

COLLEGIATE

DREAM MORE. RISK MORE. BE MORE.

SUMMER 2012

8 Summer Party Ideas

HOW TO USE THE GIFT OF HOSPITALITY

The 3 Lies of Consumerism

Have you bought into them?

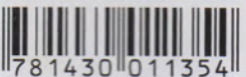
Shane & Shane

Simple Songwriting Tips



SUMMER 2012 U.S.A. \$4.25

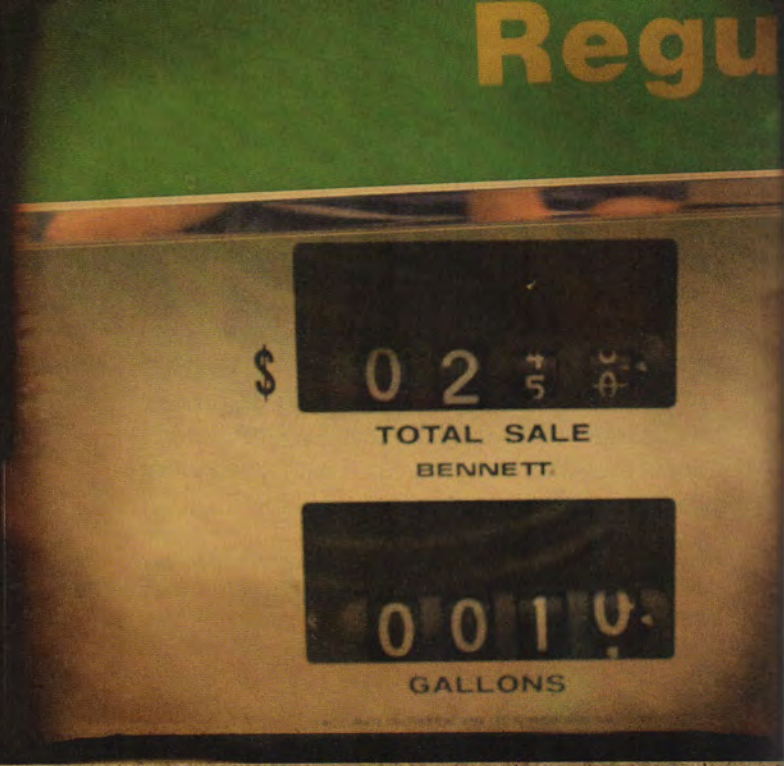
ISBN 978-1-4300-1135-4



9 781430 011354

BIBLE STUDIES:
JOSHUA, JUDGES, & RUTH
CHARACTER AT THE CROSSROAD

threads
by LifeWay



JOSHUA, JUDGES, & RUTH: CHARACTER AT THE CROSSROAD

BY LESLIE ANN JONES

TRANSITIONS ARE A PART OF LIFE. FROM HIGH SCHOOL TO COLLEGE. FROM SINGLE TO DATING. FROM LIVING WITH YOUR PARENTS TO LIVING ON YOUR OWN. FROM RELATIONSHIP BACK TO SINGLENES. FROM COLLEGE TO GRAD SCHOOL. FROM SINGLE TO A NEW LOVE. FROM SCHOOL TO WORK, AND SO ON IT GOES. SOME TRANSITIONS ARE EASIER THAN OTHERS, BUT THEY ALL HAVE ONE THING IN COMMON: IT TAKES TIME TO ADJUST.

The people of Israel were in a state of transition. They had spent 40 years wandering in the wilderness with Moses when the time

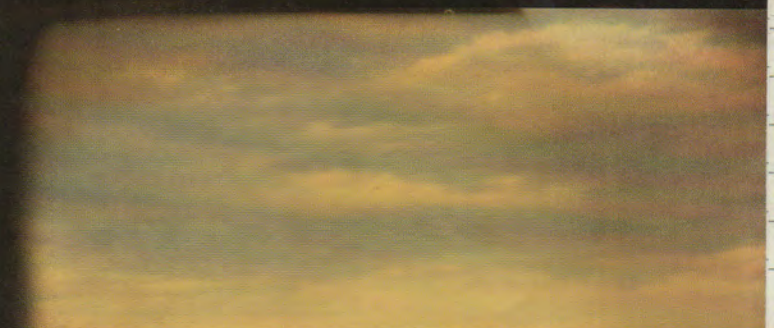
came for Joshua to lead them into the land God had promised so many years before. Once they arrived, they discovered that living in the promised land was harder than imagined, and they spent the next several years trying to navigate life in their new home.

The Israelites were at a crossroad, and their entire lives changed as a result. But one thing stayed the same: God. He's still Lord, even in the most tumultuous of times, and as we'll learn from the Israelites' story, remembering that He is Lord and living in light of that knowledge is the key to managing rocky transitions gracefully.

Over the next several weeks, we'll take a closer look at one of the most exciting and dismaying times in Israel's history. True character is displayed at the crossroad. Some responded well in moments of crisis. Others, not so much. We'll celebrate their successes and mourn their failures. And we'll learn what it takes to be a person of God when we're standing at our own crossroad.

