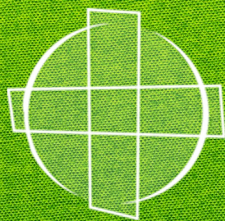


Donald J. Wills  
Senior Pastor

MARCH  
2018

**TRANSFORMED** 2018  
JUDGES 4-6:32  
IN OUR ACTIONS



ADULT CONNECT  
CLASS CURRICULUM

The purpose of First Baptist Church of Fort Worth is to ***introduce*** people into a loving relationship with Jesus, ***instruct*** them in spiritual growth through God's Word, ***inspire*** them to serve for God's kingdom, and ***incorporate*** them in authentic worship to glorify God.

## *A Note From Our Pastor*

Dear FBC family and friends,

As we hear about events unfold in the world around us and the opinion of the culture, we are reminded of the relevance of the study of Judges in the Old Testament. Often, we may ask if there is any hope or where God is in the midst of these trying and uneasy times. However, we know that God has promised in Hebrews 13:5-6 that He “will never leave you nor forsake you” and we do not have to fear. Our peace and hope come from our relationship with the Heavenly Father in His Son—our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The layout of this curriculum begins with a 7-day approach for you to get the most from each lesson. We encourage each member to use the suggested 7-day approach for each one’s own personal study and growth in your relationship with the Lord. In the process of study if you have any questions arise please feel free to contact your Bible study teacher or one of our staff members to assist you in your learning.

As we consider the events that occurred during the time of Judges and how they parallel so many things happening in our own culture, let us remember that we are to live the “Transformed Life.” Do not allow this world to press us into its mold, but be “transformed by the renewing of our mind” (Rom. 12:2).

-Blessings  
Pastor Don



## *Suggested Plan for Using this Bible Study Guide Effectively*

### *Introduce*

**Day 1:** Read and meditate on the Scripture, asking God to guide you throughout the week as you study His Word and allowing Him to speak to you through the Spirit. Read the **INTRODUCE** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Instruct*

**Day 2:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and read the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary. Concentrate on memorizing the focal verse for that particular week.

**Day 3:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and answer the focal questions in the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Inspire*

**Day 4:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and begin thinking about tangible ways you can incorporate the principles you learned in your daily life. Read the **INSPIRE** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Incorporate*

**Day 5:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and apply the theological principle that you learned from this week in a tangible way. Use the **INCORPORATE** portion of the lesson commentary to guide you.

**Day 6:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and in the journal section describe how God allowed you to apply this passage in a real and tangible way this week.

**Day 7:** Review the Scripture and share with others in your Connect Class on Sunday morning at 9:30am. Be ready to share your experience about how God allowed you to apply the lesson for that week.

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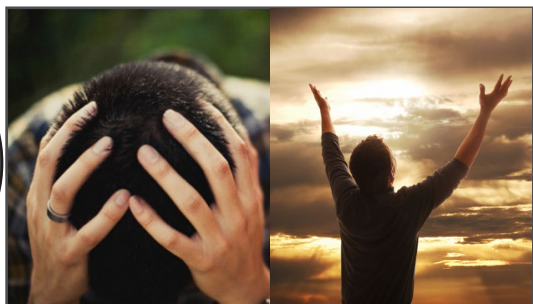


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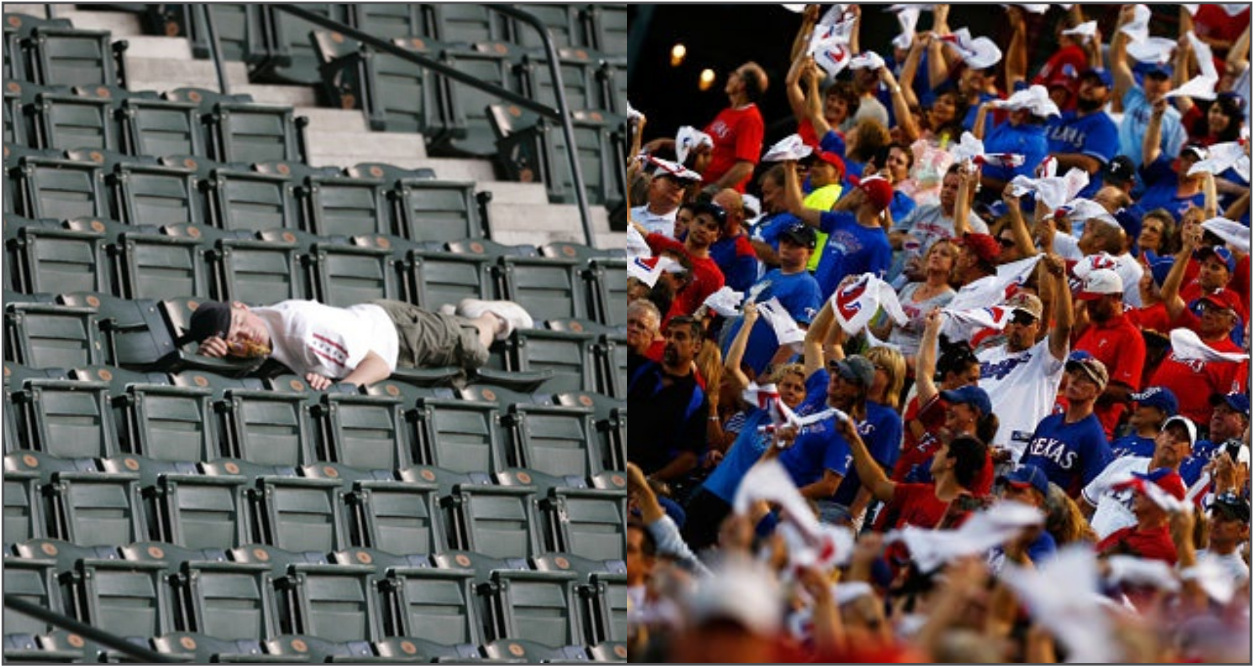


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*March 4, 2018*



# *Be Transformed from Disengaged to Engaged*

## *Judges 4:1-24*

**Focal Verse:**

**"Then she sent and called for Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, 'Has not the Lord God of Israel commanded, Go and deploy troops at Mount Tabor; take with you ten thousand men of the sons of Naphtali and of the sons of Zebulun.'"**

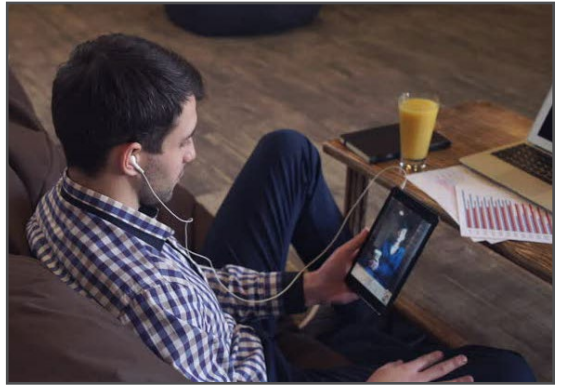
**Judges 4:6**

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## Introduce

If we only took a cursory look at the life of Johnny B. Tired, we'd see an outwardly successful man who ran a profitable small business, had a beautiful and healthy family, and good social relationships with his network of friends at church. However, if we truly examined his life closely, we would see a man who was disengaged and often distracted. Despite his great work ethic, Johnny comes home after a long day in a mood where he doesn't want to be bothered. Plopping on his comfortable recliner, he

flips on the television and begins to let his mind disengage and unwind as he watches show after show. As the hours drone on, he becomes too tired to read Scripture and pray. Consequently, he never thinks about ways in which he can worship the Lord daily by serving



his family and others; he certainly thinks it's too much of a hassle to waste time sharing the gospel with others who most likely won't listen anyway. Because Johnny B. Tired has become disengaged in his relationship with Christ, it affects every other area of his life. He no longer sees his children, who desperately want to spend time with him, as a treasure and a blessing, but he regards them as a burden. He complains often to his wife about how he simply wants to rest and how helping with their homework, listening to their problems, investing quality time in their lives, or doing activities with them takes too much time and effort. Therefore, he ignores his children, letting them do anything they wish so that they keep out of his hair; in fact, he tells them to watch TV, play video games, or surf the net.

Being disengaged with his family also places an extra strain on his wife.

## Introduce

No longer do they have meaningful discussions, but Johnny complains constantly; he no longer values time alone with her, kindling their relationship, but would rather watch TV while getting angry if she interrupts.

Being disengaged not only affects his relationship with his family, but also in the church. Johnny does not have enough time to serve and, now, skips church frequently because his rest and leisure time are much more important. When he does attend church, he complains about everything. He has a negative attitude about the services, Bible studies, and ministries. He spends more time griping rather than doing something constructive to expand the Kingdom. Although he may look successful in the eyes of the world, he needs to be reconciled to Christ and transformed to be obedient to His call—moving from disengaged to engaged.

In Judges 4, we see what happens when the men of a nation become disengaged and even hesitate because of their doubt to follow the Lord. God had called Barak to lead the nation into battle, but he remained disengaged until the prophetess, Deborah, confronted him. Even then, he hesitated to do what God had commanded and go into battle against Jabin and the forces who oppressed Israel. Instead of being disengaged and apathetic, we must allow Christ to transform our lives in such a way that we can be involved in God's work daily; when we are actively involved in pursuing a relationship with Him, although we may still have troubles in this world, we will have a better life within our families, our community, our jobs, and our churches.

Key  
Question

In what ways do you see people being disengaged rather than engaged in the church today?



## Judges 4:1-3

### RESIST REPEATEDLY PARTICIPATING IN EVIL:

After Ehud died, **the children of Israel** once **again did evil in the sight of the Lord** (v. 1). Even in this short period we have studied the book of Judges, we should have noticed the repetition of this theme. Although we may grow weary and feel this repetition is unnecessary, God has good reason for continually reminding the people that they have perpetrated **evil**; we humans are often hard-headed and set in our ways, so we need a constant reminder of our propensity to sin lest we follow the wicked ways of previous generations. Think about how often we must remind children of the boundaries we have set for them; to teach them effectively, it requires repetition which emphasizes the way in which they should behave. Raising a child certainly requires patience and persistence. Unfortunately, sometimes as adults we have this same need for repetition because of the sinful habits that we develop. Fortunately, however, we have a God who is patient and persistent, constantly seeking to remind us the right path to take and offering reconciliation when we err.

In what ways does God show patience and persistence to us? Why should we be thankful for the repetition in His Word?

