

**An interactive study experience
through the book of Judges**



Imagine the scene: it's the championship game; the game is tied and the coach has the team gathered at half time. Each player leans forward on his wooden bench in the locker room. The coach begins to talk: "alright team, this is our game. Now listen, I want you to go out there and give about 50%. Look, you guys have other things to do tonight, don't leave it all on the field – you've gotta save some for yourself! The other team will be giving their all – won't they feel silly when we surprise them with a half-hearted effort? Alright – now go out there and try a little."

Ridiculous, right? That coach wouldn't last long in any sport. Going half way in anything is not inspiring and not what any of us ever wants to do. Yet the reality is that's where many of us live – "half way". No one sets out to do it; no one plans to do it – yet it's where many of us end up. The people of Israel in the Old Testament set out on their quest for the promised land with a God who empowered them. Yet when it came to going "all-in" with God's plan, they didn't complete it and it led to some pretty scary outcomes. There is much we can learn from God's people. Unfortunately we end up seeing some of ourselves in their partial obedience and outright disobedience. But what if things could be different today? What if we could learn the lessons and respond to God? What if we could discover a full life? Jesus said, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." Jesus came to bring us a "full" life – will we follow? Will we accept the invitation and go "all-in" with Jesus?

The fact that you are reading this devotional is a great indicator of your desire to grow. In these pages, you'll be invited to explore these powerful stories from the book of Judges, to think more deeply about each one, and to see a God who faithfully keeps His promises even with a people who run from Him. You'll see some of yourself and you'll learn from the experiences of others how you can avoid some of the same pitfalls of the Israelites.

Pastor Jason



Using This Devotional Journal

Please read the designated passage in preparation for the Sunday message – the dates listed are the week prior to Sunday’s message. Although we’ve divided each section into three days, this is only a tool to be used in the way that works best for you – do it all in one day or spread it out over three. Always begin your study time with prayer, perhaps following the Psalmist’s example: *“Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.”* (Psalm 119:18) And we suggest that you read each week’s passage each time you do the study.

Overview Of Judges

During the time between the death of Joshua and the rise of Samuel, the prophet who anointed the first King of Israel (approximately 300 years), 12 judges (military leaders) ruled the people. Throughout this time the people continued in a downward spiral both spiritually and morally. As a nation they turned their back on God and embraced the foreign gods and lifestyle of the Canaanites. God remained faithful and responded to his people each time they cried out to him. With each judge the people experienced temporary rest and blessing, and then they slowly faded into apostasy and disobedience that left their land in turmoil, chaos, and ungodly living. In fact, the biggest challenges they faced were not the chariots and mighty armies of the Canaanites, but the attractiveness of their unholy, me-first religion and lifestyle. The people eventually begged God for a king to lead them, but it’s God himself who desires to be their King and ours.

June 12-18

Introduction



Day 1: Read Judges 1:1-3:11

1. What did God command the Israelites to do as they moved into the Promised Land? (*Numbers 33:50-56, Deuteronomy 7:1-9*)
2. Read Judges 1 and note Israel's response to God's command:
3. Why do you think God would include this book in our Bibles? What purpose could He have for us who read it today?

Day 2: Read Judges 1:1-3:11

1. According to Judges 2:1-10, what were some factors that led up to the commentary that “the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals” (verse 11)?

2. How does our connection/ relationship with God impact our obedience?



Day 2 continued

3. What is one area in your own life that you need to repent of partial obedience (which is really disobedience)? How have you been living “halfway” with God?

4. What keeps you from fully following God? What could be your next steps towards full obedience?



Day 3: Read Judges 1:1-3:11

1. Why did the next generation not know God?
2. What steps will you take to pass your faith on to the next generation? (Psalm 78:1-8)
3. How do we see God's mercy and faithfulness in Judges 2:16-23?
4. Re-read Judges 1:1 – 3:11.
How can you take one step towards safeguarding your own life against drifting away from God, compromising with the culture around you, and serving "other gods?"

