



Unit .09

Session .01

The Pattern of Rebellion

Scripture



Judges 2:8-19

8 Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at the age of 110. **9** They buried him in the territory of his inheritance, in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. **10** That whole generation was also gathered to their ancestors. After them another generation rose up who did not know the Lord or the works he had done for Israel. **11** The Israelites did what was evil in the Lord's sight. They worshiped the Baals **12** and abandoned the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed other gods from the surrounding peoples and bowed down to them. They angered the Lord, **13** for they abandoned him and worshiped Baal and the Ashtoreths. **14** The Lord's anger burned against Israel, and he handed them over to marauders who raided them. He sold them to the enemies around them, and they could no longer resist their enemies. **15** Whenever the Israelites went out, the Lord was

against them and brought disaster on them, just as he had promised and sworn to them. So they suffered greatly. **16** The Lord raised up judges, who saved them from the power of their marauders, **17** but they did not listen to their judges. Instead, they prostituted themselves with other gods, bowing down to them. They quickly turned from the way of their fathers, who had walked in obedience to the Lord's commands. They did not do as their fathers did. **18** Whenever the Lord raised up a judge for the Israelites, the Lord was with him and saved the people from the power of their enemies while the judge was still alive. The Lord was moved to pity whenever they groaned because of those who were oppressing and afflicting them. **19** Whenever the judge died, the Israelites would act even more corruptly than their fathers, following other gods to serve them and bow in worship to them. They did not turn from their evil practices or their obstinate ways.

Intro Options

Main Point:
**God disciplines His people
when they turn from Him
and do what they think is
right in their own eyes.**

Option 1

Throughout history, revolutions have formed new nations, implemented social change, and altered the way we live. But revolution and rebellion does not just take place on a national level. Children rebel against their parents, teens rebel against authority, and adults rebel against the status quo. Overtly or secretly, we've all rebelled against some sort of authority in our lives.

▪ What forms of rebellion and revolution, national or personal, stand out to you? Why?

Unlike many rebellions, the one we encounter in today's passage wasn't brought on by a movement; it was fueled by sin. One person at a time, one heart at a time, considered God's authority and commands and replied, "No. I don't want to."

Joshua had led the people with faith in God, resulting in victory over their enemies. But Israel's victories were not complete. They were in the land, but they still had to clear the land of the remaining inhabitants. Completing this work would require faith and obedience.

As the Book of Judges opens, we see that the Israelites picked up where they had left off under Joshua. But that would not last. Sin is a powerful internal foe, and the Israelites would soon see first-hand the effects of their rebellion against God.

Option 2

In 1954, William Golding wrote a novel where a group of well-educated, well-behaved English schoolboys crash into the paradise of a deserted island with no adult survivors. The book, *Lord of the Flies*, poses the question as to what would happen to these young adults. Would they use their privileged upbringing and knowledge to create a new society of peace, or would something else occur?

As the story progresses, we see that instead of creating harmony and peace, these little boys fight for power, hunt and kill each other, and even cut off the head of a pig and sacrifice it to an imaginary and yet utterly real "beast" on the island. Golding uses this beast as a symbol for the evil in the heart of every person, even children, and ultimately shows the consequences of what the world would look like if all rule and authority were removed and rejected.

Golding's book, selling more than 15 million copies, is popular not because it's so unbelievable but because it's so terrifyingly possible. The underlying moral logic of the story is an imaginary outworking of the truth about the nature and condition of our own hearts. We are a people who constantly reject God's rule and authority over our lives, while going through life and making decisions based on what we, as individuals, believe to be right and wrong.

TEACHING PLAN

The Book of Judges presents a cycle of sin and salvation that becomes a pattern for God's people. In the previous sessions, we saw the incredible influence Joshua had on the Israelites. As Moses' successor, Joshua led Israel to great victories. The walls of Jericho came down. Joshua and the other elders were a positive spiritual influence on the people, counseling them to walk in the ways of the Lord.