LEADING A GROUP?
CHECK OUT OUR FREE TEACHING PLANS
AND MORE AT LIFEWAY.COM/COLLEGIATE.

BIBLE STUDY 



BIBLE STUDIES BY — LESLIE ANN JONES, an ordinary girl living an extraordinary life in the small town of luka, Miss. She's a wife, mom, author, speaker, stationery designer, youth worker, and wannabe photographer who's striving to fulfill the call God has placed on her life. She blogs about her journey at leslieannjones.com.



An Extraordinary Role

HOW DO YOU IDENTIFY YOUR PLACE IN THE CHURCH?

On July 31, 2011, Paul Menard won his first race as a NASCAR driver by following the direction of his crew chief. As the drivers entered the final laps of the Brickyard 400, the race became one of strategy. Menard patiently conserved fuel, only pushing his car to its limits in the last three laps of the race, when his crew chief told him to make his move. As the

to him, "Moses is gone now. I need you to lead My people." Gulp. Talk about a daunting task.

God may not have called you to lead His chosen people into the promised land, but that doesn't mean you're excused from service. Undoubtedly, God has called you to become a leader in some aspect of your life. Thankfully, the Lord's promises are

not like that. When God says He'll be somewhere, He shows up. His promise of presence must've been a great comfort to Joshua, who knew that the Canaanites wouldn't be excited about his arrival. In the face of that uncertainty, God encouraged Joshua to take heart and lay aside all anxiety.

It takes strength and courage to allow God to use you and live by His Word, but we have His promised presence to sustain and enable us. When the task seems insurmountable, when it feels like we're all alone, when the world closes in on us, God is there.

GOD HAS CALLED YOU TO BECOME A LEADER IN SOME ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE.

opportunity for victory surfaced, Mernard and his crew chief rose to the occasion.

As believers, God presents us with ample opportunities to serve Him and lead His people. It's go time. Will you rise to the occasion when the opportunity for leadership surfaces?

just as trustworthy now as they were when He commissioned Joshua.

God promised Joshua that the land was his for the taking, and when God promises something, it's a done deal. God is not only able but faithful to do what He says He will do. Our task is to trust Him.

RESPOND WITH OBEDIENCE (READ JOSHUA 1:10-11.)

Joshua had a choice to make. He could either assume leadership of the Israelites or he could run for the hills. God doesn't force His people into service. He issues the call; how we respond is up to us. As for Joshua, he chose obedience.

When we obediently surrender to God's call on our lives, we become the avenues through which He displays His glory. As Joshua dispatched his inaugural instructions to the people of Israel, he repeat-

REST IN THE LORD'S PROMISE (READ JOSHUA 1:1-5A.)

After Moses died, Joshua found himself on the receiving end of some tall orders from the Lord. As he stood on the edge of the promised land, the Lord essentially said

RELY ON GOD'S PRESENCE (READ JOSHUA 1:5B-9.)

Have you ever been stood up? It can leave you feeling pretty worthless. Sometimes people break commitments. They don't show up when they're expected. Thank God He's

DIG DEEPER

JOSHUA 1:1-11,16-18

"THE GOAL OF LEADERSHIP IS NOT TO ERADICATE UNCERTAINTY, BUT RATHER TO NAVIGATE IT. UNCERTAINTY IS A COMPONENT OF EVERY ENVIRONMENT THAT CALLS FOR LEADERSHIP."

— ANDY STANLEY,
NEXT GENERATION LEADER

ON THE WEB

For an insightful read on the biblical model of leadership, check out Mike Hurt's article, "Leadership: More About Availability than Ability," at threadsmedia.com.

RECOMMENDED READ

The church at Antioch provides a concrete expression of what a healthy church looks like. Learn more in *Building Antioch: Your Role in a Transformational Church* by Jeff Iorg (available at lifeway.com).

LISTEN TO ...

Song: "I Will Follow"
Artist: Anthony Evans
Album: *Home*





Out of Your Comfort Zone

HOW DOES FAITH HELP YOU IN CHALLENGING SITUATIONS?

Katy Perry, Justin Bieber, and Avril Lavigne have something other than music and fame in common. They, along with many other stars, are spokespeople for an acne-fighting system. They dare to share stories (and embarrassing photos) about their lives before and after using the brand. The manufacturer, in turn, rewards the celebrities for their willingness to attach their image to the product with a nice paycheck.

from Israel. The men should've been her enemies, but Rahab had heard the talk about the great and mighty things God had done for His people, and she believed the stories.

Rahab's confession of faith was bold and amazing. She was a Canaanite prostitute. She had grown up in a pagan culture with no one to talk to her about God. Yet the miraculous stories of how God had brought the people of Israel out of

Have you ever been in a relationship with someone who professed their undying love for you yet walked away when things got tough? Unfortunately, some of us have learned the hard way that words are empty and meaningless unless they're backed up by actions. Sharing your faith with words is one thing, but expressing your faith through actions is altogether different. It takes things a bit farther and affirms your commitment to God.

When the time came for Rahab to choose between her city and God, she chose God. Helping the spies escape only proved what she had already testified: Her allegiance belonged to the God of Israel. Rahab believed in the power of the Lord, and she joined His cause without hesitation.