Question  
# 1

Once again, the nation brought the penalty for their disobedience upon themselves, so **the Lord** delivered **them into the hand of Jabin** (v. 2). **Jabin reigned** over the remnants of some of the Canaanite nations who had escaped the conquest in the book of Joshua; he established the

## Instruct

capital at the city of **Hazor**, although it had been completely destroyed and all the inhabitants killed, since it had formerly been the site of the Canaanites' consolidated government (see [Josh 11:10-13](#)). Since the city lie in ruins and the army in tatters, **Jabin** employed the mercenary **Sisera** as the commander of the troops. As they rebuilt the army, they amassed **nine hundred chariots of iron** and **harshly oppressed Israel** for a total of **twenty years** (v. 3). Just at in the past, Israel **cried out to the Lord** because of their distress and the brutality of their oppression, so He once again provided a way to rescue the people.



## Judges 4:4-10

### **REFRAIN FROM BEING DISENGAGED:**

As we transition to verse 4, we meet a **prophetess** by the name of **Deborah** whom God was using to **judge Israel at that time**. In the previous chapters, God raised up deliverers to rescue the people when they **cried out** to Him, but here God sends **Deborah** to judge the men of the nation who were disengaged and not fulfilling the role to which He had called them. Although the text never identifies **Deborah** as a deliverer, she clearly speaks on behalf of the Lord as His **prophetess**; her function, therefore, is not to deliver Israel, but to speak God's **judgment** against those who are disengaged. In fact, **she would sit under a palm tree** in a centralized

location where the people could easily access her to help them settle disputes (v. 5).

Sending for **Barak**, Deborah asks him a rhetorical question that implicates him for failing to do that which the Lord had **commanded** (v. 6). She asks plainly if **the Lord** has not instructed him to **go** and fight **Sisera**, promising to **deliver Jabin** and his army of **chariots into his hand** (v. 7). This question portrays **Barak** as disengaged, indecisive, and unsure. The context also

presents him as uncertain that God would fulfill His promise to defeat the forces of Jabin. Because of his uncertainty and distrust, **Barak** remained amongst his tribe—inactive and disobedient to what God has asked him to do; therefore, he asks Deborah to **go with** him to



the battle for reassurance, but if she **does not go** then neither will he (v. 8). Although we shouldn't be impulsive or reactionary, we must be engaged in a relationship with the Father so that we may clearly know what He desires us to do and to be engaged obediently in the plans that He has for our lives.

Why is being disengaged or even apathetic a sin? How can we overcome being disengaged or apathetic?

Question  
# 2

Throughout the Bible, God has given men and women clear roles and responsibilities whether in the home (marriage / parenting), in society, or in the church. For the home and church to function properly, which directly affects society, we need both men and women to fulfill their God-

given roles. Problems arise, however, when one or the other fails to be engaged in responsibly fulfilling his or her role. Even though God has assigned different roles to both men and women, it doesn't mean that one is more valuable than the other; on the contrary, both are equally important in working together in tandem, so the community can function in the way that God intended. For instance, we see such an example in the husband and wife team of Aquila and Priscilla in the New Testament where they both undertook mission work and a teaching ministry together. Aquila, as the leader of the home, cultivated the spiritual environment through servant-leadership in which he and his wife could serve together to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ in Europe.

Why is it important to have both men and women function according to their God-given roles in the home and the church?

Question  
# 3

Yet, we also see times in Scripture where the men were disengaged and did not rise to the challenge or were absent altogether. During Deborah's day, as we have seen, the men were reluctant to engage as God had commanded them; they were willing to complain and cry out to God, but they were hesitant to do anything about it when the Lord called upon them. In the New Testament, we see this in Philippi when Lydia and the other women met by the river for prayer. Unfortunately, the men weren't leading as they ought in this community, but nonetheless God raised these godly women to lead a spiritual revolution. Even in our day, we often see a lack of men leading in the home and churches as they ought. Although we do have some very godly men who understand and engage in their

God-given roles, we often see a lack of involvement in the home as the spiritual leader as well as in the church as a servant-leader who inspires both his family and others to serve. God has called men to be engaged in leading the home by providing for his family, protecting them, and ultimately pointing them to a relationship with the Savior by



living transformed lives which model Christ's holiness (see [Eph 5:23-30](#)).

In what specific ways can husbands lead their families to have a healthy relationship with the Lord? How can wives complement the spiritual leadership of their husbands?

Question  
# 4

Today, dysfunction in relationships and failing to discharge one's responsibilities has led to many single-parent homes. Although these parents, whether the mother or father, do their best to provide for and nurture their families, God never intended one parent to bear the burden alone. Nonetheless, if there is a single-parent household, children need the godly influence of both men and women in their lives. If a mother is raising her children alone, men in her extended family, whether her father, her uncle, or her brother, must provide that influence—they can't replace the absent parent, but they can model Christ in an influential way. In addition, the men in the church can also supplement this same type of influence in a positive way and invest in the lives of the children by being godly teachers and leaders who model Christ in a visible way. The same also goes for a father raising his children in a single-parent home as they

need the influence of godly women in their lives who model Christ. Although the ideal situation is to have both parents actively involved and modeling a relationship with Christ, we cannot discount God using other men and women to provide good examples and demonstrate the wisdom of walking in Christ to the community as a whole.

How can we as an extended family or as a church help single-parents raise their children in a godly way?

Question  
# 5

This section concludes by illustrating that being disengaged from the Lord has consequences. To reassure Barak, Deborah promises to **go with** him, but she also outlines the consequences of his inactivity and distrust of the Lord first (v. 9). Because of his faithlessness, he would receive **no glory** from the battle and the Lord would allow **Sisera** to fall at **the hand of a woman**. With this declaration, Barak assembles **ten thousand men** and Deborah then travels with him to **Mount Tabor** for the battle (v. 10). Because Barak was disengaged and hesitant, and other men provided poor examples and offered poor leadership within their families, a chaotic chain reaction occurred. As we will see in the next section, **Jael, the wife of Heber**, takes matters into her own hands and deceives **Sisera** in order to kill him. If the men of the community had listened to God and obeyed His command, **Jael** wouldn't have been in this position where she felt that she must compromise her integrity to kill **Sisera**. When men and women fail to abide by their God-given roles, it not only creates chaos in society, but it has consequences which can span generations. From the foundation of the world, God intended men and women to complement each other in

their roles so that society functions properly; therefore, in order to avoid chaos and suffer its consequences, both men and women must know their roles and how they function together in the way that God designed.



In what ways have men and women not fulfilling their God-given roles caused chaos in society?

Question  
# 6

### Judges 4:11-16

#### ***RECALL THE LORD'S PROMISE:***

Not only were some of the men in Israel disengaged, but one in particular led his family to act treacherously and defiantly by joining forces with the enemy as an informant. **Heber the Kenite**, who was of the lineage of **Moses** related by marriage, **separated himself** from the rest of his tribe and **pitched his tent** near **Kadesh** which would seemingly offer him more protection by **Sisera** (v. 11). As Sisera's informant, **Heber reported** Israel's plans to wage war at **Mount Tabor** since **Barak** had already assembled his forces and left for that site (v. 12). Consequently, **Sisera** mobilized his **nine hundred chariots of iron** to defend against the now-spoiled surprise attack (v. 12). Although being a traitor was bad, the ungodly example that **Heber** set for his family had even worse consequences. As we will see later, his treasonous actions inspired his wife, **Jael**, to act deceptively and corruptly in murdering Sisera because it placed her in a position in which she felt she had to compromise and take matters into her own hand to

## Instruct

resolve the situation in which she felt trapped between her husband and the nation of Israel.

In the meantime, Deborah charges Barak to **go up** to the mountain, reminding him **this is the day** that God **has delivered** Sisera's forces into his hand (v. 14). With another rhetorical question, she reminds him of both God's specific promise to him as well as His faithfulness to the nation in the past: **Has not the Lord gone out before you?** Barak had received a specific promise from the Lord that He would enable him to defeat the forces of Jabin and his mercenary Sisera. Yet, he hesitated to act. However, Barak, along with Israel for that matter, had a long history to which they could point that God had graciously and completely fulfilled His promises to them and their forefathers. From Abraham to Isaac to Joseph and then the people's deliverance from



slavery in Egypt, God had faithfully executed His plan and fulfilled His promises. Throughout the conquest of Canaan, when the people obeyed the Lord and did what He had commanded, God fought on their behalf and delivered their enemies into their hands—despite the seeming superiority of their armies and their fortified cities. In the same way, God still acts faithfully today to fulfill that which He has promised us in His Word. We ought not hesitate to act upon that which God has



commanded because we are complacent or we fear, but we should boldly be engaged, allowing Him to guide, equip, and use us to proclaim His gospel and serve in His Kingdom.

What happens when we forget or fail to recognize how God has fulfilled His promises in our lives or we look primarily at our own achievements?

Question  
# 7

After Deborah reminded Barak about God's promise and fulfilled her promises to accompany him to **Mount Tabor**, he finally acted upon that which God had commanded him. He and the **ten thousand** men he had assembled went into battle where they **routed Sisera and all his chariots** (v. 15). As the soldiers **pursued** the retreating **chariots** to annihilate the army **so that no man was left**, Sisera cowardly **fled on foot** to a location he felt safe—the encampment of his ally, **Heber**. Yet, because of Barak's hesitation and Heber's treachery, we will now see how it caused Jael to compromise and try to resolve the issue on her own, thereby fulfilling the Lord's declaration that Sisera would be delivered into the hand of woman.

### ***Judges 4:17-24***

#### ***REMAIN ENGAGED IN THE LORD'S WILL:***

As **Sisera fled**, he ran to the encampment of his ally **Heber** where he assumed he would find protection (v. 17). When **Sisera** arrived, **Jael**, Heber's **wife**, **went to meet** him and persuade him to take shelter in her **tent** (v. 18). To deceive him and give him a false sense of security, she **covered him with a blanket** and **gave him milk to drink** to quench his thirst (v. 19). Feeling safe, **Sisera** asked her to stand at the door of the **tent** to guard against anyone looking for him (v. 20). He even requested that

## Instruct

she lie to anyone who may ask if a **man** were inside. **Jael**, however, crept back inside as he slept and took a **tent peg** and **drove** it into the side of his forehead (v. 21). Finally, after Barak had completely defeated the rest of the army, he arrived at Jael's **tent**. As he approached, Jael met him and declared: **Come, I will show you the man whom you seek** (v. 22). Entering **the tent**, he found **Sisera dead**.

