



God's faithfulness, people's unfaithfulness

Judges 2:10-19 – Leaders version

For a one hour study, just do the starred * questions

Check in – with the group sitting in a semi circle go round and ask everyone, including leaders, how they are and how they're feeling about studying the Bible today.

You need to explain some background to the group before you start:

Moses had led God's people out of Egypt, under God's command, and they had made it safely to the border of the Promised Land of Canaan. However, it was not long before the people disobeyed God, so God said that that whole generation would die before the people entered Canaan. As a result, over a million people lived in a desert, in temporary housing, for 40 years, until the next generation had grown up (Deut 1).

Joshua finally led the people from the desert into the Promised Land and started to clear the land of it's previous inhabitants. God told them he would ensure they would win their battles in order to clear the land of other nations who didn't know him, so that the nation of Israel would be pure – worshipping only God, and not falling for the gods of the surrounding nations, Deut 7:16.

What does the passage say and mean?

90 minutes

Read Deuteronomy 7:17-23.

1. When we read these accounts through 21st Century eyes, it seems very unfair on the people who were already in Canaan to be thrown out. Why do you think God said it was important that this happened?

The other nations had other gods, and God knew that these other gods would tempt the people of Israel to wander from their faith in Him. God also knew that the clearing of the land had to be complete – if any of the previous occupants stayed, they would lead God's people into trouble.

2. The people had been living in a desert for 40 years. They had no battle experience, and although there were over a million of them, they were still not a big group. Read v17-19 again. What reassurance did God give them and how do you think they felt about this?

God said that he would win their battles for them, as he had when he had rescued them from Egypt. Although none of this group had been in Egypt, their parents would have passed down the accounts of what happened, and the current generation should have understood that God was able to do this.

3. Read Deuteronomy 8:19. What warning did God give to the Israelites? What does this tell us about the people and about God?

People – it tells us that God already knows the people's tendency to wander off and follow other gods, making this warning necessary.

God – it tells us that 1. God is a jealous God, he won't tolerate being replaced by another god, and 2. there are consequences for the person who is not faithful to God.

(Jealous – appropriate jealousy, for the honour of his name, and of our commitment to him. God's jealousy is pure and appropriate, unlike ours which becomes sinful).

*4. **SHOUT-OUT** Why do you think God is so concerned that the people follow and worship Him alone?

Let the group brainstorm.

Then give a definitive answer: God tells us that idols (anything that comes above him in our priorities) cannot save us from our sin, 1 Sam 12:21, because they are useless. God tells us that apart from him, there is no God, Isaiah 44:6 – this would be an arrogant statement if it were not true!

God is holy (=separate) and his name is to be honoured. Any compromise, any mixing of faith in God with faith in something or someone else, dishonours Him and shows we haven't really understood who he is. If we had understood, we would worship him alone...

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What kind of things might we follow or worship today, either instead of, or alongside God?

Think about things relevant to the group – playing pick and mix with religions, celebrity culture, caving in to peer pressure, astrology etc.

Try to identify the mini-gods behind each of these (1. self i.e. making a religion that suits me from the best bits of several others, 2. fame, 3. pride, 4. being in control?, respectively for my examples).

*5. Read Judges 2:6-7. What do the people do once they are in the Promised Land and what are we told about the people's faithfulness to God?

They settle in and are faithful to God.

*6. Read v10-12. What happened in the next generation and why do you think this was?

The following generation didn't know God, and didn't know the accounts of the exodus. They followed foreign gods which made God angry. It seems that the first generation hadn't told their children about God, so once the parents and original leaders died, the people stopped following God.

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What can we learn from this about the importance of telling children about Jesus?

It only takes a generation for the message to get lost... We have a responsibility to tell our children about Jesus, without deceit or deception, but in a way they can understand. Sunday school isn't something to occupy our children, it's an opportunity to share the truth with them!

Questions 7-9 are **SELF-DIRECTED QUESTIONS**. You need to write them on flip-chart sheets for the group to work on in pairs.

*7. **SDL** Read Judges 2:14-15. What happened as a result of Israel's unfaithfulness, and should this surprise us? (see Deuteronomy 31:16-18)

They started to lose their battles, God was no longer fighting for them. This shouldn't have been a surprise, since God had said that he would forsake (abandon) them if they were unfaithful.

*8. **SDL** Read v16&18. Why did God introduce judges into their society?

Their primary role tended to be to lead the people in battle.

v16 – the judges saved the people from the raiders of v15. Verse 18 tells us that it was not the judge, but God who saved the people. He did this because he had compassion on them.

*9. **SDL** Read v17&19. How did the people react to these leaders that God gave them?

They would not listen to them, rather they continued to worship local gods. They no longer obeyed God.

And when the judge died, they got even worse!

It's been likened to an addiction...

*10. **SHOUT-OUT** How do you think God felt about the way the people were acting?

Let them brainstorm. Then explain that Judges 2:20 tells us that God was angry.

11. Does it surprise you that God felt this way about the people's disobedience? Why?

Just co-ordinate a discussion – don't jump start the rest of the study!

*12. **STICKERS** How do you think God feels about our disobedience (sin) today? Why?
Again, don't give an answer, just read out their answers to the group.

13. Read Psalm 103:8-10. What does this tell you about how God feels about our sin, and how God actually responds to our sin?

God is slow to anger and will not hold onto his anger for ever. God is angry at our sin but 'he does not treat us as our sins deserve...' v10, because of his great love for us, v8. God is faithful to us, even though we are unfaithful to him!

14. Read Romans 5:9. What has Jesus done for us and what has it saved us from?

Jesus has died for us, and saved us from God's wrath.

*15. How does Jesus' death save us from God's anger?

You may need to give a gospel overview here, if there are people in the room who have not heard the whole gospel. God is our creator. He made us to be in a loving relationship with him, to worship him and honour his name in all we do. Sin is anything that dishonours God or puts anything above him in the priority stack of our life. Sin is so offensive to God, that God said that the penalty for it is death, spiritual and physical. So someone has got to die for my sin. Jesus died in my place, he took my punishment, he bore God's anger at my sin. And because Jesus rose again after he had died, we know that he has overcome death, it no longer has any power over us (spiritually) and so we can have eternal life.

16. Read 1 Peter 2:12. What does this tell us about how we are to live today, in a multi-cultural and multi-religious society?

We are not told to keep our land pure from other religions (although we are to keep our hearts pure!). We are told to live good lives among the pagans – i.e. to live in society, not in Christian ghettos (which doesn't negate the value of Christian rehabs), so that those who don't believe will see our good deeds and eventually realise that our behaviour reflects God's character.

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What is your response to what Jesus has done on the cross?

Check out – with the group sitting in a semi circle go round and ask everyone, including leaders, how they found the study and if they are safe to go back to the cell.

Judges Intro
Judges 2:10-19

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15. How does Jesus' death save us from God's anger?

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