DIG DEEPER

JOSHUA 2:1,6,8-15; 6:22-23

"IF YOU WAIT FOR THE TIMING TO BE RIGHT BEFORE YOU MAKE A MOVE, YOU MAY NEVER MAKE A MOVE AT ALL."

—BLAKE MYCOSKIE,
START SOMETHING THAT MATTERS

ON THE WEB

For some inspiration on taking steps out of your comfort zone, check out Chris Ediger's article, "It All Begins with the Small Steps," at threadsmmedia.com.

RECOMMENDED READ

Enjoy fiction? Check out James Rubart's *Rooms* for a chilling and inspiring story about discovering what you've been divinely designed to do (available at lifeway.com).

LISTEN TO ...

Song: "Make a Move"
Artist: Royal Tailor
Album: *Black & White*

WORDS ARE EMPTY AND MEANINGLESS UNLESS THEY'RE BACKED UP BY ACTIONS.

We're not celebrities touting a product; we're believers called to step up and serve God. It's not always easy, and the payoff isn't financial, but the rewards are greater than any licensing deal a celebrity can make. Are you up for becoming Christ's spokesperson?

FAITH EXPRESSED IN WORDS

(READ JOSHUA 2:1,8-13.)

It was a heart-pounding moment. There, on her roof, stood two spies

Egypt had reached her ears and that was enough for her to believe. She chose for herself the God of both heaven and earth to be her God.

Who in your circle of influence needs a God-honoring friend? How can God use you to impact that person for Christ? In what ways does Rahab's story give you courage to talk to others about your faith?

FAITH EXPRESSED IN ACTIONS

(READ JOSHUA 2:6,14-15.)

FAITH REWARDED

(READ JOSHUA 6:22-23.)

It takes a bit of gumption and a lot of courage to own your faith and act on it, but for those willing to step up, the payoff is great. In Rahab's case, sharing her faith and acting on her beliefs aligned her with the Israelites





Accepting Responsibility

DO YOU HOLD YOURSELF ACCOUNTABLE?

America is a nation plagued with credit card debt (see article on p. 54). Every day, thousands of consumers swipe their little pieces of plastic with little thought to the cost. Many sink so deeply into debt that they drown in the flood of unpaid bills. They lose their lives in the allure of their stuff.

could've been so stupid, but we also walk into sin with eyes wide open. We're masters at pretending like we're not sinners, but we're all every bit as guilty as he was.

If you think no one will notice your sin, you're mistaken. God always notices. Your sin may seem

the people of Israel who wandered in the wilderness for years after leaving the slavery of Egypt. They probably wondered why God had even bothered to bring them across the Jordan River only to let them to be humiliated in battle at Ai. Joshua seemed to have forgotten how God had shown Himself faithful in the mighty defeat of Jericho. Although Joshua and the elders of Israel had a selective memory about God's promises, they did turn to God for answers to their crisis.

Have you ever been there? Sometimes we run to God kicking and screaming, only to find out that it's not God who has broken His promise. It's us.

YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO ACT LIKE THE WORLD. YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO ACT LIKE HIM.

Over the course of a lifetime, we charge thousands of "little" sins to our account with God. Our bills are exorbitant, and the cost is high. Are you being crushed by the weight of the debt? Or are you living a debt-free life?

private, but its effects spread quickly. When we sin, others suffer. Relationships falter. People get hurt. Calamity ensues.

SIN IS SERIOUS

(READ JOSHUA 7:1,5.)

It was over just as quickly as it started. The Israelites were still basking in the victory at Jericho when reality slapped them in the face. Thirty-six Israelite men were dead, and the rest were running for their lives.

It was, to say the least, a shocking defeat. The explanation? Sin.

It's easy to wonder how Achan

TURN TO GOD

(READ JOSHUA 7:6-8.)

God always keeps His Word, even when we wish He wouldn't. Joshua's grief and mourning were dramatic and visible. He cried out to God, questioning why the defeat had happened. However, his memory was conveniently selective — just like ours sometimes tends to be when faced with the consequences of sin.

Joshua's laundry list of complaints sounded much like the complaints of

DEAL WITH SIN

(READ JOSHUA 7:10-13.)

God's words to Joshua were clear. By breaking their agreement, Israel had become just like Canaan. If they wanted God to walk among them once more, they had to consecrate themselves. Something consecrated is set apart. It's holy. They couldn't blend in. They were a people set apart by God, and they had to act like it.

You must choose between sin and

DIG DEEPER

JOSHUA 7:1,5-8,10-15

"TRY NOT TO BECOME A MAN OF SUCCESS, BUT RATHER TRY TO BECOME A MAN OF VALUE."
— ALBERT EINSTEIN

RECOMMENDED READ

The God I Don't Understand: Reflections on Tough Questions of Faith by Christopher J.H. Wright

VERSES TO CHECK OUT

The Bible repeatedly mentions *accountability* throughout. Here are a few extra verses on the subject: Genesis 3:16; 1 Samuel 20:16; Ecclesiastes 12:1; and Acts 17:30-31.

