

Judges & Ruth

God's *Faithfulness* Remains

women's | BIBLE STUDY

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LESSON *Thirteen*

Rock Bottom

As we read these chapters, the depth of Israel’s sin is unsettling: lack of godly leadership, terrifying treatment of God’s people, and sin that spreads like cancer. Their actions, both individual and as a nation, became unthinkable; even horrifying. An innocent woman was abused to the point of death at the hands of men from the tribe of Benjamin. God, seeing the sin of His people, passed judgment on Benjamin through a civil war. No longer permitted to continue as they had been: Benjamin was effectively wiped out.

WARNING:

The passages you are about to read contain extremely difficult content. The events you are going to learn about may make you wonder, “Where is God?” But remember, God does not let sin go unpunished. He is just and will judge sin. He is also the justifier and offers grace to those who turn to Him in faith. His faithfulness remains, even when we are faithless.

GENESIS 19

Read Genesis 19 to see the many similarities between Gibeah and the sin-filled city of Sodom. However, in this case the “wicked men” were from one of Israel’s tribes.

CONCUBINE

In the Bible, a concubine was “a wife of lower status (usually a slave) than a primary wife.” They had no authority but were granted a sort of protection by the man with whom they were in a relationship.⁷⁴

DOWNWARD SPIRAL

Remember, Judges is characterized by a downward spiral. Israel’s decline has been steady throughout the book. One way we see Israel’s sin corrupt their nation is through their increasingly poor treatment of women. Think about how Israel treated Deborah in Judges 4 compared to the concubine in this passage. They have certainly fallen a long way.

Read Judges 19-20 before answering the following questions.

1. Write down your gut reactions and emotions after reading this passage. What questions do you have?
2. Looking over the entire passage, it is easy to see the depth of Israel’s sin. Where do you see God at work? How does this passage relate to our culture today? (See Appendix: Sin.)

Read Judges 19:1-21.

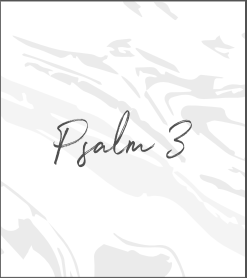
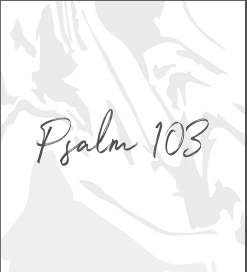
3. Describe the Levite’s relationship with the concubine in verses 1-9. What happened upon the Levite’s arrival?

4. Their journey back home began in verse 10. Why didn't the Levite want to spend the night with the Jebusites? How then did they proceed?

Read Judges 19:22-30.

As you study the Bible, you always want to compare the passage being studied to the whole story of Scripture. Through the following questions, you will see some horrific events in Judges. Then you will zoom out to be reminded of the overarching character of God despite the depth of humanity's sin.

5. Verse 22 set the scene of the terrible events that unfolded. Describe the circumstances:
6. Slowly read through the following Psalms, writing down the character qualities of God as you go:

PSALM	GOD'S CHARACTER
 <p><i>Psalm 3</i></p>	
 <p><i>Psalm 103</i></p>	

Considering what you have learned, how do you think God felt about the harm done to the concubine? (See Appendix: Problem of Evil.)

GIBEAH

The town of Gibeah is a couple of miles north of Jerusalem in the allotment of the tribe of Benjamin.

HOSPITALITY

The Levite was not invited into a home. Rather, he was left in the city square. The lack of hospitality was a warning sign that things were not as God intended in this town.⁷⁵

THE LEVITE'S CHARACTER

The Levite's true character showed in verse 28. He told a woman in a crumpled, broken heap on the ground to "get up." He not only was a coward who gave up his wife rather than himself, but sadly he lacked even basic compassion.

ABANDONMENT

Though you might feel abandoned at times, if you have trusted in Christ then God will never leave or forsake you. He will never let you go. Romans 8:38-39 says, "For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

If you have been a victim of abuse, know you are not alone, and God loves you.

This story highlights the depth of depravity humanity can sink to apart from God. Just because this story is in the Bible in no way means that God condones abuse. God intends for His people to learn from this horrible example in Israel's story. God is not okay with what happened to you. He hurts when you hurt and is grieved by your pain. He desires deeply to comfort you and help you heal. For resources on recovering from abuse, please visit regenerationrecovery.org and type "Sexual Abuse" in the search bar.

A WORLD WITHOUT GOD

"This story is meant to disturb, to jar God's people, by showing them a world without God."⁷⁶

JUDGES 20:1

Notice that verse 1 is the first mention of God in this lesson's text. Israel assembled "to the Lord."

"WICKED MEN"

Instead of bringing the "wicked men" to justice for their treatment of the concubine, Benjamin's tolerance of their own tribe's "wicked men" lead to civil war. This illustrated the depth of sin they had reached.

7. Have you ever been in a situation where you felt like God was not present, protecting you, or had your best in mind? Explain.

How can you fight to believe in God's good character in the midst of these tough circumstances?

8. Who was to blame for the concubine's abuse and murder? Why is it easy to blame God in times like this?

Read Judges 20.