June 19-25:
Ehud



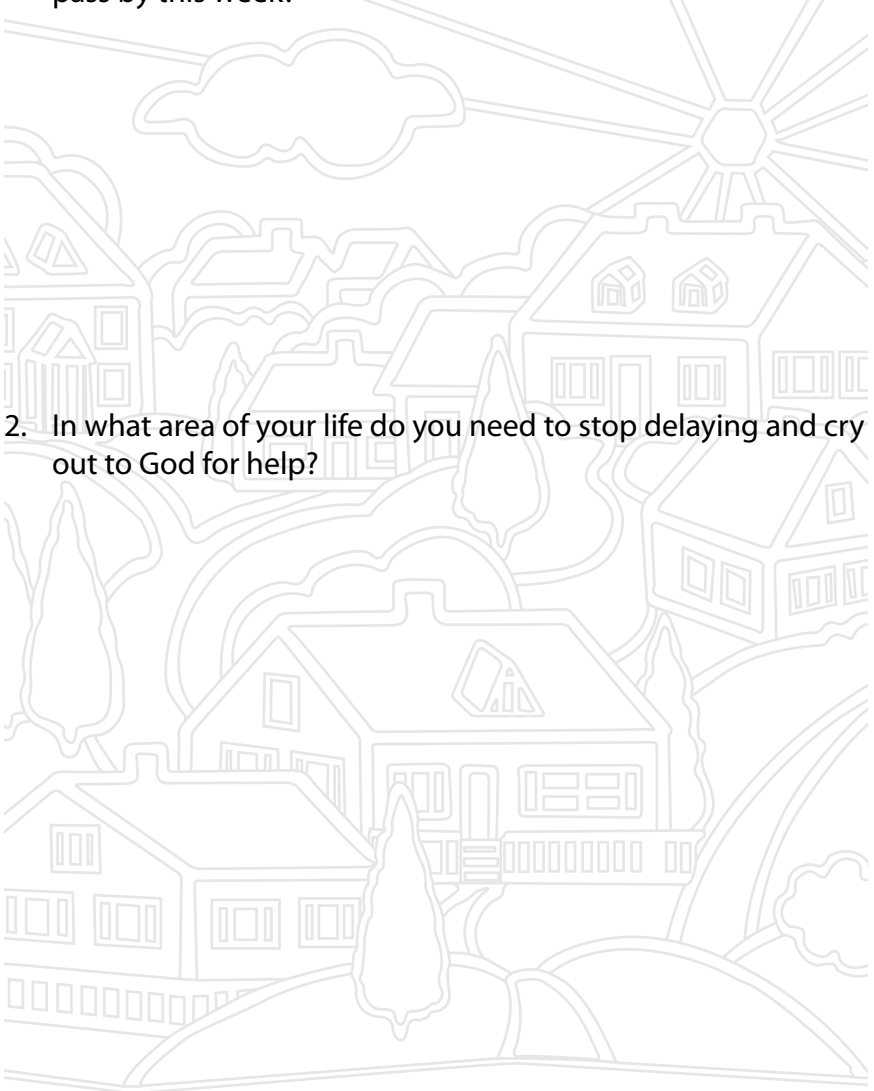
Day 1: Read Judges 3:12 -31

1. How long did Israel serve their enemies before crying out to God for help?
2. How did Ehud become the leader of Israel?
3. Why do you think it's significant that the Bible records that Ehud was a left-handed man (which was seen as a handicap in ancient Israel)?
4. What perceived "weakness" of yours could be used for God's mission?

Day 2: Read Judges 3:12 -31

1. Judges 3:26 says that Ehud “passed by the idols and escaped” back to his people. What “idols” in your life do you need to pass by this week?

2. In what area of your life do you need to stop delaying and cry out to God for help?



Day 3: Read Judges 3:12 -31

1. Read Judges 3:30 & 4:1 There were 80 years of “rest” and after Ehud died they returned to evil. What often happens when things are fine and we “rest” spiritually?
2. Could the presence of Ehud have kept them from evil? Could you be depending too much on another person or leader and not taking your own steps of growth?
3. Think about your spiritual life right now. Are you in a battle? Are you in a time of rest/ comfort? Are you being stretched? Based on where you are – reflect on what is most needed right now: trust in God? Action/ next step? Faith step? Worship/ thanks? Write down what commitment you’re making to respond.



June 26 - July 2
Barak/Deborah

Day 1: Read Judges 4:1 - 5:31

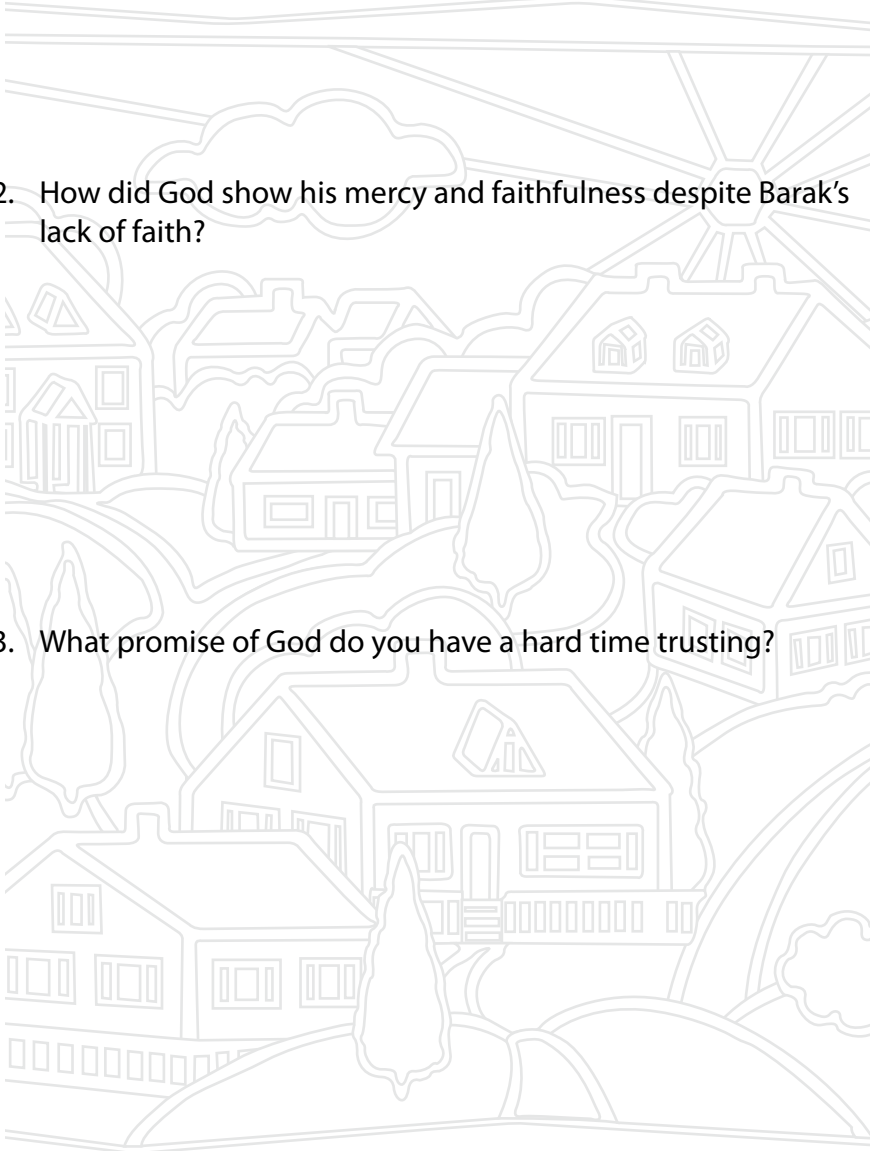
1. How long did it take the Israelites to cry out to God for help?
2. Why did they cry out to him?
3. What did not cause them to cry out to God, but should have? How were they living a "half way" faith?
4. Spend some time in prayer this week seeking God for the things that are on his heart rather than your own.