LISTEN TO ...

Song: "Bring Us Home (Joshua)"
Artist: Tait, Blanca Callahan, & Lecrae
Album: *Music Inspired By the Story*



Don't Stop Believing

ARE YOU CULTIVATING LIFELONG LOYALTY TO THE LORD?

In early 2011, BP offered customers loyalty cards each time they purchased at least eight gallons of fuel. The premise was simple: Collect five cards, then redeem them for a \$10 reward check. The promotion aimed to develop brand loyalty among consumers. For BP, loyalty was a quality worth paying for.

It's not just Old Testament heroes who have stories to tell. Everyone who's ever chosen to trust God when His Word seemed unbelievable has a story worth sharing.

When we choose to believe the unbelievable and tell others about it, God gets all the glory. You see, Caleb's story isn't primarily about his faithful-

Joshua gave Caleb the hill country he desired as an inheritance. The city named Hebron sat about 19 miles from Jerusalem at more than 3,000 feet above sea level. The water was plentiful and the soil was good, making it a prime location. Verse 14 confirmed why Caleb received Hebron — "because he remained loyal to the LORD."

The land inheritance wasn't the only reward for Caleb. God granted him long life and strong physical health. No doubt Caleb also received additional rewards from God during the years of waiting as well as the years following this event.

A person might lack money, possessions, or good health, but be rich in spiritual rewards. Why do we sometimes look at a person like that and mistakenly think that he or she has missed out on all of God's blessings?

FAITH ISN'T JUST TAUGHT — IT'S DEMONSTRATED.

God is also in the business of rewarding loyalty, but for His followers, there's much more at stake than a \$10 check. He's on the lookout for hearts wholly devoted to Him. Is yours one of them?

ness, but about God's, who's always loyal to those who are loyal to Him.

As you think back over your life since you trusted Christ as Savior, how do you rate your loyalty? What specific examples stand out?

TESTIMONY OF LOYALTY (READ JOSHUA 14:6-12.)

Caleb had been waiting on this moment for a long time. Forty-five years earlier, he had scouted out the promised land with Joshua and a handful of other men, but he and Joshua alone believed their God rather than their eyes. Consequently, they were the only two who lived to tell the story. And tell it, they did.

REWARD FOR LOYALTY (READ JOSHUA 14:13-15.)

In those 45 years, do you wonder if Caleb ever got discouraged? Did he ever think to himself, "I was naïve to believe that promise Moses made"? We live in a microwave society that desires instant results. Would you have had the patient loyalty to keep on serving God while waiting all those years?

CHALLENGE TO LOYALTY (READ JOSHUA 15:14-17.)

When people inspire others to emulate their ways, we call them role models. Caleb was a role model who challenged younger Israelites, including his daughter and her husband, to choose loyalty as well.

DIG DEEPER

JOSHUA 14:6-15; 15:14-17

"WHEN PEOPLE STOP BELIEVING IN GOD, THEY DON'T BELIEVE IN NOTHING — THEY BELIEVE IN ANYTHING."

— G.K. CHESTERTON

VERSES TO CHECK OUT

Numbers 13:1-14:38

ON THE WEB

For more on cultivating loyalty, read the article "Finding Your Way Out of the Desert" by Jim Johnston at threadsmedia.com.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Caleb learned from Joshua, and Othniel learned from Caleb. This is a biblical picture of mentorship discussed by Chuck Lawless in his book, *Mentor* (available at threadsmedia.com).

LISTEN TO ...

Song: "Victory In Jesus"

Artist: Sean Michel

Album: *I Know I've Been Converted*



It's Your Choice

ARE YOU LIVING IN COVENANT WITH CHRIST?

Choices. Our lives are filled with them. Paper or plastic? Cash or credit? Walk or drive? Go to class or skip? We make a million tiny decisions every day without even thinking about them. The choice between flip flops and sneakers is an easy one to make, but other choices are excruciating. They're the ones that keep you up at night and steal your attention during the day: Study this major or that one?

finally, at long last, their wandering was over. It was time to go home and unpack their bags. But first they had to make a decision. Would they serve the Lord or something else? Ambition. Popularity. Materialism. Sex. We're all driven by something.

A clear vision of God in all of His holiness and glory commands fear and reverence and demands faithful devotion. If you've managed to catch

children, they spent mornings gathering manna for meals and evenings listening to campfire tales of the harrowing escape from Egypt. As adults, they walked across the Jordan River Bottom while the Lord held back the waters for them. Then they proceeded to knock off Canaanite cities one by one and settle into the land the Lord had given them. And they couldn't have done any of it without the Almighty's intervention.

It's stories like Joshua's that compel teenage girls to fly to Africa to open orphanages (kissesfromkatie.blogspot.com), businessmen to walk away from lucrative careers to develop partnerships with coffee farmers (jonathangolden.typepad.com), and retired couples to spend their days doling out food and water to disaster victims (see Ed and Patty's story on pp. 81-82 of David Platt's *Radical*).

God did the unimaginable for them, and He has done the same for you. Just as He rescued them from slavery, He has rescued you. Just as He blessed them abundantly, He has blessed you. In light of that, how should you serve Him?

