

THE STORY

Judges: A Few Good Men... And Women

Introduction: What is the first word that comes to your mind when you hear the word “judge”? Turn to the person next to you and share what came into your mind first. Remember, no swearing in church. Some people think of Flip Wilson of “Here Comes the Judge” fame. Others might think of Judge Judy. Others think of the person in the black robe who hands down a jail sentence. In The Story we come to a 300 year period known as the period of the Judges. A book in the Bible is named Judges. In the Old Testament while these judges not only could throw you in jail, they are known mostly for getting God’s people out of jail. Seven hundred years after God’s promise to Abraham, the people of God are in their own land, God is present in the tabernacle, a law guide their lives and a sacrificial system exists for forgiveness of sins. The people were truly blessed by God. But there is a problem. Sin. Sin still reigns in the hearts of the people. Sin raises its ugly head.

- I. Israel’s Two Mistakes after Conquering the Land. Joshua 1
 - A. They did not drive out all the Canaanites and this led to the sin of idolatry. Judges 1:28; 2:12

Application: our environment can influence us toward wrong

- B. They did not teach their children about God and his great acts of deliverance. Joshua 2:10

Application: Christianity is only one generation away from extinction. One person within one generation can make a difference.

- II. The two reasons that God raises up the judges.
 - A. God has blessed Israel in the eyes of all the other nations. God wants other nations to know His goodness and blessing.
 - B. God powerfully intervenes when His people cry out to Him for help. When the people pray, God responds with deliverance.
- III. The four movements in a repeated cycle or pattern in Judges. (The cycle is repeated 6 times in the Book of Judges)
 - A. Movement 1- sin.

- 1. The people worship pagan gods.
 - 2. God wants to be first in their lives. See Psalm 37:4

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B. Movement 2- oppression

1. God removes His hand of protection and allows surrounding nations to oppress His people. Judges 2:22

2. God uses 6 pagan nations to oppress His people: Mesopotamians oppress for 8 years; the Moabites for 18 years; the Canaanites for 20 years; the Midianites for 7 years; the Ammonites for 18 years; and the Philistines for 40 years.

C. Movement 3- repentance.

1. The oppressed people cry out to God for help. They “turn” or “return” to the Lord. They make a decision to do a 180 degree change in direction.

2. God raises up a judge who serves as a deliverer: Othniel delivers them from the Mesopotamians; Ehud delivers them from the Moabites; Deborah from the Canaanites; Gideon from the Midianites; Jephthah from the Ammorites and Samson from the Philistines. (...and Orkin from the Termites)

D. Movement 4- deliverance.

1. It is important to notice that God orchestrates the deliverance, not the human judge.

2. The judges were flawed human beings.

IV. Two judges illustrate flawed humanity.

A. Gideon: Judges 7

1. Gideon was from the weakest clan and was the weakest in his family.

2. God reduces Gideon’s army from 32,000 to 300 so that the deliverance will be from God, not Gideon and the army.

B. Samson: Judges 13-16

1. Samson reveals the secret of his strength to Delilah: Judges 16

2. Samson’s pride and immaturity led to his death.

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Application of the cycle to our lives:

We sin—we don't keep God on the throne of our lives. 1 John 1:8

We are oppressed—our fellowship with God and others is broken. 1 John 1:6

We repent/confess—we are restored through the blood of Jesus. 1 John 1:9

We experience deliverance—we experience joy and fruitfulness. 1 John 1:7