Day 2: Read Judges 4:1 - 5:31

1. Is Judges 4:6-7 a command or a promise?

2. How did God show his mercy and faithfulness despite Barak's lack of faith?

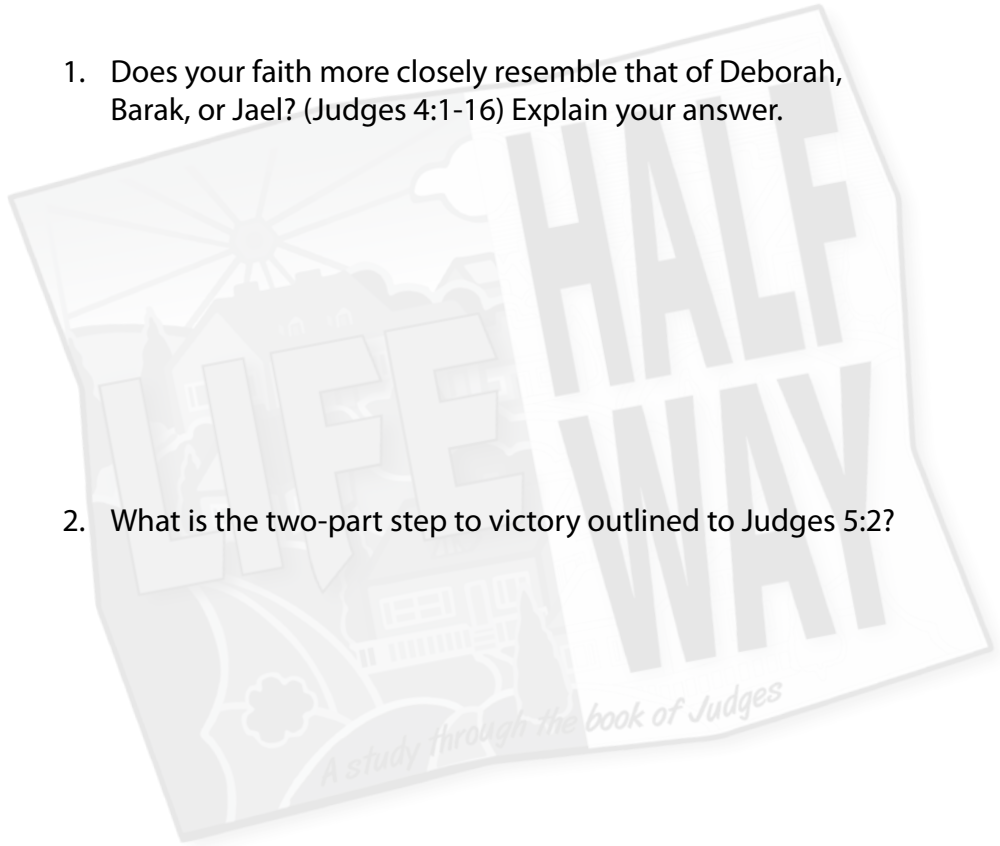
3. What promise of God do you have a hard time trusting?



Day 3: Read Judges 4:1 - 5:31

1. Does your faith more closely resemble that of Deborah, Barak, or Jael? (Judges 4:1-16) Explain your answer.

2. What is the two-part step to victory outlined to Judges 5:2?



Day 3 continued

3. The phrase “the people offered themselves willingly” comes from the same root word as “freewill offering.” When have you been so excited about what God is doing that you’ve wanted to offer your time, talents, or treasures above and beyond what you normally do or what you perceived was expected?
4. Are you willing to step forward or are you waiting for something to happen first? If you fully trusted God, what step would you take right now?



July 3-9
Gideon

Day 1: Read Judges 6:1 - 8:35

1. What caused the people to call out to God for help in Judges 6:1-10?
2. How did Gideon become the leader of Israel?
3. When have you been able to identify with Gideon's question in Judges 6:13?

