

## **ReGroups 7/14/24**

### **Choice and Consequences - Joshua 24/Judges 2**

Joshua is remembered for leading the children of Israel into the Promised Land. Moses passed the torch to him, and he faithfully and passionately served the Lord and his generation. By the end of the conquest period, Joshua was 110 years old. As he and the other elders were coming to the end of their lives, the stage was set for the next generation to step up and lead.

Our first text tonight will be Joshua's farewell address, wherein he challenges the nation to take full advantage of the opportunity in front of them. It would be so tragic for them to waste the time at hand and fall short of their potential. They had waited decades for this moment and their next steps would prove crucial for their future.

The Bible consistently puts this sort of ultimatum before us, where **what God has done for us** is underscored and **how we ought to respond** is stressed. To set the tone for the conversations we will have around Joshua and Judges, read **Luke 14:16-24** and **discuss** these intense words of Jesus.

**In what ways has God prepared an ideal life for all of us? Consider the obvious blessings *and* those that easily can go overlooked. What excuses do we make/have we made, forgoing the greater opportunities that God has offered us?**

Our goals tonight will be to highlight the choices we should make as believers and the consequences that are certain if we make the wrong ones.

#### **Make The Choice Today**

Read **Joshua 24:14-24** and **discuss** Joshua's plea and rationale for putting God first. Consider what Israel had witnessed during the Exodus and Wilderness periods. **Why would they have had any doubt or disbelief concerning the Lord?** It's true that we all have millions of reasons to trust the Lord, yet we *all* stray and drift in our devotion- and we really have no good excuse, **do we?**

What's profound and perplexing is that there were people who had been led through the wilderness by God, directly provided for out of miraculous circumstances who were *still* clinging to pagan gods from Egypt. Can you *even* imagine?

Old habits die hard, especially bad ones. *This* is why concentrated and dedicated devotion to God is so important. Our hearts *will* turn away. Our minds *will* wander. Unless we prioritize worshipping God alone and listening to Him above all other voices, we *will* entertain false gods and inferior influences.

Verse 14-15) Joshua is so emphatic and blunt because he knows the human heart and wants to make sure the people don't let this moment pass them by.

Joshua boldly asserts his decision and is unwavering in his commitment to serve the Lord. It is now up to the people to make their own decision and commitment. **We are not saved by someone else's faith.** We must respond to God personally and trust in Him with our own hearts. Our own lives must reflect a sacrificial relationship with God. We will be judged as *individuals*. The good works done by our leaders, pastors, or parents are *not* credited on our accounts.

Every single day, we must choose who/what we will serve with our lives. The Bible details the many ways in which we must pursue God's will and way- whether relationally, professionally, financially, etc.

There are countless verses that we can remember, which punctuate this truth. Read **Psalm 40:8, Proverbs 3:5-6, and Matthew 6:33. Are there any other verses that remind you of the importance of God's will and encourage you in your faithfulness?**

Verse 16-24) The people give a worthy response- insisting that they will put God first and seek Him above all else. However, Joshua rightly suspects that their profession is shallow and insincere. Similarly, Jesus exposed the hypocrisy of His generation in **Matthew 15:7-9. Why is it so easy to confess one thing but mean and practice the opposite?**

This reveals how much religion can deceive us and distance us from a genuine relationship with God. Religion will desensitize us from an authentic relationship with God, convincing us that salvation is detached from the personal and practical.

We cannot give into this false sense of security and must remember that salvation makes a real difference in our lives. Joshua tested the people and held their promises to the fire. Much like James did with his audience, Joshua is making it clear to his generation that salvation *works* - see **James 2:14-20**.

### **The Cycle Begins**

Read **Judges 2:6-10** and see what happens to the people of Israel after Joshua steps down. **What stands out to you? Knowing what Joshua said and how he warned them, is any of this surprising?**

Verse 10 is really the thesis of the entire book of Judges and sets up the many stories that follow chapter 2. Joshua's generation had lived out their days faithfully, but the next group had to exercise their own faith and obedience. As we know, they were not very faithful or obedient, which led to many avoidable hardships and burdens.

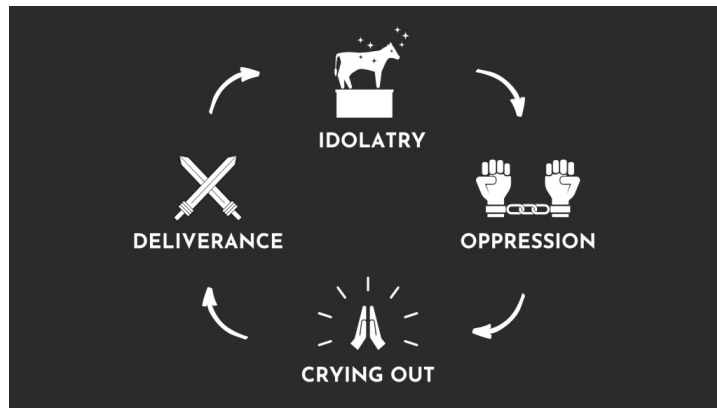
### **A Poor Exchange**

Read **Judges 2:11-15** and see what happens to Israel as they turn from the Lord. When we take faith out of the Lord, we inevitably and certainly place that faith in someone/thing else. There is a vacuum for trust in every one of our hearts. As creatures, we crave someone to place our weight on and rely on. If we don't serve the Lord, we will just serve another master. We simply trade one king for another. **Discuss** how our lives revolve around serving some master and/or agenda.

Nobody is a true and genuine atheist. We all worship somebody or something. If we follow the footprints our lives leave behind, our direction and devotion will be revealed. Just as with Israel, these masters do not bless us and care for us like God does. No, they take, drain, and plunder our lives and souls from what is good and pure.

### **The Judges Cycle**

**Judges 2:16-20** details the cycle that this generation would appear to be trapped in. **Read** and **share** your thoughts about the chart on the following page:



The gods that Israel served instead of the Lord were not merciful nor gracious. They were ruthless and sought to oppress and corrupt the people. Truly, they were not “gods” at all, but mere tools of the devil to destroy God’s people. The devil still uses idols, addictions, and worldly lifestyles to enslave and ensnare us all. If we turn our affections and attention in the wrong direction, we will fall under the same affliction as the Judges Generation did. **Share** your own experience resisting temptation and struggling with the world’s false hopes.

Proving His incredible kindness and goodness, God would always hear the cries of His people and respond with help. Even if the people’s repentance was not always genuine, God was forever reliable and true to His character.

**What are your thoughts about this Judges Cycle? How do you think it reflects the lifestyles and habits of people in our world? What can we do to avoid repeating these same mistakes?**