Ultimately, God did deliver the nation of Israel and empower them to **destroy** Jabin (vv. 23-24). Jael, however, was placed in a situation in which she should have never faced and was pulled in two different directions, choosing to compromise because the men in Israel were not leading as they ought. On the one hand, her own husband sided with the enemy and directly disobeyed God by making an alliance with Jabin ([Deut 7:1-2](#)). On the other hand, Barak and the men in Israel were disengaged and hesitant to fight as God had specifically commanded them. When we don't fulfill the roles that God has given us as men and women, it has dire consequences on society as a whole. Our choices don't merely affect us, but they can affect those around us—even those within the church. Every one of us ought to allow God to transform us from being disengaged to being engaged according to His calling and His purpose. We shouldn't sit idly in the church, allowing the culture to dictate what we believe and how we respond, but we must be engaged together to wage spiritual war on sin by both living and proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.

What consequences can our actions, especially sinful ones, have upon other people?

Question  
# 8

One day, Johnny B. Tired came home and began to take stock of his life. As he sat on his recliner with the television off this time, he listened to the sounds in his house. He heard his son bickering and talking back to his wife because he had brought home a report card with multiple Fs. With his mother trying to get him to study, Johnny, Jr. unleashed a tirade of vulgar language and steadfastly refused. Then, Johnny, Sr. heard his wife sobbing and expressing lament over where she had failed; he then wondered where his son had learned such things, but then discovered the television and internet programs he had been viewing. His heart sank because he remembered the times in which he had run his son off because he was too tired and bid him to go and watch television, play games, or surf the internet. As he examined his son's internet searches, he accidentally clicked on his daughter's Facebook page and was appalled to learn what she had written in some of her private messages. Shocked, he nearly wept, because surely his Jaime wouldn't be involved in any of those things which she was expressing interest and desiring to experiment.

Johnny, Sr. began to weep because he realized how disengaged that he had become from his family. Instead of standing in the gap for them and trying to nurture and protect them spiritually, he had failed in his duty and was an absentee leader in the home. He had allowed the culture to wage war against his family—even the things which could be used for good, Satan had used to perpetrate evil. Yet, Johnny wasn't without hope; after spending time in God's Word alone and repenting, he called his family together to ask for their forgiveness and share what God had taught him. It's never too late for us to repent and turn to God so that He can work through us to fulfill the purpose to which He has called us. We need to be

## ***Inspire***

engaged in our family because through our culture Satan has waged an all-out assault and war. We need to be engaged in God's Word, engaged according to His will, and engaged in His work. We must be engaged and abide in the Lord in all areas of our lives, so that we will live according to the holy standards to which He has called us and bear fruit so that others might be pointed into a relationship with Him. How has God called you to be engaged in your family, in our community, and His church?

## ***Incorporate***

Spend time in prayer and ask God to help you evaluate whether you're engaged or disengaged. In what ways are you engaged in doing what God has commanded in His Word? In what ways did God reveal that you were disengaged (if any)?

## ***Incorporate***

What is your role in the church? How can you use it to spread the gospel and allow God to work through you to grow His Kingdom?

What areas in your life have you compromised in the past and not been engaged in what God has called you to do? What did you learn from these experiences? How can you avoid repeating them in the future?

March 11, 2018



# *Be Transformed from Disobedience to Obedience*

## *Judges 5:1-31*

Focal Verse:

“When leaders lead in Israel, when the people willingly offer themselves, bless the Lord!”

Judges 5:2

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## Introduce

Last week, we met Johnny B. Tired who realized how disengaged he had become from his family which allowed Satan to get a foothold. After he repented and surrendered fully to Christ, he began willingly offering himself to the service of the Lord. Everything in Johnny's life had changed. Although things didn't change overnight because they certainly didn't occur in one night, they did slowly improve. For example, his worship changed because he no longer viewed it as only something he did for a couple of hours on Sunday mornings, but recognized it was a lifestyle of obedience and service to the Lord. Moreover, he realized that to worship the Lord properly he must also live a holy life and walk with the Lord daily so that he could model the right way to live amongst his family, friends, and acquaintances.

In addition, Johnny began praying nightly, not about all the things that he perceived he needed, but about how God could use him to serve. One night, God inspired Johnny to join the men's ministry and become a friend and mentor to other young men so that he could encourage them not to make the same mistakes that he had and show them how they could be actively involved



in serving the Lord. Although he may once have viewed such a ministry as a burden and time consuming, he now saw it as his calling and an opportunity to serve the Lord gladly. He recognized that none of us are perfect, but that God can cleanse the imperfect person and use us to

## Introduce

invest in the lives of others so that they too may know how to have a relationship with Christ and how to live an exemplary life aided by the Holy Spirit when we completely surrender.

The song in Judges chapter 5 which we will study this week recounts the exploits of Deborah, Barak, and Jael and demonstrates what an obedient and transformed life in the Lord should ideally look like. Although we know from [chapter 4](#) that the nation was dysfunctional, God can still transform us into a people who are obedient and walk according to His will. To accomplish this, we not only need to be transformed from disengaged to engaged, but also from disobedient to obedient. Even though Barak eventually agreed to fight as God had commanded, he did so reluctantly and hesitantly. We, however, need to offer ourselves willingly to the Lord and worship Him through our unconditional obedience whereby we walk daily according to His will. When we do, we become a vessel whom He can use; we, therefore, bring glory not to ourselves, but to Him.

Key  
Question

In what ways does our obedience bring honor and glory to Christ?



#### WILLINGLY OFFER YOURSELF TO THE LORD:

After defeating Jabin and his forces commanded by Sisera, the nation of Israel **sang** a song of victory led by **Deborah** and **Barak** which highlighted God's glorious provision and deliverance of the people (v. 1). Having initially hesitated to wage war against Jabin and Sisera at Mount Tabor, it appears that the **leaders in Israel** had now fully committed themselves to the purpose for the Lord which inspired the people to **offer themselves willingly** as soldiers in battle (vv. 2, 9). Too many times as humans, we only obey begrudgingly because the directives don't seem to fit with our plans, they may even seem beneath us, or they may even seem too difficult. After being asked several times, for example, we may finally relent and fulfill the orders that we have received.

As teenagers, perhaps, this mindset occurs most frequently when our parents asked us to do something, such as chores around the house. We may have complained, saying that we'll get to it later, repeatedly asked why, or even lamented that such



chores demean or abuse us. Often, this set a bad example for our younger siblings and probably even inspired them to protest loudly as well.

Yet, this mindset does not just occur with adolescents and teenagers, but it occurs with adults as well, particularly in the church. Rather than

## Instruct

proactively finding a place of service to which God has called us, we wait until we are asked specifically or until someone even guilts us into serving by describing the dire situation created by the need. If we believe that God has placed us in this body, that is the church, then He has equipped us to serve and meet the needs in the congregation; therefore, no need or God-ordained ministry should ever go unfilled or unmet if we have an attitude of **offering** ourselves **willingly** in His service. If God has called us to serve as **leaders** in the church, whether as ministerial staff, deacons, Bible study teachers, group leaders, committee members, or overseers of specific ministries and mission projects, we must set an example by being servant-leaders; this, however, does not mean that those who don't see themselves as **leaders** have a license to disengage, but rather they too are responsible to utilize the gifts which God has given them.

Why is it important that we lead by example?

Question  
# 1

Yet, as **leaders**, God has given us greater responsibility to inspire the church to work together as one unit and **willingly** follow the directives He has given us to reach the world with the gospel. For this reason, the author of this hymn emphasizes that **when leaders lead** it will cultivate an attitude of participation (v. 1); in other words, **when leaders** function as they ought, the church will recognize and execute her God-give purpose. Therefore, let us **lead** by example and **willingly** volunteer to serve in any way that God has called us as a church.

In what ways has God called you to volunteer and serve specifically in our church?

Question  
# 2

Although the song opens with the participation of the nation, the **praise** quickly and rightly turns to the Lord; God, not the human strength of the people, is the source of their victory. For the next three verses, the hymn focuses on what He did for Israel. They should only **bless the Lord** (v. 2c) and **sing praise** to Him (v. 3). The Lord had led them to victory over **Seir and Edom** as a mighty conquering Warrior (v. 4). The reference to the earth shaking and **water pouring** from the **heavens**, therefore, represents the way in which God visibly appeared to the people at Mount Sinai and here also refers to His presence among the people in battle. At Sinai, God ascended upon the mountain as a thick **cloud**—accompanied by thunder, lightning, and an earthquake (see [Exod 19:9, 16;](#) [Heb 12:26](#)). This helps the people to know that the Lord is real and works mightily in His world whereas Baal, the false storm god of the Canaanites who supposedly controlled the weather, was powerless to act; thus, God went before His people into battle and defeated the Canaanites and their false gods.



Why is it important to point out specific instances where God has worked in our lives?

Question  
# 3

In verses 6-8, the song describes the misery the people faced before the Lord delivered them and why they found themselves in this predicament. First, the song exclaims that **in the days of Shamgar and Jael** that both commerce and trade had ceased along with normal **life** in the **village**

## Instruct

because the people were oppressed by a foreign enemy (vv. 6-7).

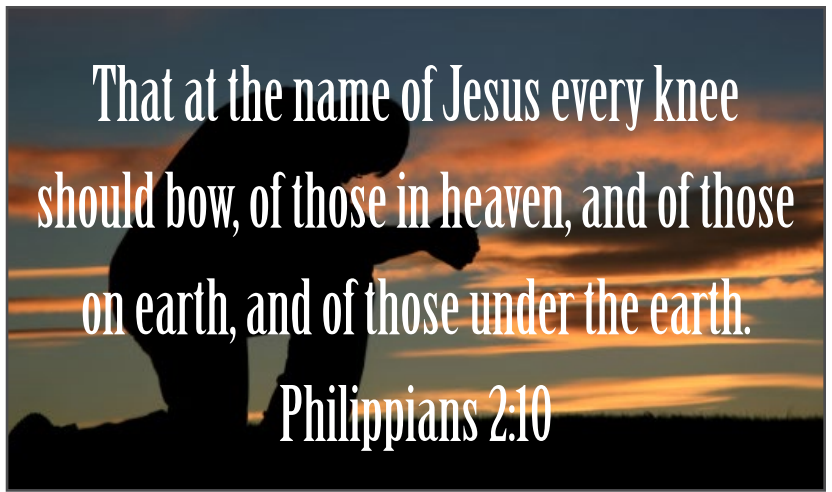
Thus, the **highways were deserted** and people **walked** along the backroads for fear of robbers and bandits. Moreover, war had come upon them and no one in Israel had a weapon with which to fight (v. 8); in other words, this hyperbolic statement means that they were powerless to do anything to ward off the invaders. Second, the song ascribes the reason why this tragedy had befallen them: **they chose new gods** (v. 8a). Because of the people's rejection of the Lord and their worship of false gods, they had brought this calamity upon themselves; but in His grace, God delivered the people and transformed the leaders from disengaged and disobedient people to ones who inspired others to join the effort and serve the Him **willingly**. Therefore, in verse 9, the last three lines of this stanza end where it began: the **rulers** fulfilling God's purpose and **the people willingly offering themselves** to the Lord.