But when Joshua died and his generation was no longer on the scene another generation rose up who did not know the Lord or the works He had done for Israel (Judg. 2:10). This is where our story picks up, with the Book of Judges and a section of Scripture that introduces us to the leaders God gave Israel to govern them and rescue them from their enemies.

Read Judges 2:8-13




The generation of Israelites in the promised land were the descendants of Abraham, God's chosen people. God had given them the law. He had given them freedom from Egypt. He had given them godly leaders such as Moses and Joshua. He had given them victory in the land. And yet, they chose evil. Walking in obedience and trust is not something a godly leader or anyone else can do for you. It is an individual choice, and the children of Israel chose to walk in evil instead.

- **What can we do to make sure we don't forget God's past work in our lives and in the lives of others?**

The decision to do evil was not a one-time choice. On the contrary, the Bible speaks of the Israelites doing evil in the Lord's sight dozens of times, including three in the book of Judges alone (Judg. 3:7,12; 13:1). God's people doing evil was not an anomaly; it was more of the norm. Their acts of evil were not missteps; they were evidences of open rebellion against their God. At the heart of this rebellion was idolatry: choosing to worship the gods of the inhabitants of the promised land and turning their backs on the one true God who had brought them out of Egypt.

- **What are some ways we are tempted to do what is right in our own eyes?**
What are some examples of our culture living this way?

Like a good parent points his children on the straight and narrow way, God will be sure to let His children know when they are living in disobedience to Him and His Word. And that's exactly what He did with the Israelites because of their rebellion and idolatry. 

Read Judges 2:14-15



- **When have you experienced the discipline of God? How did you respond?**

COMMENTARY

Judges 2

Main Point:
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8-13. Israel's turning to other gods wasn't due to missing some slight nuance in the law that only a Bible scholar could have noticed; it was point one of the law, virtually highlighted and in bold font. Worshiping only God was the first of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:3) and repeated by Moses in Deuteronomy nineteen times. So what happened? How did the people go from walking in victory over every enemy to walking in idolatry, away from the God who had given them victory? Perhaps they turned their backs on the wisdom of their leaders, and more importantly on God, and chose the path of idolatry for the same reasons we do today:

Idolatry is everywhere. Not only do we have potential idols all around us—possessions, reputation, leisure, technology—we are surrounded by idol worshipers as well. And they are not found just outside of the church. We can likely count the number of people we know who put God first in their lives on one hand. Choosing to give family, or job, or sports, or health, or anything else first place in our lives over God plagues our culture—and the church.

Idolatry is easy. There is no shame in acknowledging that following God is difficult. It requires sacrifice. It requires faith. It requires aligning our priorities according to God's will instead of our own. Idolatry, on the other hand, is much less demanding and modern idolatry has inverted our focus from giving another glory to receiving pleasure. We make idols from that which pleases us.

Idolatry is explainable. It is easy to explain—to rationalize—idolatry when it is so prevalent around us and when God's ways seem so daunting. "Everyone else is doing it, why should I be different? And does God really expect me to follow Him the way He describes in Scripture? I can't do that! Not even the people in Scripture could do it!"

99 Essential Doctrines (p. 72, DDG)

Sin as Idolatry

Sin is not only a physical act of rebellion against God, such as lying or stealing, but it is also a matter of the heart. The physical displays of sin are the fruit of what has been birthed in the heart of a person (Matt. 15:10-20). In Scripture, idolatry usually refers to bowing down to a statue made of wood or gold, worshiping created things instead of the Creator. But idolatry can take on more subtle forms: a seeking of approval, security, power, pleasure, etc. We can diagnose the idolatry of our heart by examining the areas where the desires of our heart have turned into idolatrous demands (Jas. 4:1-2).

TEACHING PLAN

Though the Lord declared that He is slow to anger (Ex. 34:6), there are times when His anger against sin will lead to discipline. And so, loving discipline came to the Israelites. The words of verses 14-15 are the antithesis of the potential power God had promised the Israelites. Moses and Joshua had told God's people, on behalf of the promises of God, "No one will be able to stand against you." (see Deut. 7:24; 11:25; Josh. 1:5; 10:8; 23:9.) No one. As long as the people obeyed God, He would wipe out their enemies. But that singular condition was quite important.