Day 2: Read Judges 6:1 - 8:35

1. In what ways does Gideon demonstrate that his faith is weak?
(Judges 6:15-27 & 36-40)

2. How did God strengthen Gideon's faith? (Judges 6:16; 7:1-18)

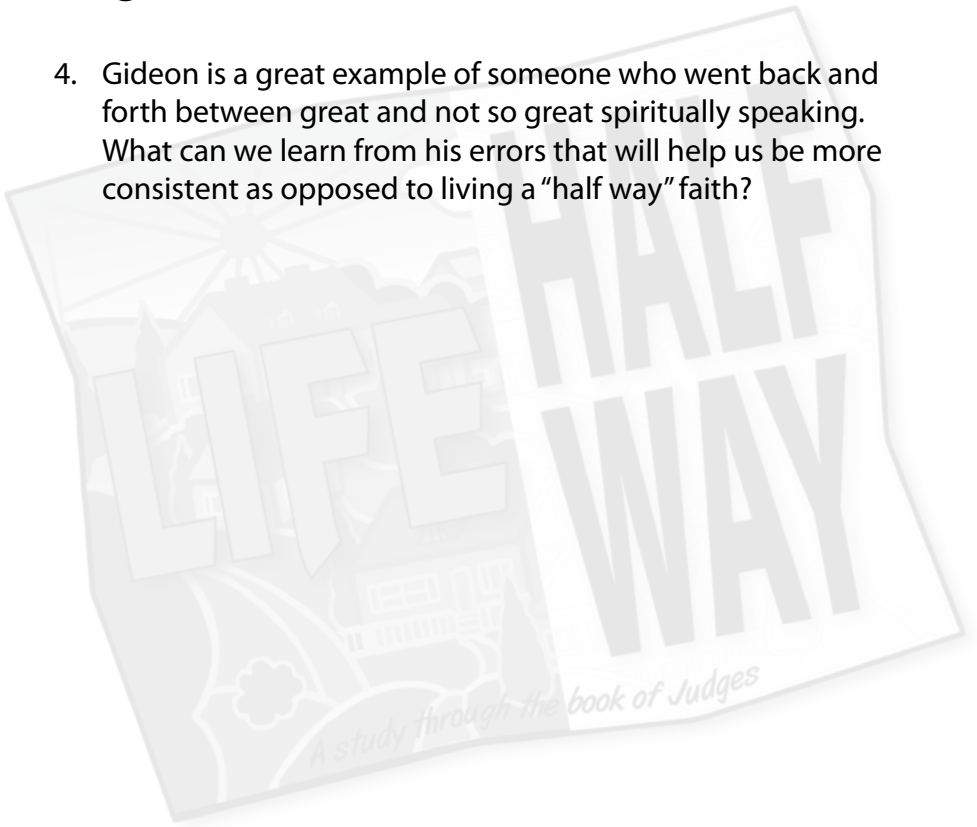
3. What tools do you need to take advantage of for your faith to grow during the next year? (Catalyst, Small Group, Serving in a Ministry Area, Extend Grace Day, Short Term Mission Trip.)
What will you do to ensure you take that step?

Day 3: Read Judges 6:1 - 8:35

1. What were some factors that led to Gideon and Israel drifting away from God? (Judges 8:22-35)
2. How did Gideon let a religious activity become a snare to his relationship with God?
3. What's one step you need to take to not drift away from a personal and genuine relationship with God?

Day 3 continued

4. Gideon is a great example of someone who went back and forth between great and not so great spiritually speaking. What can we learn from his errors that will help us be more consistent as opposed to living a “half way” faith?





July 10-16
Abimelech

Day 1: Read Judges 9:1-57

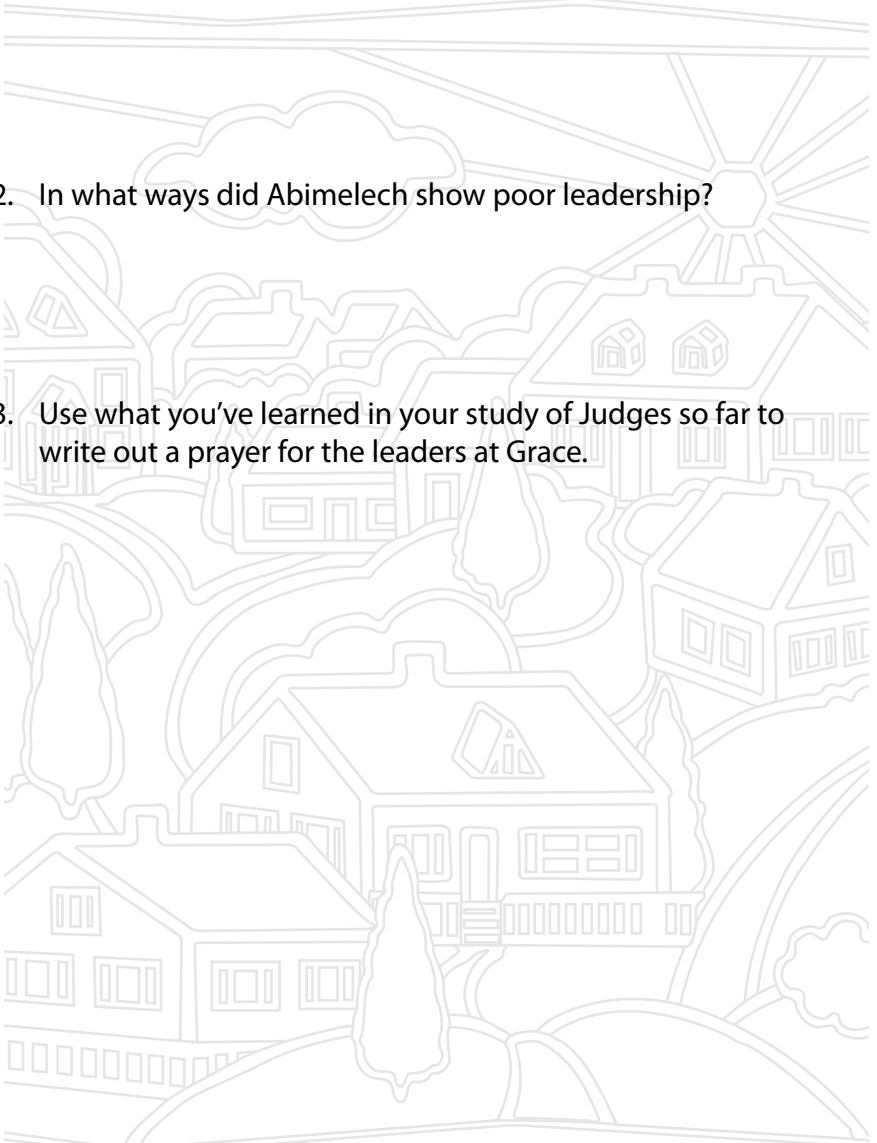
1. How long did the people stay faithful to God after Gideon's death? (8:33)
2. What were some signs or symptoms of spiritual decline during this time period?
3. Do you have a "Spiritual Running Partner" (see www.extendgrace.org/nextstep.html for more info) who will point out signs of decline in your own life? Have you given anyone "permission" to tell you when they see you declining? Have you asked for feedback?

