kind of person Samson turned out to be, what kind of parenting style do you suppose they took? Disciplinary? Appeasing? Super High Expectations?
- 13) Samson was a Nazarite; what kind of behaviors did that lifestyle require?
- What was Samson's attitude toward those requirements?
 - Samson seems pretty vindictive, a logical response to the oppression the Philistines had rained on the Israelites. What ways did Samson show this?
 - How long was Samson a Judge of Israel?
 - What kind of rulings do you think he gave when he was consulted about an issue?
- 14) Samson had a particular weakness for ladies, how did it surface throughout his life?
- 15) How did Samson's dialogue with Delilah progress?
- What ways does this parallel how a person (in their own strength) deals with temptations?
 - At the end Samson confessed the truth of the source of his strength and when he went out a final time "he did not know that the Lord had left him" Why is this such a sad statement?
- 16) What are the strongest temptations you face?
- How do you fight such temptations?
 - What is the likeliness of success when you include prayer, scripture, and accountability?
- 17) How did Samson die? What did Samson's death accomplish for his people?
- 18) How do you think Samson's life would have gone if he had been faithful to God's commands and maintained a purity and honorableness that affected his behavior and interactions with his fellow Israelites and the Philistines?
- 19) What does the way Samson died teach us about sacrifice?