## Judges 5:10-23

### WORSHIP THE LORD THROUGH YOUR OBEDIENCE:

The second stanza starts by calling the conquered Canaanites to acknowledge **the righteous acts of the Lord** (vv. 10-11). In verse 3, the defeated **kings** and **princes** have already been called to **praise** the Lord, but here the song summons the merchants to join. Light colored, or **white, donkeys** were the preferred status symbol for these wealthy merchants who traveled **along** the trade routes enriching themselves. The **donkeys** were further outfitted with ornate saddles or blankets (i.e. **judges' attire**) to flaunt their extraordinary wealth. Those who had become rich at the expense of **Israel** have now received their just reward

in their defeat and must give credit to the Lord Himself. Though they did not enter into battle and remained **far from the sound of the archers** and **watering** of the horses that pulled the



chariots, the merchants have realized that the Lord has fought **righteously** on behalf of His people. Even in the face of persecution and mockery from the secular world, we can have hope that one day the Lord will subdue them and they will acknowledge His power and authority—even if they don't do so in this life. Although those who do not have a relationship through Christ will remain eternally separated from God, one day they will understand their folly and bow their knee in His presence.

How does [Philippians 2:9-11](#) help us to understand [Judges 5:10-11](#)? Why do both passages ultimately give us hope?

Question  
# 4

The next two verses provide a call to worship as well as a call to arms for Israel and invoke both **Deborah** to **awake and sing** and **Barak** to **arise** and call the troops into battle (v. 12). Although the warriors (i.e. **survivors**) valiantly **came down** to fight **against the nobles**, the ultimate victory belongs to **the Lord** because He Himself **came down** and led them into battle and fought on their behalf **against the mighty** (v. 13). Often, as during the time of Deborah and Barak, the situation looks hopeless when

left to our own strength and wisdom, but the Lord goes before those who trust Him and fights on their behalf. We have nothing to fear when we trust and follow Him. Without Him, we are powerless and to be pitied, but with Him we are victorious; therefore, He alone deserves all glory and praise for what only He can do and has done for us!

In what ways has God fought on your behalf during your life? How have you or do you express your gratitude to Him?

Question  
# 5

The following five verses extend praise and gratitude for those who joined the war effort while expressing remorse for those who did not. First, the song lauds those tribes who joined the battle without hesitation; those from **Ephraim** (i.e. Joseph's tribe), then **Benjamin**, **Machir** (i.e. Manasseh), **Zebulun**, and **Issachar** (vv. 14-15). Each of the tribes contributed in a slightly different way, but were unified for one purpose. **Benjamin** brought the warriors (i.e. **people**), Manasseh contributed the leaders, **Zebulun** recruited others, and Issachar functioned in support of both **Deborah** and **Barak**.

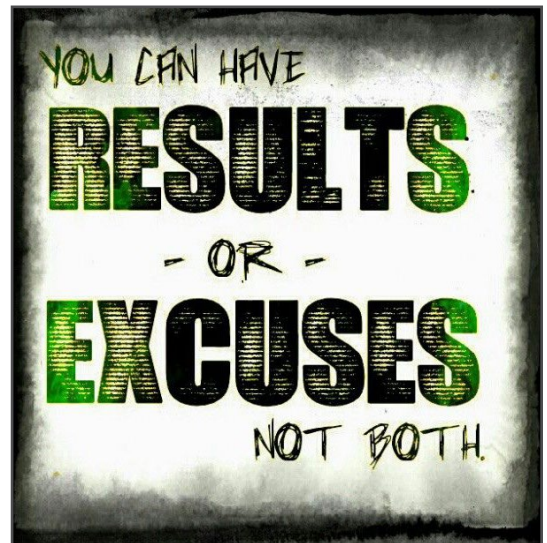
Later, the song singles out the tribes of **Zebulun** and **Naphtali** for special valor because they **jeopardized their lives** and fought in **the heights of the battlefield** (v. 18). Although all these tribes contributed, the latter two tribes went beyond the ordinary call of duty to fight alongside the Lord. As a church, God has equipped us with various gifts so that we can serve Him through one unified purpose; therefore, every one of us should contribute to the purpose to which God has called us: sharing the gospel to see Kingdom growth. Even though accomplishing this purpose

sometimes requires us to make sacrifices, we should gladly and without reservation trust the Lord and follow Him because His Son gave everything for our sakes.

What sacrifices does God sometimes call us to make when serving Him? Why should we be willing to make these sacrifices?

Question  
# 6

Second, the song chastises those tribes unwilling to join the fight. The tribe of **Reuben**, for example, felt it more important to tend to their own affairs by watching their **sheepfolds** and being entertained by their music while watching their **flocks** rather than being bothered to fight with their brothers. In fact, they steadfastly refused and **resolved** in their **hearts** to be concerned only with their troubles (v. 16). Likewise, **Gilead** (i.e. Gad) who settled on the east side of the Jordan refused to cross and fight and the tribe of **Dan** had not yet fully conquered their territory, so they could not be persuaded to move from the **seashore** and **inlets** (v. 17).



In verse 23, God, through His divine messenger, **curses** the **inhabitants** of **Meroz** because they refused to join the battle and **come to the help of the Lord**. Though not much is known archaeologically about **Meroz** and this is the only reference in the entire Old Testament to the city, the people represent those Israelites who refused to go to war as God had summoned them.\* Unfortunately, many church members today can't be bothered to

## Instruct

serve the Lord either. They feel that they don't have the time, they just want to rest or relax because of their difficult jobs, they have their own set of problems, or they simply are unconcerned altogether. However, we need to resist the temptation to be isolated and uninvolved, but rather we should act as one unit and strive to accomplish that to which God has called us as a congregation.

### In Reference



*For more information, see Daniel I. Block, Judges, Ruth, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1999), p. 238-239.*

What are some common excuses people have for not serving or participating in the church?

Question  
# 7

The last five verses recall the actual battle waged against the Canaanite **kings** in the valley near **Megiddo** in **Taanach** (v. 19). These **kings** failed miserably in their quest so much that they **took no silver** bounty which they had expected. They also thought that they would swiftly defeat Israel, but instead they were engaged in a difficult and titanic battle which is described poetically as fighting **in the heavens** which **moved the stars from their courses** (v. 20). They were quickly and soundly defeated, being **swept away** just as the flooded **Kishon** River would destroy everything in its path (v. 21). Although they had superior weaponry in the form of chariots here symbolized by the **pounding hooves** of the **galloping steeds** (v. 22), they were no match for the Lord. Therefore, God, using those willing to fight in Israel, soundly and thoroughly defeated the Canaanites.



**WALK IN THE WILL OF THE LORD:**

The last stanza of the song celebrates the death of **Sisera** at the hands of **Jael**. It even identifies **Jael** as the **most blessed among women** because she single-handedly killed the captor of Israel and the commander of Jabin's military forces (v. 24). After approaching **Sisera** first, she deceived him to think that she would offer him protection and security in her

home. Indeed, she even went beyond the ordinary call for hospitality when **he asked for water** by giving him **milk** in a **fancy bowl** (v. 25). Yet, she had an ulterior motive because the

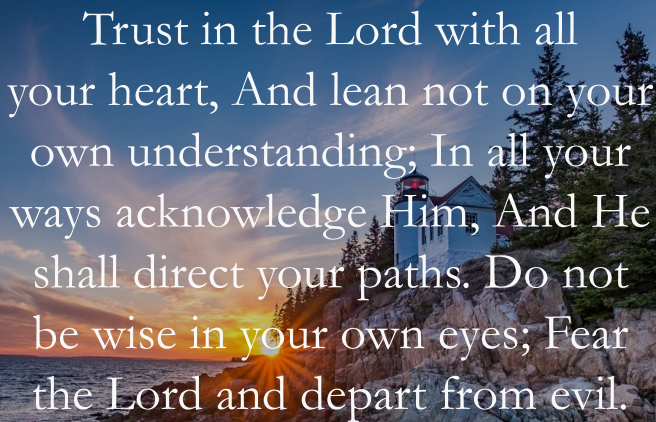


**milk** would lull him to sleep, so that she could return and dispatch him later. The song then very vividly describes that moment when she drove **the tent peg** into **his head** and how the once mighty warrior **fell dead** at **her feet** (vv. 26-27).

When we examine this last stanza closely, we see a shift in where the praise is directed. Nowhere in verses 24-30 is the action of the Lord mentioned as it had been expressly highlighted in the previous verses, but glory and praise are directed toward a human figure. In chapter 4, God does predict that Barak would not receive the glory for the victory over Sisera and it would be given to a woman—**Jael**. In the first two stanzas of this song, six times over the course of these events the actions of the Lord are highlighted and praise is directed exclusively to Him (see vv. [2-5](#), [9](#), [11](#), [13](#), and [23](#)); however, the song now begins to view the

## Instruct

events from a human perspective with praise directed at **Jael**. In last week's lesson, we learned what happens when both men and women fail to fulfill their God-given roles because they are disengaged. Such failure often causes others to compromise, such as Jael, even if they feel that they are doing God's will. In reality, neither Barak nor Jael should receive the glory because God is the One who ultimately defeated Jabin and Sisera and delivered His people from bondage. Certainly, God allowed Sisera to fall by Jael's hand, but He was not implicit in the way that she had acted to deceive and kill the commander. To her, because the men of Israel were disengaged and disobedient, she felt that this deception and treachery was the only option she had to accomplish this goal.



Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and depart from evil.