Day 2: Read Judges 9:1-57

1. How did Abimelech become the leader of Israel?

2. In what ways did Abimelech show poor leadership?

3. Use what you've learned in your study of Judges so far to write out a prayer for the leaders at Grace.

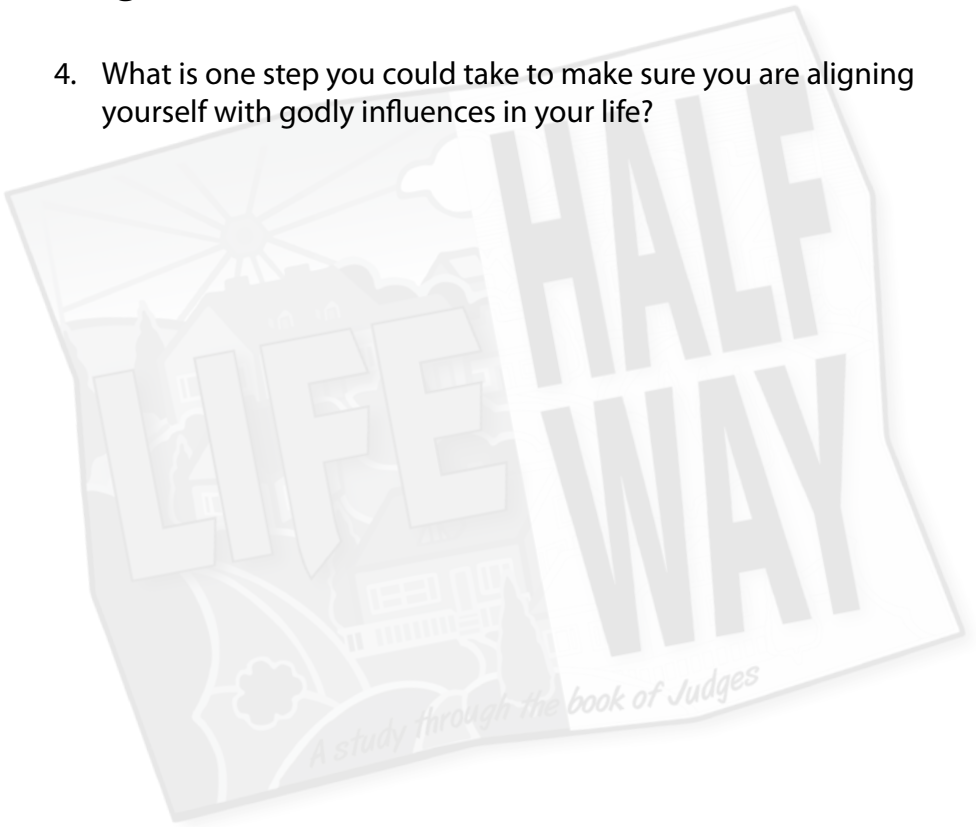


Day 3: Read Judges 9:1-57

1. What do we learn about God's character and heart in this passage?
2. Ask God to show you if there are any areas in your life where you are not acting "honorably and in good faith" (9:16-20, 56-57). Repent and make a plan to make necessary changes.
3. What leader are you really following? Who has true authority in your life? Are you following God half way or truly letting Him lead? How is God's leadership evident in specific areas of your life? (ie. habits, finances, relationships, time, identity, etc.)