TO SERVE THE LORD IS TO LIVE UNDER THE SHADOW OF HIS PROTECTION.

Take the job or walk away? Move across the country or stay put? Get married or break up? Follow God or follow the world?

The last choice is the most important. Have you made your decision?

TAKE YOUR STAND (READ JOSHUA 24:14-15.)

Joshua stood before the people of Israel and issued a challenge. Their feet were firmly planted in the promised land. The cities had been conquered (most of them, anyway). The land had been allotted. And

a glimpse of His majesty, you know there's really no other choice. To serve the Lord is to live under the shadow of His protection. To serve anything else is a death sentence.

He is Lord of all. Always has been. Always will be. In His tremendous grace and mercy, He has given you the chance to side with Him. What's your choice?

REFUSE SHALLOW COMMITMENT (READ JOSHUA 24:16-18.)

To say they had been through a lot would be an understatement. As

DIG DEEPER

JOSHUA 24:14-25

"WHEN WE RISK OUR LIVES TO RUN AFTER CHRIST, WE DISCOVER THE SAFETY THAT IS FOUND ONLY IN HIS SOVEREIGNTY, THE SECURITY THAT IS FOUND ONLY IN HIS LOVE, AND THE SATISFACTION THAT IS FOUND ONLY IN HIS PRESENCE."

— DAVID PLATT,
RADICAL TOGETHER

WATCH

Kermit the Frog learned a valuable lesson on contracts and covenants in the 2011 film version of "The Muppets." Gather a group and have fun watching it this week.

RECOMMENDED READ

Kisses from Katie by Katie Davis is a great read for inspiration on staying committed to God's clear calling (available at lifeway.com).

LISTEN TO ...

Song: "The One You Need"
Artist: Shane & Shane
Album: *The One You Need*





Truth or Consequences

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF UNFAITHFULNESS?

When we say someone has forgotten where they came from, it usually means they've allowed tremendous success to overshadow their humble beginnings. They've become full of themselves and overconfident in their abilities. They've all but forgotten those who've helped them along the way. Their egos have gotten the best of them.

The people of Israel forgot where

And in case you're wondering, He wasn't too happy about it. He's a jealous God who won't put up with infidelity. His love is fierce and unyielding, and He'll go to unimaginable lengths to shake His people to their senses. The Israelites were shaken to their core.

It's easy to wonder at their infidelity, but the truth is that apart from God, we're exactly like the Israelites.

need of rescue. So the Lord provided an escape route by way of the judges, a handful of leaders who God empowered and enabled to lead Israel through some of her darkest days.

It's true that God is a jealous God, but it's equally true that He's merciful. In the face of Israel's adultery, the Lord had no reason to spare them. No reason, that is, except for His compassion. He showed them, and us, what grace looks like by refusing to leave them stranded. They needed help they didn't deserve, and the Lord provided it time and time again.

We're also in desperate need of help we don't deserve. God is just as merciful today as He was then, and just as He gracefully provided a way out for them, He has done the same for us — even if we don't deserve it. Even if it's our own fault. Even if we feel all alone. There's a way out. That way is Jesus.

IT'S TRUE THAT GOD IS A JEALOUS GOD, BUT IT'S EQUALLY TRUE THAT HE'S MERCIFUL.

they came from, and they found themselves in a gigantic mess. God forbid we fall into the same trap.

SPIRITUAL ADULTERY (READ JUDGES 2:11-15.)

The problem was that the new generation of Israelites didn't know God. Sure, they may have heard of Him, but they didn't know Him. In the absence of a redeeming relationship with Him, they did what looked good at the moment. And the gods of Canaan looked awfully good.

In effect, they cheated on God.

What they did shouldn't surprise us. They were just doing what sinners do. Thankfully, we live on this side of the cross, and our saving grace is the relationship we share with Jesus. When that relationship is properly tended and cultivated, any other suitors fade in comparison.

DIVINE COMPASSION (READ JUDGES 2:16-18.)

Some people must hit rock bottom before they realize how far they've fallen. The people of Israel landed hard, and they were in desperate

DIVINE TESTING (READ JUDGES 2:19-22.)

It was a vicious cycle. Israel did her own thing and abandoned God. God punished Israel for her sin. Israel cried out to God. God delivered Israel from

DIG DEEPER JUDGES 2:11-22

"JESUS IS THE ONLY LORD WHO, IF YOU RECEIVE HIM, WILL FULFILL YOU COMPLETELY, AND, IF YOU FAIL HIM, WILL FORGIVE YOU ETERNALLY."

— TIM KELLER

FOR FURTHER STUDY

For a deeper look at consequences of unfaithfulness and overcoming sin daily, read *Seven Daily Sins* by Jared C. Wilson (available at threadsmedia.com).

WORD STUDY

MERCY (noun) — In the Old Testament, God's mercy is bound up with His covenant with Israel. His mercy is never just a feeling but is expressed by His action.

LISTEN TO ...