Proverbs 3:5-7

When we walk according to God's will, focus will always be upon Him and He will always receive the glory for what He has accomplished through us. Problems arise, however, when we fail to see things from God's perspective and view them from our own human-centered perspective. To accomplish God's will, although we must make ourselves available to be used by Him, we will never need to give Him a "helping hand" by compromising our values or acting contrary to the principles in His Word. Instead, when we completely surrender our lives to Him, God will work in a righteous way that can only bring glory to His name. Even though it may seem impossible from a

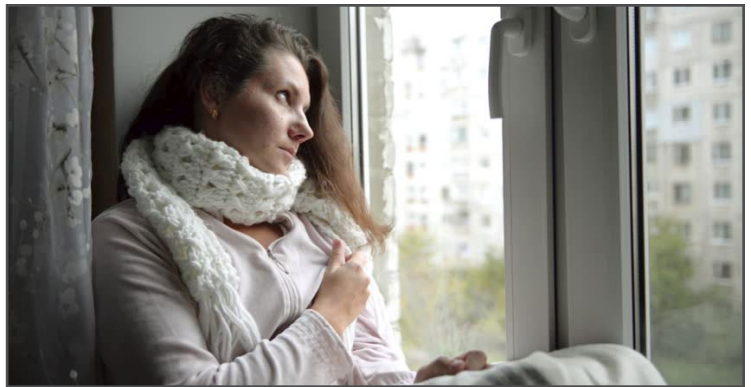
human perspective and that we must take matters into our own hands, God will always make a way so that we don't have to compromise and we can walk confidently according to His will.

How do we rob the glory from God when we take matters into our own hands? What times in your life have you robbed God of glory?

Question  
# 8

The next three verses focus on the reaction of Sisera's **mother** who is looking **through a window** and waiting for her son to come home (v.

28). As she peers **through** the **window**, she wonders why it has taken **so long** to see and hear her son's **chariot coming**. Eventually, however, she answers her own question and realizes



that her son has perished in battle (v. 29). Instead of bringing back the **spoils** of war as both he and his **mother** had expected, the commander now lay brutally murdered in Jael's tent (v. 30). Unlike in [5:3 and 11](#) where the conquered **kings** and merchants give **praise** to the Lord and acknowledge His **righteous** authority, here in verse 30 Sisera's **mother** does not because she focuses on her own troubles. Again, this human-centered mentality demonstrates what happens when we take matters into our own hands versus when we allow God to lead and work through us. When God works through us, people are clearly pointed to Him and will acknowledge His authority, but when we take matters into our own hands it obscures the focus on God by placing emphasis upon other human beings.

## Instruct

The song concludes with a general statement about the victory that the Lord had secured for Israel and how the people ought to respond as His ambassadors (v. 31). In the form of a command, the verse declares that the **enemies** of the Lord cannot stand against Him—not even the 900 chariots of Jabin’s army. For those who lovingly walk in the will of the Lord, however, it urges them to **be like the sun** which **when it comes out** shines at **full strength**. As the Lord’s ambassadors, we represent Him and His character to the world around us—not so we can receive the glory, but so that others may be pointed to a relationship with Him through His majesty, grace, and righteousness. In [Philippians 2:14-15](#), Paul writes, “Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.” By walking in His will and imitating His character, we demonstrate to the world the life-changing power through which God has transformed us from disobedient to obedient, so that the world too may know how to have that same relationship with Him.

In what ways have we been called by God to shine as lights in this dark and depraved generation?

Question  
# 9

## Inspire

Following the will of the Lord is not simply knowing what it is and then acting within our own power and strength to do it. On the contrary, when we follow God’s will, we will completely surrender our lives to Him

and allow Him to direct each step that we take. We are actively involved and willing to serve, but we must wait upon the Lord to order our steps and listen to what He prescribes for us to do. In doing so, others will see Christ in us and praise Him for His righteous work. Imagine for a moment if the resurgent Johnny B. Tired joined the men's ministry and began to do things according to his own power and perspective. Most likely, two things would happen. First, Johnny would undoubtedly tire and burn out as well as become frustrated by little or slow progress. Second, if he began changing things based on his own perspective and preferences, he would meet with ardent resistance and others would focus on *his* changes and not the Lord.

Our job is not to be independent gang-busters, doing things our own way; we are to be ambassadors who represent the Lord and His righteousness, so that others may be drawn to Him. We must live righteous lives and undertake tasks according to God's holy standard in His Word. God will never lead us to deceive others or compromise our moral values in order to accomplish His will—for He is completely holy and cannot inspire such actions. Instead, we must be wholly different from the world around us which sees things through the eyes of relativity—some even thinking it is OK to lie to protect life and property. When we live holy lives and abide by God's holy character to accomplish His will *His* way, then people will be drawn into a relationship with Him instead of being repelled; therefore, let us live transformed lives from disobedience to obedience so that we may effectively represent His presence in us to the world.

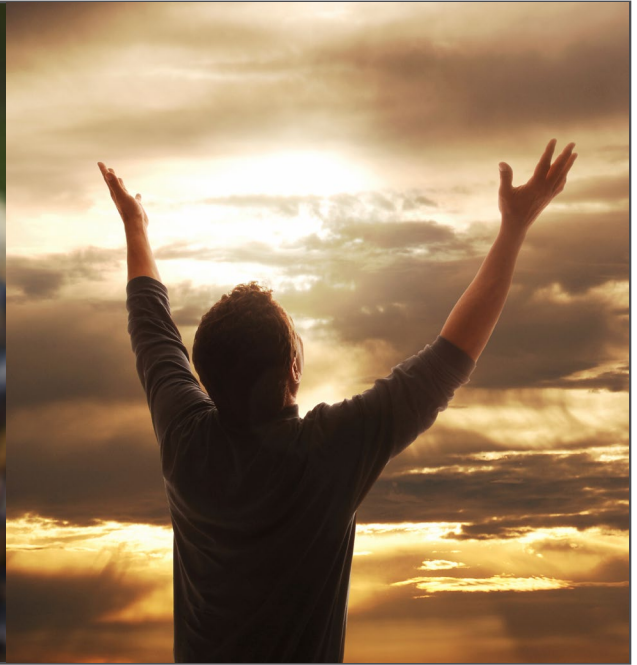
## ***Incorporate***

In what ways should we as a church direct our praise to the Lord? How does this help the world around us to acknowledge Him?

In what ways do some churches or Christians take the focus off the Lord and put it upon themselves? What affect does this have upon the world?

In what ways does living a transformed life from disobedience to obedience draw others to Christ? How can living a disobedient life as a “believer” repel others from Christ?

*March 18, 2018*



# *Be Transformed from Doubt to Faith*

## *Judges 6: 1-24*

Focal Verse:

"Gideon said to Him, 'O my lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? . . . But now the Lord has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.'"

Judges 6:13

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## Introduce

When I moved to Fort Worth nearly eighteen years ago, the interchange at 35W and 30 was undergoing construction. Not much has changed in those eighteen years, for 35 has been under construction ever since. With the soaring overpasses incomplete, the familiar orange construction barrels and barricades lined the lanes and blocked access to the exit from westbound 30 to southbound



35; all traffic merging with 35 south had to detour at Riverside Drive and wind through downtown streets and neighborhoods because only the beams for the ramp had been installed and not the concrete road deck. At nearly one-hundred-ten-feet tall, the ramp posed a serious danger for any motorist who would have tried to use it, leading to a catastrophic drop of nearly eleven stories from its highest point.\*

About a month after settling here, I decided to venture to Dallas on a Sunday to see some of the tourist sites. Although I had heard on the news in passing that the new ramps had opened, I didn't pay much attention to the story. On the way home that afternoon, traffic was light and as I approached the interchange all the construction barrels had been removed, but I noticed that no one was taking the ramp to merge onto 35. Even though I was uncertain if the ramp were actually opened, I decided to test it. As I slowly crept along, I remembered a movie where a car had taken such a ramp in Chicago only to find that it abruptly ended; the car then plummeted over the end as the camera panned out to show the Sears Tower in the

## Introduce

background. Despite this image in my mind, I pressed forward with other cars beginning to follow; driving only ten miles an hour over the two-lane ramp, not a single car passed because they had this same doubt that they would get to the top to find the overpass incomplete. However, as we arrived at the apex, we could see the completed ramp below, so we increased our speed and merged onto the freeway without incident.

We should always exercise caution and wisdom when we make decisions, but we should not allow doubt to keep us from following the Lord. God had chosen Gideon to deliver His people from the oppressive hand of the Midianites; however, Gideon doubted that God could use such a person as he to undertake such a big task. Coming from the “weakest” tribe and being the “least of his father’s house,” Gideon doubted whether God could use him to “save Israel” ([Judges 6:14-15](#)). This doubt even led him to question whether God were truly there since all these catastrophes had befallen Israel. Although we must make absolutely sure that we have heard the Lord speak and have not confused His Word with our own desires, we cannot doubt when we He has called us to a specific task; we must respond faithfully, without fear and doubt, allowing the Lord to use us to accomplish His plan.

Key  
Question

What are some of the reasons we doubt the Lord’s ability to work in our lives sometimes?

## In Reference



Gordon Dickson, “[North Texas Highway Ramps Are Going Higher and Higher](#),” *Star-Telegram* (December 23, 2016).

### Judges 6:1-6

#### DESTRUCTION BY THE CULTURE:

Once **again**, this narrative opens on a negative note by describing how **the children of Israel** continued to do **evil in the sight of the Lord** and how God punished them by delivering **them into the hand of the** Midianites **for seven years** (v. 1). Since the beginning of the book of Judges spanning several decades, the people had seen God work mightily and graciously, constantly rescuing them from their own sin and the secular nations that oppressed them; Israel, however, still never learned her lesson and continued to act wickedly, worshiping foreign gods and imitating the destructive culture around them. As this chapter begins, life in Israel had become so bad under the **Midianites** that the people hid in **dens**, caves, and **mountain strongholds** just so that they could survive and retain what little food and possessions they still had (v. 2). Yet, despite all this terror, the people still did not repent and turn back to the Lord, but they continued perpetrating **evil**.

Despite the clear hardship that sin brings, why do some people stubbornly refuse to turn to the Lord?

Question  
# 1

The story continues to describe why the people hid in these **dens** and **caves**; the **Midianites** and **Amalekites** would swoop into the land and steal Israel's harvest—whatever they **had sown** (v. 3). As these two nations **encamped against** the people, they would consume and **destroy** everything in their path, leaving nothing in Israel—not one **sheep, ox**, or

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**donkey** with which to plow the fields or eat (v. 4). Together, these nations were so oppressive that they seemed like **locusts** in the land with uncountable **camels** and throngs of **people** that just kept coming in indefinite waves (v. 5). As a result, it **greatly impoverished** Israel, so much that they **cried out** in anguish to the Lord (v. 6). The phrase translated **greatly impoverished**, however, literally means “became small”; consequently, it not only emphasizes their destitute physical and financial situation, but it also describes their demoralized attitude—they had lost all hope and there was nowhere else to turn but God. He is their last resort.

Why do people wait until all hope is seemingly lost before turning to God? Why should we not allow things to escalate so far before we turn to Him?