Day 3 continued

4. What is one step you could take to make sure you are aligning yourself with godly influences in your life?





July 17-23
Jephtha

Day 1: Read Judges 10:6 - 12:7

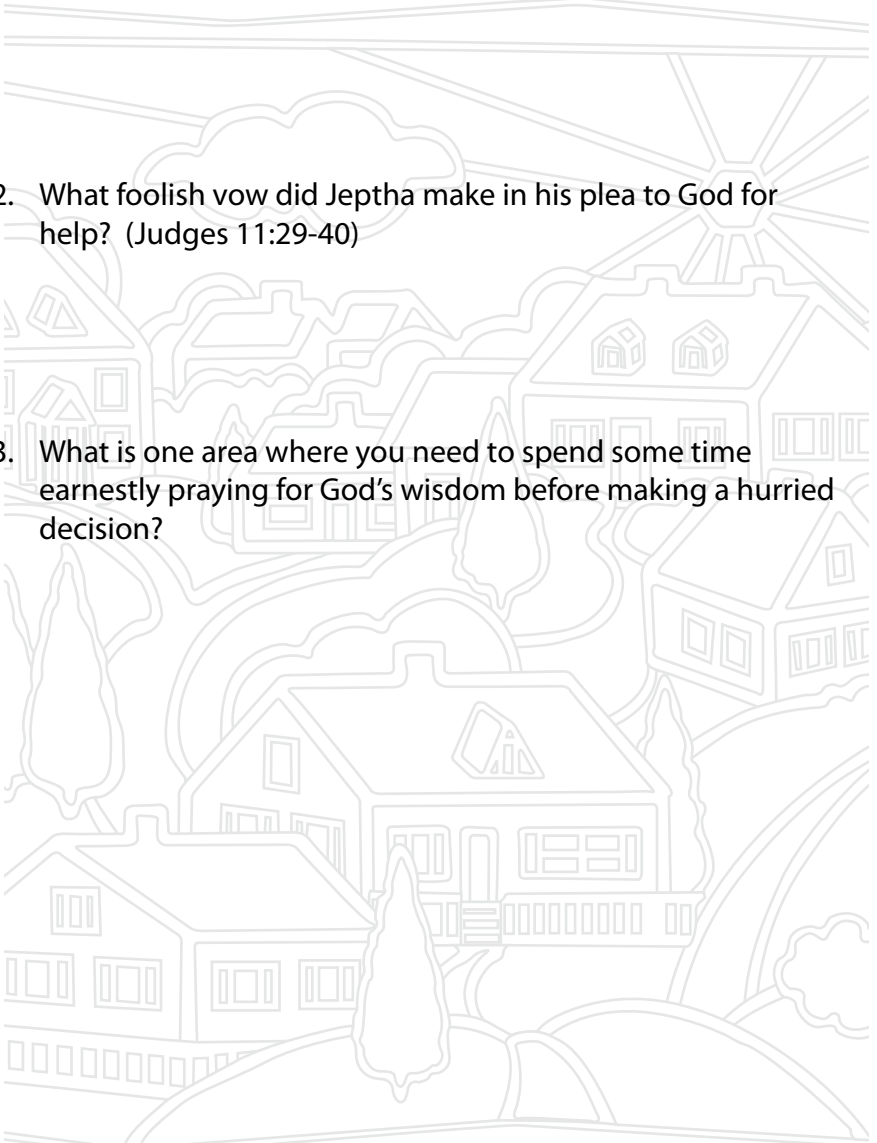
1. How long did it take the Israelites to call out to God for help? (Judges 10:6-10)
2. Why do you think God was not so quick to forgive the Israelites? (Judges 10:6-18)
3. Consider your own prayer life – when is it most active and energetic? What step will you take to avoid waiting until the next crisis to really spend time with God?

Day 2: Read Judges 10:6 - 12:7

1. How did Jephtha become the leader of Israel? (Judges 11:1-11)

2. What foolish vow did Jephtha make in his plea to God for help? (Judges 11:29-40)

3. What is one area where you need to spend some time earnestly praying for God's wisdom before making a hurried decision?



Day 3: Read Judges 10:6 - 12:7

1. We can be pretty sure that Jephtha's vow was not good news to his daughter. What was her attitude and how did she respond when she heard the news?
2. Are you currently suffering a negative consequence to someone else's decision? In what ways?
3. Do you need to repent of your own attitudes and actions? How could God get the glory in this situation? What is one step you can take to develop an others-focused and God-focused mind-set this week rather than putting your own needs and desires first?

July 24-30
Samson



Day 1: Read Judges 13:1 - 16:31

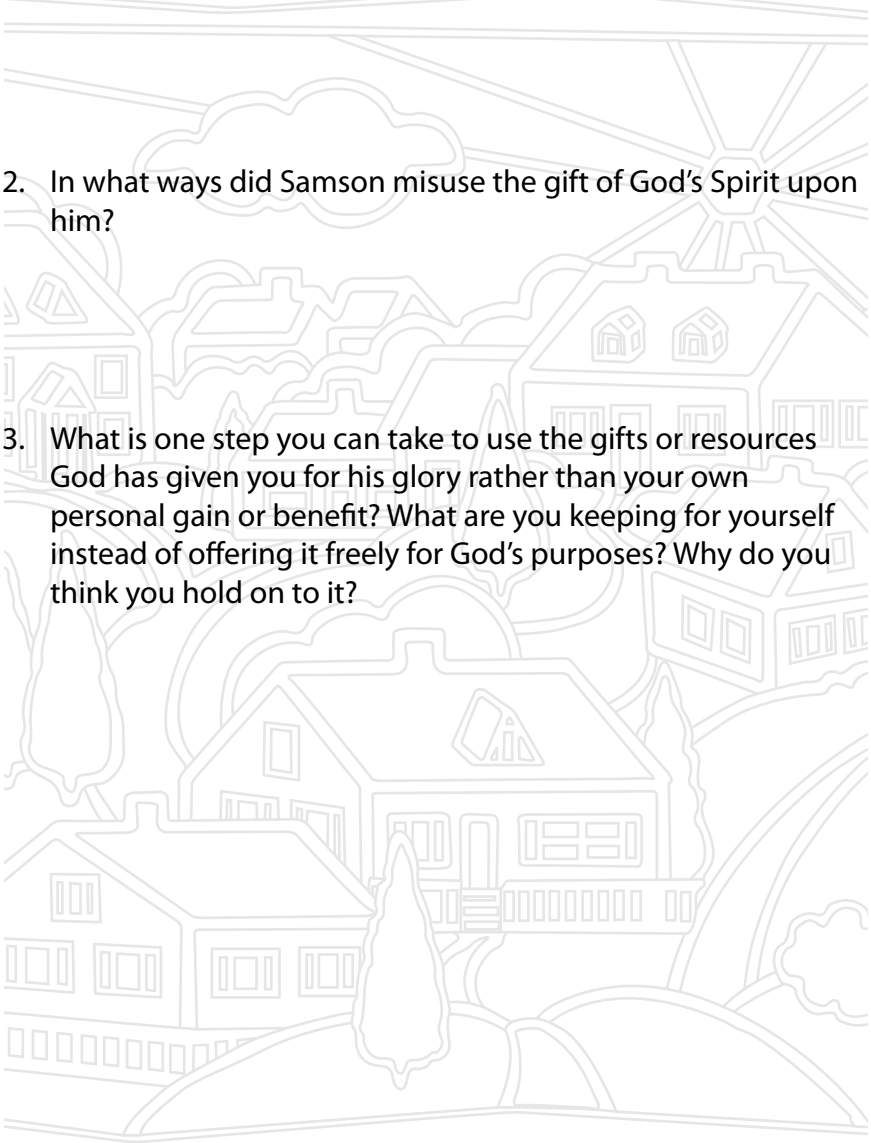
1. How long did the Israelites do evil in God's sight this time? (Judges 13:1)
2. What did Samson's father pray for when he learned he was expecting a son?
3. How will you prepare your children, grandchildren, or people you are mentoring to be set apart for God's service?
4. In what ways did Samson's parents not lead their child? How is the story of Samson's childhood/teenage years a commentary on our current culture? How can parents today avoid errors similar to those of Samson's parents?