Song: "Give Myself to You"
Artist: Leigh Nash
Album: *Hymns and Sacred Songs*



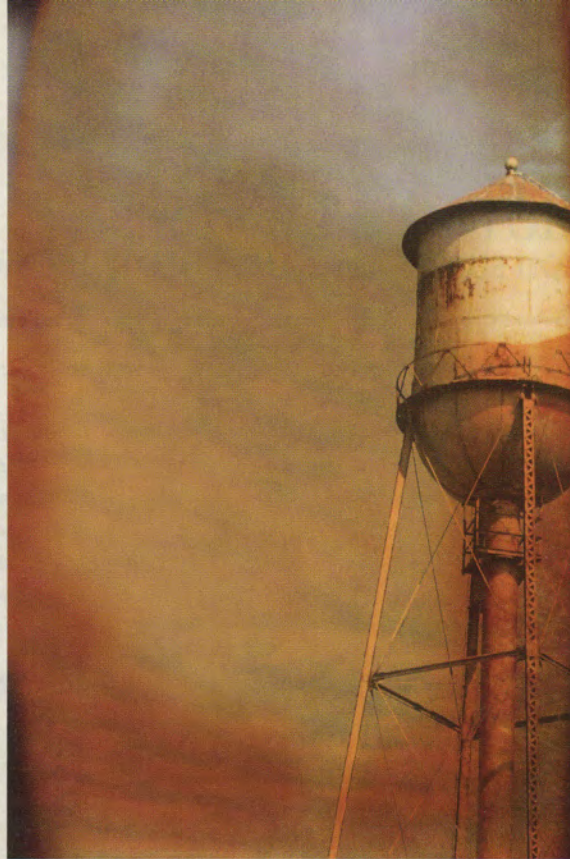
her trouble. Lather. Rinse. Repeat. Every time God raised up a new leader for Israel, the people rallied around for a brief revival, but it never lasted long, and they soon forgot the God who had come to their rescue.

Their story reminds us that it's easy to forget how desperately we need God. When life is going well, we do a tremendous job of taking care of ourselves, relying on our own strengths and skills to get us through, but when crisis strikes, we run crying to God about the unfairness of it all. Is it possible that when calamity strikes God is testing you as He tested Israel?

I once heard a preacher say God sends both joy and sorrow to His people so that we may detach our hands from the world and attach them to Him. That's what He did for the Israelites, and that's what He does for us. He's looking for people who dare to follow His ways instead of the world's. Are you one of them?

THINK ABOUT IT

Israel was in a quandary of her own making. What are some consequences of unfaithfulness? How may you live more faithfully in times of crisis?



In Search of a King

After Israel crossed the Jordan River and the walls of Jericho came tumbling down, they settled into their new homes and lived happily ever after. Isn't that how the story goes? If the Bible were a fairy tale, then yes. But it's not. It's a real life story, and the Book of Judges isn't exactly the "happily ever after" we were hoping for.

There is perhaps not a more disturbing book in the Bible than Judges. It's a downer, to say the least. In it, we see the depths of human depravity and how very sickening our sin actually is. There's murder, rape, child sacrifice, dismembering, sexual scandals, and civil war. If you read it in one sitting, it's liable to make you sick.

You may wonder why it's even in the Bible. Well, for one thing, it helps us understand the horror of unchecked sin. We have a tendency to think that people are mostly good, but Judges tells a completely different story. It shows us that in the absence of true leadership, people will follow their own hearts, which, apart from God, are inherently twisted, selfish, and evil.

More than anything else, though, Judges shows us how desperately humanity needs a Righteous King to follow. God provided a king to Israel in the years following the close of Judges. First Saul, then David, led Israel out of the dark period of the judges. But even David, who was dubbed a man after God's own heart, was prone to sin.

We need more than that. We need the King of kings. Only by following His leadership can we escape the horrifying cycle of sin that plagued Israel. Without Him, we're just like them.



Follow the Leader

ARE YOU SUPPORTING AND FOLLOWING GODLY LEADERSHIP?

Many a kid has spent countless summer nights playing "Follow the Leader." The game is simple, really. There's one leader and lots of followers. The leader can do anything he or she pleases, and the followers must imitate, even if the leader runs to a cliff and jumps off. OK, not really. But you get the idea.

for the commands God had issued, he listened.

God called Barak to lead Israel into battle against their oppressors who were much stronger and better equipped (to say the least). It was a daunting and scary task, but when Barak needed encouragement, God provided it through

ignore Deborah, or he could join her in the Lord's work. He chose to join her, and together they gathered the people of Israel and prepared for battle.

Leadership can be a lonely calling, but it doesn't have to be that way. In fact, God never intended for our leaders to do all the work while we sit back and watch them from afar. Getting personally involved is one way you can participate in the work that God is doing around you.

It may not seem like you have much to offer, but in every ministry, there's work to be done and often no one to do it. Assess your talents and consider how you may use those gifts for God's glory — then go by your church, BCM, or campus ministry and offer to help. God has specific work for you to accomplish. Until you join in the work, someone else has to pick up the slack. By stepping up, you free up your leaders to do what they do best: lead.

BY STEPPING UP, YOU FREE UP YOUR LEADERS TO DO WHAT THEY DO BEST: LEAD.

