Unit 9

God Delivers His People

Judges; Ruth

Memory Verses

“When the leaders lead in Israel, when the people volunteer, blessed be the LORD. Listen, kings! Pay attention, princes! I will sing to the LORD; I will sing praise to the LORD God of Israel.”

—Judges 5:2-3
The Pattern of Rebellion

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: God punishes His people when they rebel against Him, but He also provides a way of deliverance.

MAIN PASSAGES: Judges 2:8-19

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

Throughout history, revolutions have formed new nations, implemented social change, and altered the way we live. But revolution and rebellion do not just take place on a national level. Children rebel against their parents, teens rebel against authority, and adults rebel against the status quo. Overtly or secretly, we've all rebelled against some sort of authority in our lives. And each one of us, all people created in the image of God, has considered God’s authority and commands and replied, “No, I don’t want to.”
Group Time

Point 1: God’s people rebel against God by abandoning Him (Judg. 2:8-13).

8 Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at the age of 110. 9 They buried him in the territory of his inheritance, in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. 10 That whole generation was also gathered to their ancestors. After them another generation rose up who did not know the Lord or the works he had done for Israel.

11 The Israelites did what was evil in the Lord’s sight. They worshiped the Baals and abandoned the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed other gods from the surrounding peoples and bowed down to them. They angered the Lord, 13 for they abandoned him and worshiped Baal and the Ashtoreths.

The rebellion of God’s people was not an anomaly but often the norm. At the heart of their rebellion was idolatry; they chose to worship the gods of the inhabitants of the promised land and turned their backs on the God who had brought them out of Egypt. Here are three reasons why humans often pursue idolatry rather than worship the one true God: **Idolatry is everywhere, idolatry is easy, and idolatry is explainable.**

**Sin as Idolatry:** Sin is not only a ________________ of rebellion against God, but it is also a matter of the _______________. In Scripture, idolatry usually refers to bowing down to a statue made of wood or gold. But idolatry can take on more subtle forms: a seeking of approval, security, power, pleasure, etc.

In a conscious act of the will, the Israelites chose to turn from God to idols. But there was more to it than that. These Israelites did not know God as they should have. They didn’t know His character or what He had done. Their parents had failed to obey God and pass on His works and ways to the next generation. This was disastrous for their descendants, but their children were still responsible for their own rebellion.

What are some excuses people use to justify their idolatry and to live outside of God's will?
Point 2: God’s people are punished and given over to their enemies (Judg. 2:14-15).

14 The Lord’s anger burned against Israel, and he handed them over to marauders who raided them. He sold them to the enemies around them, and they could no longer resist their enemies. 15 Whenever the Israelites went out, the Lord was against them and brought disaster on them, just as he had promised and sworn to them. So they suffered greatly.

God does not ignore sin indefinitely. Though the Lord declared that He is slow to anger (Ex. 34:6), there are times when His anger against sin will lead to discipline. To be clear, discipline and love are not enemies needing to be reconciled; they are friends working in unison for God’s glory and our good. It was not unloving for God to send enemies to prevail against His children; it was a corrective act of love, not a punitive act of spite. Not correcting His children and allowing them to continue on in their idolatry would have been unloving.

How do you tend to respond God’s discipline in your life?

Open resistance  Indifference  Submissive humility

Disobedience caused the Israelites to fall from “No one will be able to stand against you” to “They could no longer resist their enemies” (Judg. 2:14). We might be tempted to say of the Israelites, “What were they thinking?” God had identified their secret weapon: Himself. He had warned them of the results of their disobedience and idolatry. Yet they chose other gods. We can’t fathom their cluelessness until we look more closely at our own lives, at our own struggle with unbelief and hypocrisy.

How does discipline work to correct and train God’s people?
Point 3: God’s people are saved through God’s chosen leader (Judg. 2:16-19).

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

When we read through the Book of Judges, we see Israel’s repeated rebellion. If we were God, we would have walked away from them and left them in their sin and its consequences, not been moved to pity for their suffering. But God is not like us. God desires for His people to enjoy a relationship with Him. Unlike us, God is ever faithful.

How do God’s attributes help to explain both His punishment of sin and His mercy and grace for rebellious sinners?