If you have watched the Olympics, you may have seen the monstrous throws in the discus and shot put by some of the best athletes in the world. But not every athlete is, of course, on this level. No matter, the fundamentals are the same: "Eyes up. Elbow up. Flip the wrist. Weight low." You will hear these instructions on any field with athletes of any level—from middle school kids to Olympic champions.

No matter how far an athlete advances, the skills are always the same. And this isn't the case only in track and field, nor only in sports for that matter. It was the same for the Israelites: from the youngest child to the most pious priest, the commands were the same: fear the Lord. Walk in His ways. Love Him. Worship Him. Keep His commands (Deut. 10:12-13).

Like a good coach can watch one throw and give a dozen pointers to an athlete to help him or her correctly execute the fundamentals, God sent judges to the Israelites to spur them on to obedience. These judges knew what it would take to move God's people from idolatry and sin to holiness and victory. But how much can a coach do when the pupil doesn't want to listen?

Read Judges 2:16-19



Some of the most interesting characters and wildest stories in the Old Testament are found in the Book of Judges. The Judges were flawed men and women. They were sinners in need of a Savior themselves. But they were each given by God to rescue His people in their time of need solely out of His gracious love for them. God's love is a faithful love, flowing forth from an ever-faithful God.

▪ How has God shown you love, mercy, and forgiveness even when you were living in willful disobedience?

God had provided each judge to rescue His people from the hands of their enemies, and in doing so, to bring them back to obedience. And each time, that is what happened, but it never lasted. The people would obey God while the judge who had delivered them was living, but once that judge died, the people once again did not listen (Judg. 2:1). The judges saved the Israelites from the consequences of their sin but could not change the cause of their sin. This is why they repeated the cycle of sin over and over. But in Christ, we have a Savior and Judge who takes upon Himself the consequences of our sin and then offers us new hearts that seek His righteousness. Without Jesus, our Savior, we too would be drowning in our sin. We too would be doomed to repeat the pattern of sin and rebellion seen in the Israelites. But by grace we have been saved from all our sin, once and for all.



▪ Where do you see idolatry in our culture today? What can you do to address these idols and show that Jesus is better?

COMMENTARY

Judges 2

Main Point:
God disciplines His people
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14-15. Parents are often able to convey instructions or disapproval merely with a “look.” One “look” across a room or from the other side of the table is all it takes for a child to know he or she is doing something wrong and it is time to stop. But sometimes a “look” isn’t enough. Sometimes a child’s disobedience warrants more than that; perhaps even discipline.

In Hebrews 12:5-6 we read that God disciplines those he loves. The writer is quoting Proverbs 3:11-12, but repeats a truth revealed several times in the words of Moses: God disciplines His children (Deut. 8:5; 11:2). Yes, God is love. Yes, God forgives. Yes, God shows mercy when we sin. But sin cannot continue indefinitely unchecked.

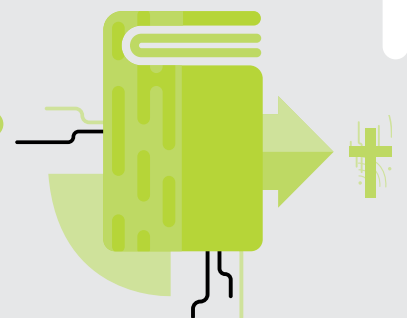
We have to be careful to understand that God’s anger against sin and His discipline because of sin are not antithetical to His love. Punishment and love are not enemies needing to be reconciled; they are friends working in unison for God’s glory and our good. God’s discipline is designed to correct His children—to put them back on the path of obedience, the path that is the best for them. It was not unloving for God to send enemies to prevail against His children; it was a corrective act of love, not a punitive act of spite. Not correcting His children and allowing them to continue on in their idolatry would have been unloving. God will not ignore sin indefinitely; His love compels Him to act. Too much is at stake for Him to passively allow His people to continue on in rebellion.