In life, there are both leaders and followers, and chances are you'll be both at one point or another. As believers, we're called to support and boldly follow godly leaders as we work together for God's glory.

Deborah's timely words.

It can be downright uncomfortable to be singled out and given direction, especially when you know God has asked you to do something you'd rather not. But here's the thing: The Lord is a relentless pursuer, and though you may run from His call, you can't hide from it. Sometimes God uses the prodding of godly leaders to encourage us to follow His direction. We can support their leadership by heeding their call to action.

ACCEPT HELP (READ JUDGES 4:1-4,6-7.)

No one likes to be called out, but sometimes we need an extra push to get us going. That's what Deborah did for Barak. Deborah was a well-respected leader who was one of the godliest judges Israel would ever have. So when she called out Barak and held him accountable

GET PERSONALLY INVOLVED (READ JUDGES 4:8A,10.)

Barak had a choice to make. He could

PRaise the Lord for His Work (READ JUDGES 5:1-5,9-11A.)

Barak listened to Deborah and joined her in the fight against Canaan. Israel rose victorious, but neither Barak nor

DIG DEEPER

**JUDGES 4:1-4,6-8A,10;
5:1-5,9-11A**

"THE BEST THING THAT ANYBODY EVER SAID TO ME IS THAT YOU'RE ONLY AS GOOD AS THE PEOPLE YOU ASSOCIATE WITH. LOOK AT THE FIVE FRIENDS THAT YOU SPEND THE MOST TIME WITH — THAT'S WHO YOU ARE."

— WILL SMITH

FOR FURTHER STUDY

What if God wants something more than a safe, predictable life for those who love Him? Maybe life with Christ should be a little more like a wild goose chase ... mysterious, unpredictable, and even dangerous. Check out Mark Batterson's *Chase the Goose* to reclaim the adventurous spiritual life God intended for us (available at threadsmedia.com).

LISTEN TO ...

Song: "Show Me"
Artist: Beckah Shae
Album: *Destiny*



LEADING A GROUP?

CHECK OUT OUR FREE TEACHING PLANS
AND MORE AT LIFEWAY.COM/COLLEGIATE.

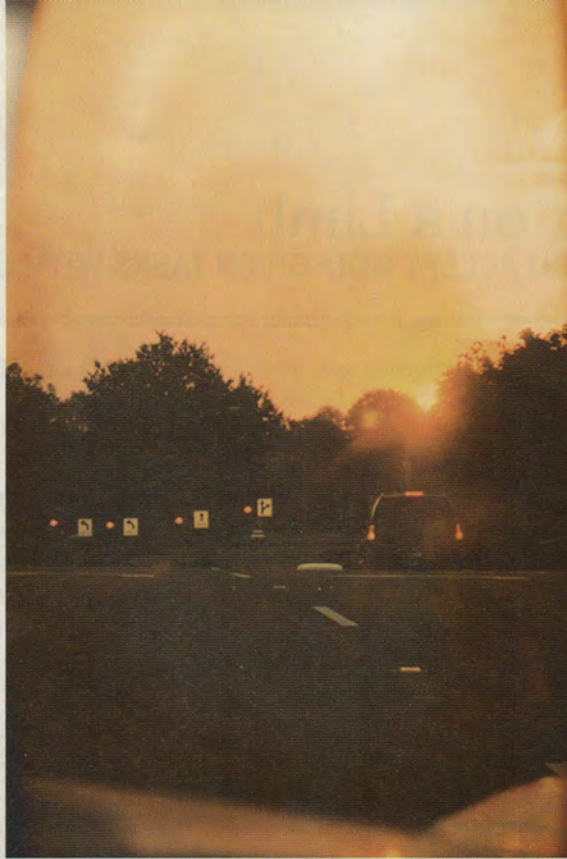
Deborah deserved the glory for the victory. That belonged to God alone, and they were quick to give it to Him in a song of praise.

That doesn't mean they didn't deserve any credit at all. They were, after all, faithful to the call of God on their lives, and they stepped up to lead God's people at a time when Israel needed it most. But it was God who won the battle.

Thank God for the leaders He sends to guide and direct us. He mobilizes leaders and followers alike to work together in ways that point to His name alone. When we have success, it's for no other reason than that He orchestrated it. Your entire life's purpose is to make much of Him and the amazing things He has done. As it turns out, He's the Leader; we're the followers.

THINK ABOUT IT

God ordained your work in His world a long time ago. How are you fulfilling the call He has placed on your life?



The Call

In Christian circles, we hear a lot about "the call" of God. It can be confusing, mainly because most of the people who talk about "calling" are involved in full-time vocational ministry (i.e. pastors, youth ministers, etc.). But ministry isn't reserved for a chosen few. Ministry belongs to the entire church, and *all* believers are called to participate.

Ready to jump in and get your hands dirty? Here are a few steps to guide you along the way.

PRAY. Ask God to show you where your talents and gifts could be put to good use. Studying graphic design? Use your skills to help promote a fundraiser for building water wells in Africa. Good with words? Write an editorial for the campus newspaper.