Question  
# 2

Certainly, when we look at the world around us, we don't see much hope; we see a barren land devoid of life apart from God. If left to its own devices apart from the Lord, secular culture leads down a path of destruction. Yet, we as God's people have life and ought to be a beacon of hope and light to others. We can't rely on our own ideas, perspectives, or social programs to transform the world, but we must rely on the hope found solely within the gospel. We shouldn't figuratively hide in **dens** or **caves** to isolate ourselves from the world because of fear, but we must be a light which is placed on a lampstand instead of under a basket and a city which shines brightly on a hill ([Matt 5:14-16](#)). If we as believers fail to point the world to the One in whom they can have true hope and change, what do they really have? We must allow God to transform us from fear and doubt to one who boldly

proclaims the source of life and offers hope in a hopeless world—destroyed by the very godless culture they value.

In what ways can we innovatively share the gospel with the world around us so that they too may have hope?

Question  
# 3

### Judges 6:7-10

#### DELIVERANCE BY GOD:

In this section, we see the Lord's response to the people's pleas because of their suffering at the hands of the **Midianites** (v. 7). Just as He had called the prophetess Deborah to judge Israel, the Lord **sent** another unnamed **prophet** to remind the people how He had acted on their behalf numerous times by rescuing them from peril. First, He had

**brought** them **out of Egypt** and freed them from four hundred years of **bondage** since the time of Joseph (v. 8).

Second, He **delivered** them from the **hand of the Egyptians** not only



by sparing the first-born children of Hebrew families during the Passover who had sheep's blood over their doors, but also at the Red Sea when the mighty Egyptian army surrounded them and they had nowhere to escape (v. 9). In fact, God had **delivered** them **from all who oppressed** them—including the nations who had **oppressed** them in the first five chapters of Judges. Finally, the **prophet** reminds the people that God

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is the One who actually had given them the very **land** on which their feet now trod and He is the One who **drove out** the secular nations. From the time of Joshua to the first chapter in the book of Judges, God fulfilled His promise to Abraham and went before Israel, giving them their long-awaited Promised Land.

In what ways have you seen God deliver you through tough circumstances in your life?

Question  
# 4

Not only does the prophet remind Israel of God's gracious blessings, but he also pronounces judgment against them for **not obeying the voice** of the Lord (v. 10). The people had nothing to **fear**—not even the false **gods of the Amorites in whose land they dwelt**, but they had rejected the Lord and refused to follow that which He had commanded. When we allow fear and distrust to distort our relationship with the Lord, it always leads to compromise. The people saw themselves as self-sufficient and wise in their own estimation, so they no longer relied upon the Lord and rejected His commands wholly. In our own society, we see many people who are wise in their own estimation which leads them to reject God and justify their immoral choices. Yet, we are without excuse, like Israel, because God has clearly delineated His plan for salvation in His Son and the need for transformation whereby we surrender and conform our lives to His.

## Judges 6:11-21

### DOUBT EXPRESSED BY GIDEON:

Next, we meet the deliverer whom God has called to free Israel from the grip of the **Midianites** (v. 11). God dispatches His messenger, **the angel**

**of the Lord**, to inform **Gideon** of His divine plan—finding him **threshing wheat** at a **winepress** on his father’s land, that is **Joash the Abiezrite**. Ironically, the messenger greets Gideon as a **mighty man of valor** even though he was hiding in the **winepress** which would afford him some security and safety from **the Midianites** who would have come to steal the grain if they had known (v. 12). In and of himself, Gideon was not an extraordinarily courageous or strong man, but he was like every other Israelite at that time—fearful and perplexed. If we fail to read the phrase directly before the designation **mighty man of valor**, we will miss a significant point that the messenger makes. Gideon can only be called a **mighty man of valor** because **the Lord** was **with** him. When left to our own wisdom, strength, and authority, the situation may seem bleak and hopeless; it may even cause us to doubt and fear. When we see ourselves as empowered by God to do His will, however, we can regard ourselves as victorious conquerors regardless of the odds that may be stacked against us.

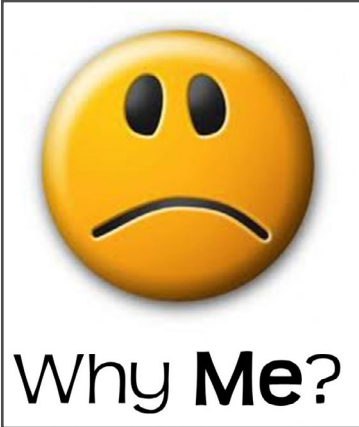


Why should we be fearful apart from the Lord?  
In the Lord, how can we overcome fear?

Question  
# 5

Gideon replies to the messenger, but it’s an unusual response because he blames God for Israel’s misfortune rather than taking responsibility for the sin that they had committed (v. 13). In a series of rapid-fire questions, Gideon actually blames the Lord for forsaking them: 1) **If the Lord is with us, then why** have **all** these bad things happened?; 2) **Where** are **all** the good things (i.e. **miracles**) that God had promised **to our**

**our fathers?;** and 3) **Did** God bring us **out of Egypt** only to **forsake** and abandoned us to **the Midianites**? Gideon's response sounds like many people today—both believers and unbelievers. To put it in modern



terms, people ask why bad things happen to “good” people or even more specifically why God allowed this tragedy or these problems to happen to *me*. Although not all tragedy is directly the result of sin and should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, God should never be blamed as though He is responsible for any evil at all. At times, as a loving Father, God does punish those who are His children. This doesn't mean that He loves us any less; on the contrary, it demonstrates His divine love because He desires us to live the most fruitful and abundant life. At other times, God demonstrates His love and power by delivering us through bad situations and sustaining us as we rely solely upon Him; therefore, like Job, we should never blame God for the evil in this world.

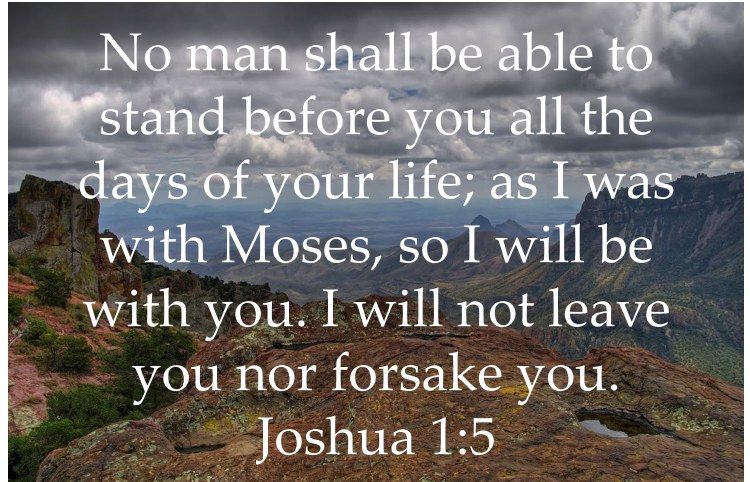
How can we help people understand why God is not to be blamed for evil either because it's directly the result of sin or it's a result of living as a human in a fallen world?

Question  
# 6

The messenger then describes the task to which the Lord has called Gideon (v. 14). Speaking on behalf of the Lord, the messenger tells him to **go** and **save Israel from the hand of the Midianites**, reminding him that the Lord is the One who **sent** him. To this charge, however, Gideon



responds with doubt, asking **how** he alone **can save Israel** (v. 15). Indeed, his continued response reveals how he viewed things from the perspective of what he alone could achieve as a human being. Therefore, he declares that his tribe, **Manasseh**, is **the weakest** and he himself is **the least in his father's house**. By his own admission, he rightly acknowledges the impossibility of accomplishing this feat on his own. Consequently, the messenger reminds Gideon that the Lord **will be with** him—he is not fighting this battle alone; God will give him a decisive victory. In



fact, God will **defeat** the Midianites so soundly through Gideon that it would be **as** though they were fighting against **one man** (v. 16). Gideon doubted his qualifications because he focused on what he could do and not what God could do through him. God often employs the least experienced and those deemed least powerful in the eyes of the world in order to display His own majesty and power. For example, He used a stuttering murderer who fled Egypt in fear to deliver Israel from the hand of Pharaoh (Moses); He used a small, red-headed shepherd to defeat a giant and lead Israel (David); He used a young prophet who often complained and cried to confront a corrupt priesthood (Jeremiah); He selected fishermen and a tax collector as His disciples. When God calls us, He will equip and empower us to do the job successfully. We need not worry about our education, abilities, talents, or resources because God

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Himself will provide. If God has called us, we should never doubt or second-guess, but we should immediately trust and follow Him because He will never fail nor will He ever forsake those doing His will. Like Gideon, we are all works in progress and must allow God to transform us from doubt to faith by trusting Him in the small things and relying on Him to accomplish even bigger things in our lives as we mature.

In times past or even now, what has kept you from doing what God has called you to do? What can we do to overcome these doubts that we may have?

Question  
# 7

Still doubting, Gideon asks the visitor to give him **a sign** if he has **found favor** and as a means to verify what he has been told (v. 17). In fact, as we continue to study the life of Gideon, we will see such doubt and uncertainty resurface in his dealings with the Lord. To seek favor with the visitor, Gideon asks him not to leave until he returns and sets his offering before him (v. 18). As the messenger waits, Gideon goes to prepare a sumptuous meal of a **young goat, unleavened bread, and a pot of broth** (v. 19). Bringing it out, he **presents** the meal to which the messenger gives specific instructions. He tells Gideon to take **the meat and bread** and place them on a specific **rock** and to **pour the broth** on top of it (v. 20). As a **sign** unto Gideon, the **angel of the Lord** extends his **staff** and **touches** the meal, and **fire rises** from **the rock** and consumes everything (v. 21). Suddenly, the messenger disappears, leaving Gideon astonished. Although Gideon had not yet recognized that this message came directly from the Lord, he does have that “ah-ha” moment in [verse 22](#) after the

visitor gives such a grandiose and startling sign. Following secular cultural customs, Gideon tested the Lord by bringing a meal to Him. Secular customs suggested that if a “god” found **favor** with someone he would “eat” the meal offered. Whether he did not expect the meal to be consumed immediately or even so dramatically, Gideon was astonished and began to fear as we will see. Without a doubt, Gideon now knew with whom he had spoken. Today, we have the Bible which is God’s complete revelation to us, outlining His commands and ordinances for us to follow. We need not test God in a condescending or unbelieving way, but instead we must evaluate what we believe He has instructed us according to His Word. God will never lead us to do something that contradicts His Word or goes against His character; therefore, by reading the Bible, we can know God’s will for our lives with certainty without requiring a sign for a test.

Why is it important for us to evaluate everything which we believe God to have spoken to us by His Word—the Bible?