16-19. Though God disciplines His children, which includes suffering for their unbelief and disobedience, He does not walk away from them. That can be hard for us to understand at times, even if we benefit from it ourselves. Why does God continue to tolerate the idolatry and sin of His people? When we read through the Book of Judges and see Israel’s repeated rebellion against Him, it’s difficult not to conclude that they did not deserve God’s grace. Far from it, they deserved for God to walk away from them and leave them sitting in their sin and its consequences.

But God is not like that. God is not like us. His thoughts and ways are not ours; His thoughts and ways are higher, even to the point that we cannot understand them (Isa. 55:8-9). While we might argue that the Israelites deserved to be abandoned because of their sins, we forget that God is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in faithful love.

(p. 73, DDG) Christ Connection

The judges saved people from the consequences of their sin but could not change the cause of their sin. Jesus is the Savior and Judge who takes upon Himself the consequences for our sin and then offers us new hearts that seek His righteousness.



Our Mission

God's Story has always been designed to connect with our story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own. Suggested answers to these questions can be found on the right-hand side of the page for leaders.

Head



What does this history in Judges teach us regarding the connection between belief and obedience?

What are some things you say you believe but struggle to live out in faith?

Heart



According to passages covered in this session, sin doesn't stop people from worshiping, but instead distorts worship. What are some ways we see sin redirect people's worship away from God today?

What are some ways to prevent our hearts from being redirected to these false idols?

Hands



How might have things been different if the previous generation were faithful to disciple the next generation in the faith?

What are you doing to strengthen your faith and the faith of other believers around you?

Main Point: **God disciplines His people when they turn from Him and do what they think is right in their own eyes.**



Head

Disobedience is what prompted the Israelites to fall from “No one will be able to stand against you” to “they could no longer resist their enemies,” (Judg. 2:14). We might be tempted to look at the Israelites, asking, “What were they thinking?” God had so clearly spelled out their secret weapon: Himself. Be His people, He would be their God and give them victory. He had warned them of the results of their disobedience. He had warned them of what idolatry would bring. And yet, they chose disobedience and idolatry instead of God. We can’t fathom their cluelessness.

That is, unless we look more closely at our lives and see our hypocrisy. We, like the Israelites, know that “everything is possible for the one who believes,” (Mark. 9:23) and that “without faith it is impossible to please God,” (Heb. 11:6). Believing God—not merely believing in Him but trusting in His character and believing what He says is true—is the root of obedience. It’s the key to victory and fellowship with Him.



Heart

One of the interesting things about sin is the fact that it doesn’t stop people from worshiping. In the case of the Israelites, we don’t see them stop worshiping altogether—they only stop worshiping God. The people worshiped idols instead. Thus, sin is not the ceasing of worship but the sinful redirection of worship away from God and toward idols. Sin, at its root, is a worship problem, which makes it a heart problem.

Most of the things we make into heart idols are not bad in themselves; they only become bad because we allow them to direct us away from God. For those heart idols, one way to prevent their redirection is to recognize that these things were never intended to take the place of Christ on the throne of our hearts.



Hands

The Israelites chose to turn from God and turn to idols. It was a conscious act of the will. But there was more to it than that. The Israelites did not know God as they should have. They didn’t know His character. They didn’t know what He had done. And when we don’t know who God is, it isn’t far for us to go to turn away from Him completely.

God had commanded the Israelites to teach their children about Him. (see Deut. 6.) He had commanded them to establish memorials testifying to His works. (see Josh. 4.) But they had failed to obey God. And their disobedience had disastrous consequences for the next generation. This is the fruit of failing to disciple across the generations. Today, we are still called not only to trust and follow God but also to watch out for one another and encourage love and faithfulness (Heb.10:23-25). We are called to know God—to seek to really know Him—as we also make Him known by others. We are responsible for our own choices in obeying God or turning to idols, but we also are accountable for others.