

Israelites with the Idol
Next Steps
June 20, 2021
Judges 1-2 (2:1-5, 11-15)

OPENING PRAYER:

Almighty God, You call us to follow, and yet sometimes we hesitate. You ask us to make a choice, and yet sometimes we equivocate. It is so easy to be consumed by doing all that we think will secure our lives here. Help us to know that it is only in giving up our sense of control over our lives and following wherever You lead that we gain our lives. In the name of the One who calls us, we pray. Amen.

-Children's Defense Fund

BREAKING THE ICE:

- What did you agree/disagree with the sermon this week?
- When did you last fail to carry out an order? (from a boss, parent, teacher, etc.) What happened?

WRESTLING WITH THE WORD:¹

Read Judges 2:1-15.

- What do you think was the mood of the people after the death of Joshua? What was their behavior like in the years to follow?
- These first two chapters, especially chapter 2, serve as a prologue to the entire book of Judges. What repeated themes and cycles of behavior can we expect based upon these chapters?
- How do you see God's treatment of Israel? (2:1-5)
- Why do you suppose the people did not listen to their assigned leaders?
- What does this passage reveal about the justice and mercy of God?
- How would your life story fit into the pattern, themes and cycles of behavior of Judges?
- Where have you been unable to learn from the past, and find yourself repeating the same mistake?
- When has the Lord tested you like He did the Israelites? How are you stronger today thanks to the testing experience?

GOING DEEPER:

The conviction ran deep that because of personal commitment and the power of God at work in a person's life, Christians were to be different. Their goals and priorities were not determined by the culture, or even the church, but by daily companionship with Jesus Christ. The love of God and neighbor led them to stand against all that was destructive of humankind. The consistent stand against injustice and the untiring efforts to create laws and institutions that brought healing, help, and hope to all people set them apart, often to their peril and pain. No one could follow Jesus Christ and not be identified, and since Methodists were to follow only Christ they were easily recognized. This recognition brought respect as well as derision. But neither counted for anything. The only thing that mattered was faithfulness to God.

Rueben P. Job, *A Wesleyan Spiritual Reader*

The power by which God transforms humans is the Holy Spirit. Christian spirituality is therefore not a matter of cultivating some dimension of the human spirit, but a matter of obedient response to the Spirit of God.

Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Creed*

- What jumped out at you in these readings?
- How do you see your life as a Methodist intersecting with the people in Judges?
- How has Jesus helped you stay on track, contrary to the people in Judges?
- Where in your life do you need to become more obedient to the power of the Holy Spirit?

NEXT STEPS:

- How could you be a 'lifesaver' and rescuer as God is to the people of Israel from this week?
- Where have your mistakes accumulated, like the Israelites, and you feel stuck in a rut or hopeless?

- How will your life be different based upon what you have learned in this week's scripture, lesson and/or sermon?

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK:

O Lord,

open my eyes that I may see the needs of others,

open my ears that I may hear their cries;

open my heart so that they need not be without succor;

let me not be afraid to defend the weak because of the anger of the strong, nor afraid to defend the poor because of the anger of the rich. Show me where love and hope and faith are needed, and use me to bring them to those places. And so open my eyes and my ears that I may this coming day be able to do some work of peace for thee. Amen.

Alan Paton, *The United Methodist Hymnal* #456

¹Adapted from *The Serendipity Bible* (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1998)