Question  
# 8

### Judges 6:22-24

#### **DEMONSTRATION OF FAITH THROUGH WORSHIP:**

After the meal was consumed by **fire** and the **angel** disappeared, Gideon realized that this messenger was sent directly by the Lord (v. 22). In fact, he exclaims that he has **seen the angel of the Lord face to face** which causes him to fear. We aren’t told the nature of Gideon’s fear whether it’s based on the fact that no one has ever seen **the face** of the Lord and lived ([Exod 33:20](#)) or because he had been so contemptuous in blaming Him for Israel’s condition and so boldly declaring his inadequacy and

## Instruct

demanding a sign. Whatever the case may be, we can see a definitive change in Gideon's attitude and life; he has been transformed from



doubt to faith which is borne out by the fact that he builds an altar to commemorate the event and worship the Lord.

Immediately, the Lord speaks to Gideon to calm his **fear**; He offers him **peace** and commands him **not to fear**

because he will **not die** (v. 23). At that point, Gideon constructs an **altar in Ophrah** and names it **The-Lord-is-Peace** as a reminder of what God has done for him (v. 24). As a result, Gideon has begun to demonstrate the transformation of his doubt to faith through His worship of the Lord. When God so radically transforms us, it will produce a visible change within our lives. We will ally ourselves with the Lord, accepting responsibility for the sin we have committed and obeying that which He has commanded. When we live by faith, we will walk in His righteousness and see the world from His perspective; we will not fear anything, but totally rely on Him so that He can miraculously work through us in such a way that people may know He is the One who empowered us and He is the One who has granted us the victory. Therefore, let us trust the Lord and shed any doubt that we may have, so that we may live by faith in such a way that it draws others into a relationship with Jesus Christ.

In what ways can we demonstrate in our lives how God has transformed us from doubt to faith?

Question  
# 9

As I was driving the newly renovated freeway ramps at 35W and 30, I trusted in what I could see and do on my own as I ascended the overpass—wondering if it had actually been completed or if I had been deceived by the removal of the barricades. Although I cautiously proceeded, I didn't fully trust my instincts until I could see over the top of the overpass and confirm that it was safe to continue downward. As believers, however, we shouldn't rely on our own wisdom and knowledge, but we should trust wholly in the Lord and His infinite wisdom; thus, we should trust the One who knows the course of human history from beginning to end. Trusting in our own wisdom many times leads to failure because we can never be certain of the outcome and we can never be confident in the sufficiency of our skills to complete the task. We shouldn't act foolishly or impetuously, but we must be equipped and informed by the Bible—waiting patiently upon the Lord to guide our steps.

The question of how we can know God's will for our lives may arise in many of our minds. When we read the Bible and spend time with the Lord in prayer, we can clearly know God's will and we don't need to guess the path on which He has directed us. Although God may give us specific directives from time to time like He did with Gideon, we can still know His will for our lives by following three basic principles: 1) we are to love God and love others, 2) we are to live righteously and make godly choices, and 3) we are to share the gospel to a world without hope. Because we can know God's will with certainty for our lives, we don't ever need to doubt the outcome. God will always lead us into whatever task He has called us and ensure that we complete it successfully. When we

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attempt to do things on our own power or judge things by our own perspective, it ultimately indicates that we don't trust God at His Word. Whether we are sharing the gospel, standing for the truth in a deceived world, or living righteously amongst a fallen society, God will empower us to victory; therefore, let us be transformed from doubt to faith in our Lord and Savior!

## *Incorporate*

What times in your life have you expressed doubt toward the Lord? What caused you to develop these doubts?

## *Incorporate*

What helped you to overcome these doubts in the Lord? How can you encourage someone using your own experience who may be doubting the Lord?

What times in your life or in another's life have you seen someone blame God for a tragic circumstance? How did you come to realize that God was not to blame? How can you help others who may be blaming God for some tragedy in their lives?

March 25, 2018



*Be Transformed from Mis-directed  
Devotion to True Worship*  
*Judges 6:25-32*

Focal Verse:

"Then the men of the city said to Joash, "Bring out your son, that he may die, because he has torn down the altar of Baal, and because he has cut down the wooden image that was beside it."

Judges 6:30

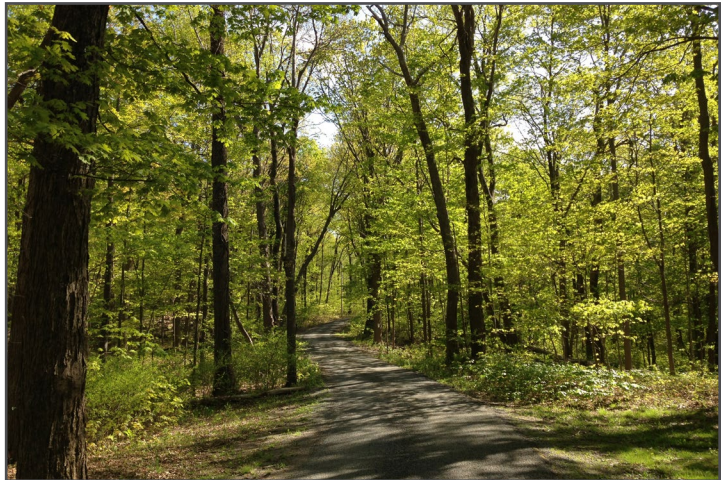
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## Introduce

Several years ago, my friend and his family were stationed at the Warner Barracks in Bamberg, Germany while serving our country in the US Army. Before being honorably discharged from active service and finally returning to the States, they stayed with me a couple of days so that they could begin the process of finding an apartment in Plano and acquiring an additional car to suit their growing family. A fellow soldier, whom they met in Germany and had recently been reassigned to Hunter Army Field in Savannah, Georgia, had a car for sale at the right price. So, they asked me to make the quick trip to Georgia with them and their two children to help transport the car back to Texas.

Before we left, we entered the address into the GPS and Siri began to give step-by-step instructions which we dutifully followed. After driving all night across the South, we finally arrived on the home stretch, traveling down Interstate 16. As we drew closer to what we thought were the outskirts of Savannah, Siri beckoned us to exit the highway and turn on a two-lane road. We continued to follow her directions as she told us turn by turn how to get to the Army base, but soon there were no houses or structures of any kind and the road became gravel and even narrower. As the road ended in the middle of nowhere surrounded only by a forest and sounds of critters inhabiting the canopy, Siri gleefully and proudly announced, "You have arrived."



## Introduce

My friends and I had gone thirty miles off-course and were severely mis-directed in our pursuit of Hunter Army Field. We trusted an inanimate object that had corrupt data input into it which caused it to spew incorrect information from it. In Gideon's day, people had trusted the false gods of the nations around them. These false gods could not hear, speak, or respond in any fashion, but they did misdirect people's devotion and caused them to turn from the Lord. They were so deceived in their worship that when Gideon chopped down the false idols the men of the area became angry and aggressive. Like my experience with Siri, the Israelites had been "programmed," that is deceived, with false information to think that these gods had the power to protect them and provide for them. However, we know that only the Lord has this ability; therefore, He alone deserves our worship. Let us be transformed from any mis-directed devotion that we have in our lives into the true, unadulterated worship of the Lord.

Key  
Question

What things, people, or activities in our lives can cause us to have mis-directed devotion or worship?

### Judges 6:25-27

#### RID YOURSELF OF IDOLATRY:

The **same night** in which the Lord sent His messenger to Gideon, which we studied last week, God called him to action to destroy the idols in the land (v. 25). A fitting task for Gideon whose name means “one who hews/chops;” the Lord instructs him to take **the second** one of his **father’s**

**bulls** which is **seven years old** and **tear down the altar of Baal** and **cut down the wooden image** of the goddess

Ashera which stood next to it. Like most of Israel during this period, Gideon and his family had turned from the Lord to worship false gods.



Even Gideon’s own father maintained a shrine to the Canaanite god Baal and the goddess Ashera on his very own land and facilitated the worship of them both. Even though Gideon and his family had forsaken the Lord to worship other gods, God acted graciously to extend forgiveness and call Gideon into a renewed relationship characterized by devoted service. Through Gideon’s service, God would also offer this same type of

relationship to his immediate family and the nation of Israel as a whole when they turned from Baal to worship Him alone.

### In-Depth Information



*The way the English is constructed in verse 25 can be a bit confusing. God didn't command Gideon to take two bulls, but He is specifying exactly which one to take. For example, we can translate it this way: "**Take your father's young bull, that is the second one which is seven years old.**"*

In what way does God use us to extend His offer of salvation to those in our families and the world around us?

Question  
# 1

The Lord then directed Gideon to **build an altar** to Him out of the remnants of the smashed **altar of Baal** and arrange the wood he had **cut down** from the **image** of Ashera to make a fire (v. 26). Using the same **bull** from **his**



**father's** herd with which he had destroyed the **altar of Baal**, Gideon would **offer a burnt sacrifice** to the Lord. Assembling **ten men from among his servants**, he followed the Lord's directive, but he greatly **feared** the response from **his father's**

**household** and the **men of the city** so he did it secretly at **night** (v. 27). Through Gideon's fear and hesitancy, we can see that transformation is a process that takes time. Although Gideon had already begun to worship the Lord, his fear and apprehension did not automatically cease even though the Lord told him through His heavenly messenger in [6:11-24](#) not to fear because He would be with him and has sent him to rescue Israel. We live in a fast-paced world in which we expect immediate results. In Christ, we certainly experience immediate transformation in which we want to live righteously and even sometimes we do immediately abandon former sinful actions, but more frequently we tend to struggle and see change slowly over time. For example, using vulgar language may not abate overnight and we may catch ourselves uttering foul words, but in Christ we immediately become more aware of the sinfulness of our corrupt speech and take steps to change it. As believers, we will always struggle with our fleshly desires and need the Spirit to remind us constantly of who we have become in Christ. Our struggle with sin, whether anger issues, lust, laziness, bitterness, jealousy, or an infinite number of others, does not simply disappear overnight, but it is a process by which we are made holy when we seek Christ and surrender to His Spirit daily. Gideon still struggled with fear, doubt, and other sins, but the Lord was at work in His life to transform him through a process over time.

Why must we remind ourselves that transformation in Christ is a process that occurs over time?