Day 2: Read Judges 13:1 - 16:31

1. How did Samson become the leader of Israel?

2. In what ways did Samson misuse the gift of God's Spirit upon him?

3. What is one step you can take to use the gifts or resources God has given you for his glory rather than your own personal gain or benefit? What are you keeping for yourself instead of offering it freely for God's purposes? Why do you think you hold on to it?



Day 3: Read Judges 13:1 - 16:31

1. How do we see God's mercy and faithfulness in this passage?
2. Samson was clearly a person in process. What is one mistake that you've made that God could redeem and use for his glory if you'll surrender it to him?
3. As you rethink through these chapters about Samson – what might God want you to learn and take with you from this? There are probably 8-10 life lessons from the various aspects of these chapters – choose **one** that you think would be God's words for you today. Respond according to God's leading and direction.



July 31 - August 6 Religious Decline

Day 1: Read Judges 17:1 - 18:31

1. What examples of religious corruption do you see in this passage?
2. In what ways do the people give an appearance of spirituality?
3. Make a plan to get into authentic, biblical community (such as a small group or spiritual running partner) to align yourself with people who will speak truth into your life and keep you from simply going through the motions of spirituality.

Day 2: Read Judges 17:1 - 18:31

1. What was the reason that both Micah and the Danites wanted the Levite to live in their presence?

2. In what ways have you expected the church to serve your needs or desires?

3. What was the Levite's motivation for serving?

4. Are you serving in any ministry area with the wrong motivation? What should be your response? What can you do to correct or strengthen the right motives?

Day 3: Read Judges 17:1 - 18:31

1. Where do you need to have the courage to say “no” to an opportunity that is not God’s calling for you?
2. It’s easy to listen to leaders who tell you what you want to hear, but God calls spiritual leaders to speak his message of truth, even when it’s not popular. How will you help to preserve the teaching of truth at Grace?
3. As you rethink through these two chapters – how were their lives and decisions “half way” (or less) spiritually speaking? What might God be trying to say to you from these chapters? What should we do to respond to God’s Word to us?