Mercifully, God raised up judges to rescue His people from the hands of their enemies and to bring them back to obedience, but their rescue was always short-lived. The people would obey God while the judge who had delivered them was living, but once that judge died, the people once again did not listen and returned to their rebellion. More than laziness or lukewarm faith, the Israelites at the time of the judges pursued idolatry. And still God showed grace and mercy, just as He does with us, but we have a better Judge.

What will it mean for God’s people to listen to His Word?
My Mission

Because we have been forgiven of our rebellion through Christ, we identify and resist the prevailing idolatries in our society so that our distinctiveness will back up our proclamation of the gospel.

- How will you respond to the sin and idolatry found in your own life?
- What are some ways your group can hold one another accountable to listen to God’s Word and obey in gratitude for your salvation?
- Where do you see idolatry in our culture today? What can you do to address these idols and show that Jesus is better?

Notes
Daily Study

Day 1: Read Judges 1:1-36

The Book of Judges starts out strong. Joshua had died, but the tribes were to continue the work of driving out their enemies. The Lord sent the tribe of Judah to battle, and He handed the Canaanites over to them; they achieved almost total victory. But then things began to unravel. The tribe of Benjamin failed to remove the Jebusites from Jerusalem (v. 21). Then Manasseh failed, followed by Ephraim, Zebulun, Asher, and Naphtali (vv. 27-33). Finally, we read of the Amorites driving the Danites into the hills for a time (vv. 34-36). Where were the victorious people of God?

Things would not get any better. As the rest of the Book of Judges unfolds, we witness Israel’s slow fade from triumphant living to disobedient laziness. They had started so strong. The Israelites had sought the Lord’s direction and obeyed Him, and because of this, they were triumphant over their enemies and they conquered the land. But it takes continuing faith and obedience, not one-time faith and obedience to live out God’s plan. Faith and obedience were not necessary just to enter the land and conquer it; they were necessary to live in the land and defend it. But instead, we encounter multiple instances of disobedience in verses 21-36. Rather than believing and obeying, they decided to let their enemies remain in the land in complete disobedience to God. God’s people were resting from their faith in God rather than resting in their faith in God.

It’s tempting to wag our fingers at the Israelites, but we shouldn’t be so fast to do so. Instead, we should ask ourselves some challenging questions: Are we any different? How prone are we to rest in a single act of faith or obedience? How often do we obey halfway? How many times do we see victories in our lives give way to defeat, not because God has failed us but because our faith has faltered?

Voices from the Church

“God’s call to his people (then and now) is to combine spirituality with bravery. True discipleship is radical and risk-taking, because true disciples rely on God to keep his promises to bless them, and not on their own instincts, plans, or insurance policies.”

—Tim Keller

In what area of your life do you struggle to believe and obey?
Day 2: Read Judges 2:1-13

God knew the Israelites well; they were part of His creation and He had made them His people. He had delivered them from slavery and returned them to the land He had first given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He had guided them in the conquest of that land, going before them in battle as a warrior, and He had given them the victory.

Over and over again, God had made a very direct connection between Israel’s obedience and victory over their enemies. So it should have been no surprise that when the Israelites failed to do what He had called them to do—when they disobeyed—God did what He said He would do—His presence and power were removed and Israel was defeated by their enemies.

The faithfulness of God extends not only to His love and mercy but also to the consequences of sin. The God who is so faithful to provide is just as faithful to discipline. Israel should have known this, and we should too.

How have you experienced God's faithfulness in disciplining you for your disobedience?

Day 3: Read Judges 2:14-15

It’s captivating to watch a small fire burn. Whether at a campfire or a backyard hotdog roast, many of us enjoy sitting around watching the fire start, grow, and burn away.

Judges 2:14 opens with the words “The Lord’s anger burned against Israel” (CSB), but it can also be translated “the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel” (ESV) and “the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel” (KJV). God’s anger didn’t spring up overnight. Like a campfire, it started slowly and grew through time, in proportion to Israel’s growing sinfulness.

We’ll never be sinless in this life, but we can and need to be aware of our sin so we can deal with it early. In Christ, our sin is forgiven, but it is not without consequence, not without discipline from God. When we ask the Lord to show us our sin, He will so we can know of our sin, repent of our sin, and bask in God’s grace and forgiveness that have quenched its flames.