Question  
# 2

Before the Lord could use Gideon to deliver Israel from the Midianites, He had to rid the land of its idols. Just as Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and

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love the other, or else he will be loyal to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and mammon” ([Matt 6:24](#)). We cannot be divided in our devotion; it simply won’t work when we try to serve God and satisfy our own fleshly desires. Often, we may even unconsciously place other people, activities, or things before the Lord. In order for us to have



the proper perspective which leads to healthy relationships, we must place God above everything else in our lives. We can’t be devoted to God and place money or work first; we can’t be devoted to God and

place our hobbies or recreation first; we can’t be devoted to God and place our relationships (family / friends) first; we can’t be devoted to God and place anything above Him. When we place anything above the Lord, those things become our focus and cause us to take our eyes off of Christ—and this causes a whole host of problems in our lives.

What are some things in our world today that can cause us to take our focus off of Christ? What can we do to prevent ourselves from losing focus?

Question  
# 3

**REACTION BY THE CULTURE:**

The next **morning the men of the city** were incensed that someone had destroyed the **altar of Baal** (v. 28). That **morning**, they found it smashed with another **altar to the Lord** constructed from its remnants. On top, they discovered the ashes from the **wooden image** of Ashera which had been **cut down** and the remains of the young **bull** which had been **offered** as a sacrifice unto the Lord. After discussing it amongst themselves and pondering **who** would do such a **thing**, they came to the conclusion that it was **Gideon the son of Josah** (v. 29). Taking matters into their own hands, the **men** rushed to Joash's home and demanded that he **bring out** Gideon so **that** they could put him to death because he had **torn down the altar** and **wooden image** (v. 30). The very nation whom God had repeatedly delivered and blessed had become so saturated with the secular culture that they no longer felt remorse for worshiping other gods and forsaking the Lord. They became angrier over the destruction of the idols than the sin which they had perpetrated. Throughout its history, Israel often turned so far from the Lord that they actually celebrated sin and felt no remorse for worshiping false gods and committing wicked deeds. During the time of Isaiah, for example, sin had become so pervasive that the prophet had to pronounce judgment on "those who call evil good and good evil" ([Isa 5:20](#)). The people were so influenced by sin and the culture that they could not distinguish right from wrong and even celebrated heinous and evil acts as good (see also [1 Tim 4:1-3](#); [1 Cor 5:1-2](#)). Later, Jeremiah also condemns the corrupt nation for their idolatry and wickedness writing, "Were they not ashamed

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when they had committed abominations? No! They were not ashamed, nor did they know how to blush” ([Jer 6:15; 8:12](#)). Consequently, from Judges to Jeremiah and even into the New Testament, we can see how sin re-programs people to accept that which is abnormal and immoral as natural and right; sin also causes people to redefine their positions in human terms, leading to the rejection of the principles outlined in God’s Word.

In what way does secular culture attempt to re-program us by obscuring the values and morals that God has clearly outlined?

Question  
# 4

Today, our society in many ways attempts to re-program us to accept sinful activities as normal while rejecting the knowledge and wisdom that God has given us as harmful, intolerant, and unloving. Recently, a local middle school teacher distributed a survey to sixth graders titled “How Comfortable Am I” as a means to promote tolerance and sensitivity among both races and “alternative lifestyles.” Two of statements posed read: “a friend invites you to a gay bar” and “your sister invites her new ‘boyfriend’ home; ‘he’ is a female-to-male transsexual.”\* Certainly, we should love every individual and share the gospel with them so that radical transformation may occur through Christ; however, we cannot accept or normalize actions which God has clearly deemed abnormal and immoral in His Word. Although this district took “disciplinary action” and admitted the inappropriateness of the survey, this local example is indicative of a larger cultural push to indoctrinate people, particularly children, and justify sin to make it seem normal. Many educators and districts never engage in such immoral



instruction, but through the media, government, and many universities an agenda to ostracize biblical teaching and promote immorality has become apparent.

## *In Reference*



David Goins, "[6th Graders Receive 'Gay Bar' Questionnaire at Birdville ISD Campus.](#)" Accessed from [wfaa.com](#). (February 14, 2018).

How should we as Christians respond when the culture attempts to re-program people and devalue morality?

Question  
# 5

The culture reacted violently against Gideon, seeking to kill him for doing that which was right. Although here in the US we don't see sustained violent attacks against believers, we do see an ever-increasingly hostile culture. For instance, several news outlets reported that some of the hosts on ABC's "The View" mocked and criticized Vice President Mike Pence for his Christian faith as being "mentally insane" or having a "mental illness" because Jesus communicates with him through prayer. Although the remarks were met with some criticism and resistance, they demonstrate the push of the culture through some media outlets to attack the Lord, demean biblical values, and silence Christians for fear of being labeled "crazy." In addition, television shows like "The Mentalist" and "The Big Bang Theory" have



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characters who openly question the belief in God while putting others down who believe in Christ; at the same time, they promote various kinds of immoral actions as normal. Though not particularly violent, the culture is opposed to anything Christian and seeks to propagate its message through shows and media that mock Christ and biblical values—either portraying them as “foolish” or “old fashioned”; therefore, we must carefully select what we see, hear, and in what we participate in order to protect our families from becoming desensitized and re-programmed by the culture to accept immoral activity which in turn hinders our relationship with the Lord.

How have you personally seen the culture intensify its attacks on believers? Why must we as a church band together and resist this advance of the culture through Christ?

Question  
# 6

## Judges 6:31-32

### **RECOGNIZE THE IDOL'S INABILITY TO RESPOND:**

To protect his son, **Joash stood against** the men of the city who had come to kill Gideon (v. 31). At this point, he is not really either defending the Lord or Gideon for his actions, but trying to be a voice of reason within the angry mob. Therefore, he begins by asking them two questions: **Would you fight (i.e. plead) for Baal** and be able to **save** him? In other words, he basically puts them on the spot by asking what they could have done to stop this from happening that **Baal** himself could not have done. **Joash** goes on to explain that **Baal, as a god**, can fight for himself; if his **altar has been torn down**, then the **god** can settle the matter himself and punish

Gideon for what he has done. Therefore, they should wait until morning to see Gideon's fate, thereby leaving the judgment to **Baal**.

**Joash** then proceeded to give his son the nickname **Jerubbaal**, which means "**Let Baal plead against him**" for destroying the **altar** (v. 32).

The nickname is highly ironic because Baal has no power to respond or retaliate for what Gideon had done to his **altar**. As an inanimate object, Baal cannot hear, see, or speak; only the Lord can take care of His creation and provide for our basic needs. Why do so many people today still turn to inanimate objects as the sources through which they attempt to meet their needs and whereby they rebel against the Lord?

For example, many people trust money as their god. In fact, we even have a saying "money talks" to refer to the purchasing power and the opportunity



for provision that it affords. However, money cannot satisfy the spiritual and emotional vacuum created when the Lord is absent from one's life. More important, what happens when someone has no money? Then, from where does their provision come? We cannot count on humans or institutions because they will fail.

Money is like Baal; it cannot satisfy the soul, it cannot provide for our emotional needs, it cannot comfort us during the times of difficulty or tragedy, and ultimately it cannot protect us and provide for us if it becomes devalued—just look at the Great Depression! God, however,

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will never fail and will always provide for us even when all other human institutions have let us down. We have a number of inanimate objects or activities that people serve as their god in search of their purpose and which seemingly promise ultimate pleasure and fulfillment if practiced—nature, electronics, automobiles, education, sports / hobbies / entertainment, fantasy through novels / video games / online interaction, illicit drug use, promiscuity, and a whole host of other things that can come before the Lord. Nothing will satisfy our longing and our hearts like a relationship with the Lord; we were created to have a relationship with Him and Christ has come to restore that relationship severed by sin so that we can once again have the proper perspective for which we were created.

What inanimate objects can become idols? How can we ensure that we worship the Lord and not turn to the worship of these objects?

Question  
# 7

Although many idols that people serve are inanimate, there are some animate or living beings that people have as their gods. For some, relationships become their god because they seem to fulfill a person's need for love, acceptance, belonging, and value. Any relationship or pursuit thereof can become an idol if we elevate that person or those people over the Lord. Our pursuit for an ideal spouse, our family, our children, our friendships, or



our coworkers can all become idols if we don't have the proper perspective in the Lord and worship Him first and serve others second. Unfortunately, any human relationship at times will fail and at points we won't find satisfaction in these relationships because we will perceive that they aren't meeting our needs. Certainly, marriages may last, children may be loved unconditionally, and friendships may blossom apart from God, but we were created to have a relationship with Him first. Without that relationship with Him, all these other relationships are temporal and will eventually pass away. If we die apart from Christ, we will be eternally separated from Him; therefore, human relationships shouldn't define who we are and they definitely cannot save us. We ought to serve others and we ought to point them to Christ, but our relationship with Him ought to be primary and used to put our other human relationships into perspective—not the other way around.

How can relationships themselves become idols that distract us from the Lord?

Question  
# 8

## **Inspire**

In the introduction, we saw an example of where an inanimate object, Siri, mis-directed us and took us way off course. For anyone who has used GPS, this has probably happened at some point. If you haven't experienced an AWOL Siri, probably you have received bad advice from a human person at some point during your life. People tend to trust everything, but the Lord. Any human being or anything designed, programmed, or promoted by humans has the potential to err and lead astray. Although human inventions can be used for good, sin can also seize them and use them for destruction. The Internet, for example, has many useful purposes; we can

locate information quickly, we can communicate instantly, we can use it for education, and we can share the gospel in closed countries covertly. Evil, however, can turn the Internet into a sinful playground of sex, violence, misinformation, and mockery if we don't have the proper perspective and foundation in the Lord.

God never fails and will never lead us astray if only we would trust Him above all and surrender our lives completely into His control. Worship isn't primarily about singing praises, but it's about complete devotion to the Lord in how we live every day. We cannot be multi-taskers when it comes to our devotion to the Lord because it will distract in our worship: we cannot serve both God and money—to reassert Jesus' teaching here. To be completely devoted to the Lord, we must rid ourselves of anything that can be an idol and hinder our relationship with Him. God must be placed first in our lives and through Him we need to filter our perspective of the world. Therefore, let us be transformed from mis-directed devotion to true worship in the Lord so that we may live an abundant life that honors Him and fulfills the need for which we were created in the first place—to have a relationship with the Father through Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior!

## ***Incorporate***

What idols have you ever had in your life that distracted your relationship with the Lord?

How can we maintain focus on the Lord in a culture which inundates us with idolatry from every angle?

What consequences can we expect in our society for standing with the Lord and against the culture / idolatry? How should we respond?

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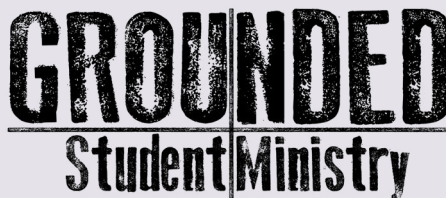
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