

## Brief Perspective on Breaking the Cycle

The story was told of a man who scrimped and saved for a ticket to cross the Atlantic on a steam liner. Having little money leftover, he decided that the only way to last the long journey was to purchase as much dry bread and to bring as much water as possible **[In those days, it took 20 days for a crossing]**. The first two days at sea was bearable but later on, it became increasingly difficult to pass by the dining hall without wishing he had the money to enjoy the hot food. Finally, on day 18, two days before they were scheduled to sail into port, the man decided that he had enough of dry bread and water. He went up to the steward at the dining hall and enquired about the cost of a hot meal to which the steward replied, 'Sir, all meals are included in the cost of your ticket. Please go right in and enjoy'.

He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Rom 8:32. Being the good bible students that we are, we read in context that the 'all things' refers to 'all things that we need live a life that is pleasing to God'.

The historical context of the Book of Judges was that the twelve tribes were already in the Promised Land, the land flowing with milk and honey (Exodus 3:8) and where a single cluster of grapes were carried on a pole (Numbers 13:23)! The elderly Joshua, having led the tribes into the Land and allotted the lands among the tribes, was about to leave the earth. But not before giving them reminders of what God had done and was going to do.

- God parted the waters of the Jordan as this was a new generation who had not seen His great miracles of Egypt and the Red Sea (Joshua 3)
- He gave them physical reminders through the twelve memorial stones (Joshua 4) and circumcision (Joshua 5) **[You may not see the memorial stones everyday but the guys got a reminder each time they pee]**
- God put fear into the hearts of their enemies, Amorites and the Canaanites (Joshua 5),
- God gave the people the example of Joshua in hearing, obeying, conquering and enjoying.

The pastor summarized for us the cycle of events in the approx. 300 years of the judges. And here is the flip side, from the perspective of God's love for His people.

Disobedience → Foreign oppression → Cries of distress → Deliverance → Disobedience ....  
Long suffering → Wrathful → Merciful → Faithful → Long suffering ...

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### Warming Up

1. What is the longest endeavour that you have undertaken? Months? Years? Decades?
2. What is God's endeavour with us? How long is that going to take?

### Into the Passages

#### *Read Judges 2*

3. What does the Bible say about the people during the time of the Judges (Judges 2:10)? And what was the outcome of such people (Judges 2:11-15)?
4. During these times, how did God demonstrate His love, compassion and forgiveness for His people (Judges 2:16-23)?

#### *Read Judges 6 - a glimmer of hope during the dark times*

5. Contrast Gideon's lament (verse 13) to the words of the prophet (verse 7-10). What can you infer about people's perspective after suffering for such a long time?
6. What was so significant about Gideon's offering?
7. What was so significant about the removal of Baal's altar and Asherah's pole and the replacement with the Lord's altar?

#### *Read Judges 7 - fulfilment of God's promise in Gideon*

8. The people's cries of distress (6:6) were met with God's salvation through Gideon (7:21). Why was God bothered with a people who returned to their sins so quickly?

### Moving Forward

*Judges 6 and 7 demonstrated God's humour. God called Gideon 'O might man of valor' (6:12). But Gideon's language indicated otherwise, 'if the Lord is with us, why ..? And..if now....' How can I save Israel? my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." (6:13-15) Gideon was scared of the people, so he took down Baal's altar at night (6:27). When confronted, his father defended him as Gideon was probably too timid to face the mob (6:31). Gideon tested God twice on the fleece (6:36-40). God knew Gideon's timid nature, so God suggested the servant to go with him (7:10). God gave Gideon another confirmation (7:13-15). But his faith came through (Heb 11:32). Our faith journey is probably not too dissimilar and a little faith in a big God makes a world of difference.*

### Life Together

1. Tear down the idols in our lives. Who is your god? Who or what is your object of worship? A person? An emotion? A dream? A desire? An object?
2. Learn to trust God. Ask Him for help in every situation in your lives. What small things can you do to start developing your trust in God?
3. Trust Him in the impossible. 300 vs. a great multitude was impossible. What are you believing God for?
4. Move in faith & victory.

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*These notes are primarily for the Into the Passage portion, and are to be used just as guidelines or commentary notes. Most of them are my own thoughts, so take that with a grain of salt. Let the Word of God lead you to truth, not these notes.*

### Into the passages

#### Read Judges 2

3. What does the Bible say about the people during the time of the Judges (Judges 2:10)? And what was the outcome of such people (Judges 2:11-15)?

*'Another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel' is a very intriguing statement. They went through the Jordan, they have people like Joshua in their midst, they heard the angel speaking clearly to them (Joshua 2). And in the words of Gideon, 'our fathers recounted to us...(6:13). It is possible for people to experience miracles or hear testimony about God's work without themselves having a personal connection with God. It is very scary.*

*Worship of idols led to judgement*

4. During these times, how did God demonstrate His love, compassion and forgiveness for His people (Judges 2:16-23)?

*God provided deliverers in the form of the judges (plural) to save His people. He judged and restored His people and was quick to forgive each time they repented.*

#### Read Judges 6 - a glimmer of hope during the dark times

5. Contrast Gideon's lament (verse 13) to the words of the prophet (verse 7-10). What can you infer about people's perspective after suffering for such a long time?

*Sinful people cannot see God's perspective. We need to recognize that sometimes we simply cannot see. It is purely by the grace and mercy of God that we are not consumed.*

6. What was so significant about Gideon's offering?

*Sacrificial goat and unleavened cake are offering for a Passover. More significantly, God accepted the offering (6:21)*

7. What was so significant about the removal of Baal's altar and Asherah's pole and the replacement with the Lord's altar?

*The remove and replace principle can be seen throughout scriptures. God's presence cannot co-exist with idols. Similarly, God's presence will not be with us if we cherish sins in our lives.*

#### Read Judges 7 - fulfilment of God's promise in Gideon

8. The people's cries of distress (6:6) were met with God's salvation through Gideon (7:21). Why was God bothered with a people who returned to their sins so quickly?

*Judges 2:2 "I will never break my covenant with you", God must remain true to His word. And each time the people repented, God accepted them back. In the Old Covenant, there was no provision to remove the sinful nature of the people. Because the nature was still there, there will always be sinful behaviour. Sinful behaviour can still be atoned for through the sacrifices.*

*Through the cross of Jesus Christ, the sinful nature of men was nailed to the cross. By faith, we exchanged our sinful nature for the divine nature. God's people, who live by faith, appropriate Christ's righteous nature. It becomes possible not to sin by living in the power of the Holy Spirit.*