9. What kind of response did the events in chapter 19 elicit from Israel? Who ended up fighting and why?
10. Trace the actions of the Lord in this chapter. Where do you see God and Israel interact?

Remember, while Jesus paid for sin on the cross, we still live in a world with hurt, pain, and destruction awaiting His ultimate return. When Jesus comes back, sin will be judged and eradicated once and for all. God's ability to judge sin is in a league of its own—much stronger than our attempts at vengeance could ever be.

One day, everything will be made right.
Read Romans 12:19 and 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10.

11. It is easy at this point to be overwhelmed by Israel's sin. Do you ever feel overwhelmed by our nation's sin? What about your sin? Explain. Where do you turn in these moments?
12. These two chapters describe some of the ugliest events in all of Scripture. The sin, destruction, and death are overwhelming. Read the following verses which explain what Jesus has done about sin for those who believe, underlining anything that stands out to you.

“Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

“For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.” 2 Corinthians 5:21

“And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved...” Ephesians 2:1-5

“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil...” Hebrews 2:14

“For Christ also suffered once for sin, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit....” 1 Peter 3:18

“And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.” 1 Peter 5:10

Jesus conquered sin and death on the cross. In this, God's faithfulness remains. How does this give you hope in a broken, painful world?

Turn the page to read a story of God's faithfulness through great hardship in the life of a Watermark member.

GOD FIGHTING

At the beginning of the book of Judges, God was fighting alongside Israel to defeat their foreign enemies. In this chapter, God was fighting against His own people.

REMEMBER

“The root of our disobedience is essentially failing to remember who [God] is. And the reverse is true—for as long as we remember who He is, we will serve Him wholeheartedly, radically, and joyfully.”⁷⁷

ISAIAH 61

To better understand who Jesus is and what He came to do, read Isaiah 61:1-3. Verse 3 says He came to “grant those who mourn in Zion—to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they might be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.”

The Lord has Redeemed Me

LANEY TATE

I am standing at a fence near the track and he gives me a long, lingering hug. A few weeks later, next to the same fence, he kisses me. Eventually, he asks me to come to his apartment, telling me to change out of my school uniform. He talks me into taking a nap. He tells me to come to his apartment during study hall. He answers the door in a robe. He always answered the door in a robe.

I remember that the song “I Will Always Love You”, was playing the first time he talked me into having sex. I was a virgin. I was 17 years old. He was my coach and I trusted him.

What I didn't know was that he was grooming me, buying me gifts and giving me special attention. He said he loved me and wanted to marry me. He told me I would get in trouble if people knew. I didn't know or fully understand then that I was being sexually abused by my high school track coach. I didn't know I would struggle with triggers of guilt and shame for years. I didn't know he abused his position of trust and authority over me. I didn't know the chain of events his abuse would cause in my life: I coped with my pain for over a decade with copious amounts of alcohol and promiscuity. I didn't know then I would struggle with major trust issues and open rebellion against God.

Years later, I learned he was arrested for abusing other teenage girls. Having no one I could trust with my secret (I had never told anyone, a common occurrence with abuse victims), I prayed the serenity prayer and understood God could help. “Lord, if you are out there in a way that I do not yet know you, you've got to reveal yourself to me and give me the courage to testify against my coach at trial.” God did just that. I testified in court and my coach was found guilty and convicted. It was then that I saw my need for God every day. Even so, I continued to cover my pain with drinking and promiscuity for two more years. Eventually, I recognized I was just as much a sinner as the convicted pedophile, and I surrendered my whole life to Christ. I completed a Christ-centered program to find freedom and healing from the pain of sexual abuse. In that journey, I went back to my coach and told him his abuse had grave consequences in my life. Even still, I chose to forgive him because Christ had forgiven me. I told him God longed to forgive him of all of his sins, if he would simply trust in Jesus. Jesus loves even the most despicable of persons, including him.

In place of eternal death, Christ gave us eternal life.

In place of parties and promiscuity, Christ gave us purity.

In place of fear of man, Christ gave us trust in Him.

In place of singleness, Christ taught me to trust a man for good in my life instead of harm.

In place of silence, Christ directed me to testify in court trials as a tool of His justice.

In place of victimization, Christ used me to fight for abused women.

In place of shame and feeling like a whore, Christ gave me the security of knowing my identity is firmly rooted in being a daughter of the King.

In place of deep hurt, Christ infused me with joy so I could point others to find hope and healing in Him.

My greatest pain, Christ used for His glory and my greatest ministry.

And the rest of the story? More than 10 years after first praying for my coach to believe in Christ, I walked into church and saw him sitting in the lobby. After much personal despair, he had recognized his need for a Savior and had chosen to believe what I had told him was true.

God is never finished accomplishing His purposes, even when it may feel like He is slow to answer. After years of living a life apart from Christ, the Lord continued to convict me of my need for Him. Now, He continues to remind me that all attempts at coping with life apart from Him lead to death. Christ's mercies are new every morning as He longs for me to live in a right relationship with Him. And that humbles me. The Lord has redeemed me, and He has redeemed the man who abused me, and He wants to redeem you, too. Will you let Him?

Do not forget to write out your Big Idea on the following page.



BIG IDEA

What is your biggest takeaway from this week's lesson?

Notes