When was the last time you invited God to reveal sin in your life? Will you do that right now?
Day 4: Read Judges 2:16-23

There are words in Scripture that soothe and comfort us: “The LORD is my shepherd” (Ps. 23:1); “I am with you always” (Matt. 28:20); “You will find rest for your souls” (Matt. 11:29). Then there are words in Scripture that provoke and unsettle us. Judges 2:17 tells us that God’s chosen people “did not listen to their judges.” The reason these words should disturb us and drive us to reflection is because they follow this statement: “The LORD raised up judges” (Judg. 2:16). Israel refused to listen to the very ones God had sent to rescue them. They spurned God’s good gift.

Whom has God put in your life to speak truth to you? The obvious answers include pastors, mentors, and teachers. Sometimes, though, God speaks to us in a worship song, a morning devotional, a stranger, or even a child. God is still raising up people in our lives, but will we listen?

What might God be telling you through the people He has raised up and put in your life?

Day 5: Read Judges 3:1-31

Sometimes when we are in the midst of a trial, we pray for God to show us what we need to do to make it stop. What will bring the struggle to an end? But sometimes God’s answer is we can do nothing to end a trial; we will have to continue enduring it. Why is that?

Consider the words in Judges 3:1-2: “These are the nations the LORD left in order to test all those in Israel who had experienced none of the wars in Canaan. This was to teach the future generations of the Israelites how to fight in battle, especially those who had not fought before.”

The best person to minister to the wounded is someone who has been wounded. So when you experience intense pain, fear of the future, anxiety, sleepless nights, or other trials, ask God to help you grow in what you’re going through. Why? So that you will be ready to speak truth and empathy into another life when you find yourself safely on the other side, or even before.

Who has helped you through a struggle because they could relate with you? How can you help someone because of what you have faced or are facing?
Encourage One Another

Join together with 2-4 people from your group, or with your family, sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and you are responding.

Share your thoughts and reflections on the truths from Scripture in this session:

- God’s people rebel against God by abandoning Him (Judg. 2:8-13).
- God’s people are punished and given over to their enemies (Judg. 2:14-15).
- God’s people are saved through God’s chosen leader (Judg. 2:16-19).

How have you responded to these truths from Scripture?

Why should reading about the tendency of God’s people to fall into rebellious behavior motivate us to encourage one another and hold ourselves accountable to fellow believers?

What are some consequences of sin that burden your heart for those who live in rebellion against God? Pray for boldness and words to share the good news of Jesus with the rebels and enemies of God in the world.

Notes
UNIT 7

SESSION 1
1. Tony Evans, Tony Evans’ Book of Illustrations (Chicago, IL: Moody, 2009) [eBook].

SESSION 2

SESSION 3

SESSION 4
1. Amy Carmichael, Thou Givest … They Gather (Fort Washington, PA: CLC Publications, 1958) [eBook].

UNIT 8

SESSION 1
1. Noël Piper, Treasuring God in our Traditions (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 64.

SESSION 2

SESSION 3
1. Betsie ten Boom, quoted in The Hiding Place, by Corrie ten Boom with Elizabeth and John Sherrill (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2006), 84.

EASTER SESSION

UNIT 9

SESSION 1
1. Andrew Murray, Abide in Christ, in The Essential Works of Andrew Murray, ed. Tracy M. Sumner (Barbour, 2008) [eBook].

SESSION 2

SESSION 3

SESSION 4

SESSION 5
A Word from the Editor

Trevin Wax
General Editor—The Gospel Project
Author of multiple books, including This Is Our Time: Everyday Myths in Light of the Gospel

In these sessions of The Gospel Project, we experience some of the most exciting narratives in Scripture. There are accounts here of sin and judgment, of moral decline and merciful intervention, and of rescuers who need rescue. Through it all, one thing is clear: God is with His people and He is faithful to His promise.

It’s important to keep that central theme in mind because many people read these stories about the conquest of the land and try to find examples for emulation. To be clear, we can learn a lot from these Old Testament heroes (see 1 Cor. 10), but we cannot implement their virtues apart from our connection to the Vine—Jesus Christ Himself, the One who bears fruit in us and through us.

As we walk through our present wilderness, struggling against sin and encountering sorrow, we know that the God who has gone before us is faithful. He is the One who prepares the way for us to be His ambassadors. He is the One who breaks the chains of our idolatry and lifts our gaze to His unchanging glory.