August 7-13

Moral Decline



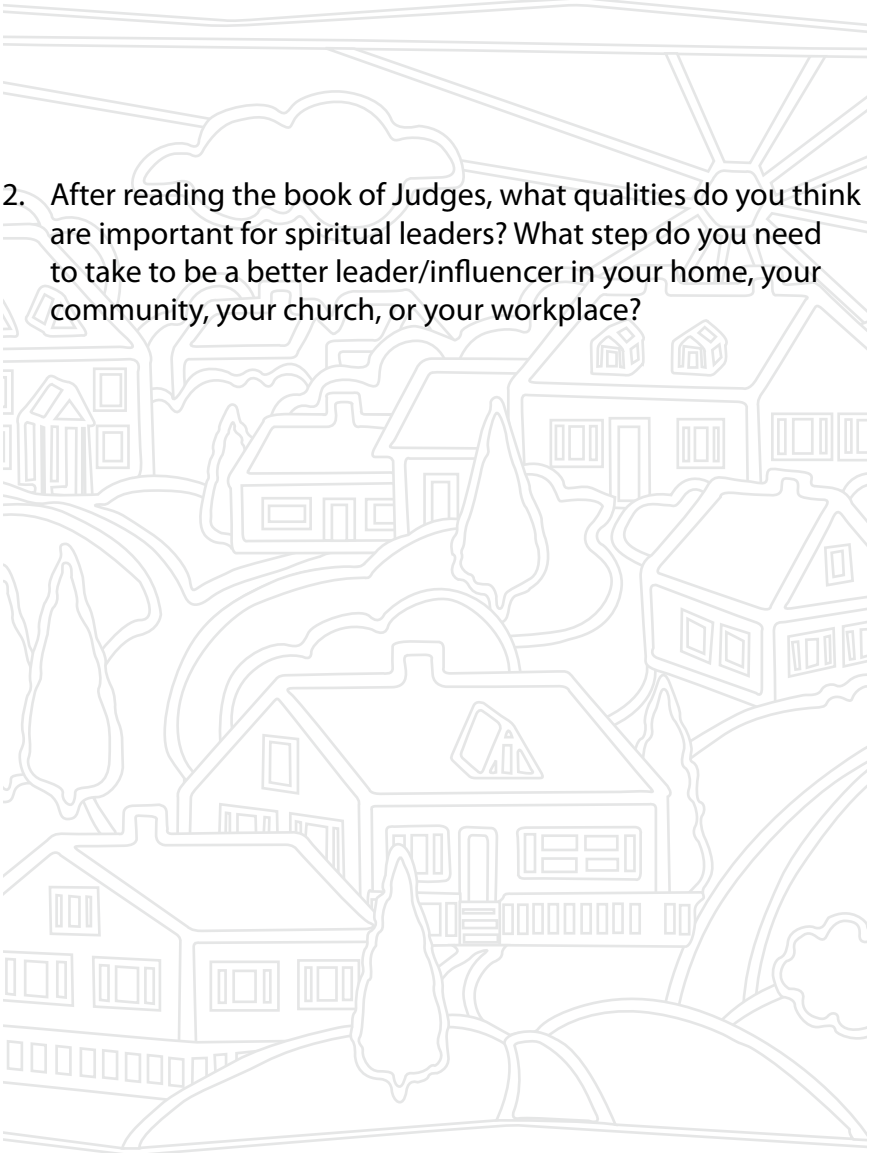
Day 1: Read Judges 19:1 - 21:25

1. What examples do you see of moral decline in this passage?
2. How was the whole nation of Israel impacted by Benjamin's refusal to purge their tribe of the evil ones?
3. What is one step you need to take to purge your life from evil? Read 2 Timothy 2:20-26. How do these verses add insight and application for this section of Judges?

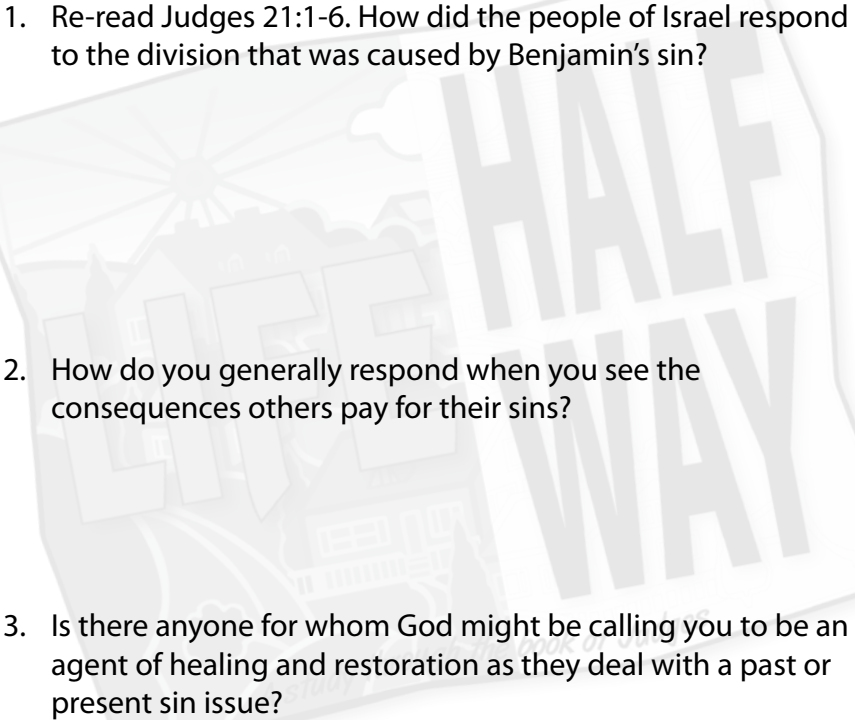
Day 2: Read Judges 19:1 - 21:25

1. How do we see God's mercy and faithfulness in this passage?

2. After reading the book of Judges, what qualities do you think are important for spiritual leaders? What step do you need to take to be a better leader/influencer in your home, your community, your church, or your workplace?



Day 3: Read Judges 19:1 - 21:25

1. Re-read Judges 21:1-6. How did the people of Israel respond to the division that was caused by Benjamin's sin?
 2. How do you generally respond when you see the consequences others pay for their sins?
 3. Is there anyone for whom God might be calling you to be an agent of healing and restoration as they deal with a past or present sin issue?
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August 14-20

Everyone Did What Was Right In His Own Eyes

Day 1: Read Judges 21:25 and Review

1. How would you summarize God's message to spiritual leaders from the book of Judges?
2. How will you specifically support, encourage, or pray for the leaders at Grace?
3. What steps can you take to grow in your own leadership and availability to influence others for God's purposes?

Day 2: Read Judges 21:25 and Review

1. How would you summarize God's message to the people from the book of Judges?

2. What step will you take along with others from our church to prevent us from becoming a place where "everyone does what is right in his own eyes?" How can you take a more active role in promoting the growth and holiness of others?

3. How can we show grace and grow as people in process? What kind of example are you being right now?

Day 3: Read Judges 21:25 and Review

1. Skim back through this devotional and all you've written over these weeks. Rerecord some of the most impactful thoughts you've had. What still needs to be worked on/ steps taken?

2. Judges is about a people living "life half way" with God. Partial obedience, while it may seem noble, is essentially disobedience. What could this year look like if you went "all-in" with God? Can you imagine living a life fully for God's glory and purposes?

Day 3 Continued

3. What could our church be like if we were all living a “full” (as opposed to half way) spiritual life?

- Where would we see it?
- What would our generosity look like?
- What would serving in our ministries look like?
- What would our influence to our community and neighbors look like?
- What would our relationships with one another look like?

Take a few minutes and try to put a sentence or two for each of these questions – dream a little, paint a picture of a church that is “all-in”:

4. Since our church is a collection of individuals, including you – read through the list and descriptions you just wrote – what steps will you take in the next 2-3 weeks to move towards making those pictures a reality in your own life?

Taking one step closer to loving Jesus and loving people...

In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes. —Judges 21:25

"Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. 15 And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

—Joshua 24:14-15



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