ASK. Seek out the leaders in your church and ask how you may help them in their ministry. It could be as mundane as distributing fliers on campus or as exciting as joining a mission team in the inner city. Both are necessary and needed tasks to fulfill.

PARTICIPATE. After you've prayed and asked, the next step is to actually participate. Sign your name on the dotted line and get to work!

TELL. Don't forget to share your story with others. It's a surefire way to generate interest in God's work and give Him the glory at the same time.





Out on a Limb

DO YOU ACCEPT GOD-GIVEN TASKS WITH CONFIDENCE?

Ever heard the phrase “Nothing ventured, nothing gained?” There’s a lot of truth in the statement. If you never try anything, you’ll never find success. Insecurities, fear, and self-doubt will paralyze and cripple you if you allow them, but if you’re willing to take a risk and go out on a limb for God, there’s much to be gained.

plan included Gideon leading Israel in a fight against Midian.

God is big enough to overcome whatever flaws you may have, no matter what the voices in your head may say. You’re not good enough. You’re not strong enough. You’ve messed up too many times. You’re too scared to talk in front of people.

ACCEPT ENCOURAGEMENT

(READ JUDGES 7:9-11.)

God knew Gideon needed a little hand-holding to accept his task, so He held on tight. The Lord promised Gideon that he would be encouraged by whatever he happened to hear in the Midianite camp, which shows us one very important thing about God: He’s faithful to reassure those who need it. Sometimes, as in Gideon’s case, that encouragement may come from an unlikely source.

God can send reassurance through a conversation with a friend who has no idea what you’re dealing with, or He may choose to encourage you through seemingly random occurrences. Just remember that with God, nothing is random, and coincidences aren’t always happenstance. They may actually be God prodding you to move forward with confidence.

We, like Gideon, sometimes need an extra boost of confidence before we step out in faith. Rest assured that God knows your insecurities, and He’s faithful to provide you with whatever you may need to complete the task at hand.

DON’T LET THE VOICES IN YOUR HEAD DROWN OUT THE STILL, SMALL VOICE OF GOD.

SHIFT YOUR FOCUS

(READ JUDGES 6:11-16.)

Gideon was a realist. The way he saw it, God had abandoned Israel and left them to rot, and there was nothing anyone could do about it. His people were starving and desperate; they needed a strong leader, and he certainly didn’t fit the bill. Gideon wasn’t exactly a prime candidate for leadership, and he knew it. That was his side of the story.

God’s story was somewhat different. Israel’s situation was their own doing, but being the merciful Lord that He is, He had a plan. And that

No way God was talking to you. You’re imagining things. He’d never call you.

In a way, those voices are right. You’re not good enough. You’re not strong enough. But He is. And because He is able, you are, too.

Don’t let the voices in your head drown out the still, small voice of God — stop looking in and start looking up to Him. He created the entire universe out of a pile of emptiness. If He can make something out of nothing, then surely He can turn you into whatever He has called you to be — if only you’ll trust Him.

DIG DEEPER

JUDGES 6:11-16; 7:9-11,13-15

“BE SURE YOU PUT YOUR FEET IN THE RIGHT PLACE, THEN STAND FIRM.”

— ABRAHAM LINCOLN

RECOMMENDED READ

Do you need to be reawakened to the brilliance of the gospel? If so, check out *Gospel Wakefulness* by Jared C. Wilson for encouragement in confidently taking on God’s task (available at lifeway.com).

DID YOU KNOW?

The Gideons International, founded in 1899, serves as an extended missionary arm of the church. They adopted their name based on these sixth and seventh chapters of Judges. More than 1.6 billion Bibles and New Testaments have been given by The Gideons to date.

LISTEN TO ...

Song: “My Own Worst Enemy”

Artist: Casting Crowns

Album: *Come to the Well*



LEADING A GROUP?

CHECK OUT OUR FREE TEACHING PLANS
AND MORE AT LIFEWAY.COM/COLLEGIATE.



ACKNOWLEDGE GOD'S GRACE

(READ JUDGES 7:13-15.)

In the end, Gideon trekked down to eavesdrop on the Midianites, and what he heard led him to instantaneous worship. At once, his misgivings and fears subsided, and his newfound assurance was contagious. He passed it on to his men, who then went on to defeat Midian by the hand of God.

When someone does something nice for you, it's polite to say thank you. The same thing is true when God patiently and gracefully offers you encouragement. He's worthy of all our praise, and when He intervenes in our lives in such personal ways, we'd be remiss not to give Him the honor. When you demonstrate confidence in God and His promises, you encourage others to do the same. Who knows? That may be the extra boost they need to demonstrate some confidence of their own.

THINK ABOUT IT

God has challenged His followers to take risks on His behalf. Do you trust Him enough to step forward? How has He encouraged you recently?



The Rest of the Story

While it's true that Gideon overcame significant insecurities to lead the Israelites to victory over Midian, it's equally true that he was an ordinary man prone to sin. After Gideon rallied his men and sent them into battle, the Lord upheld His promise to be with Gideon and gave him a decisive victory. That much of the story is often retold. The rest of it, however, is usually ignored.

If you keep reading Gideon's story, you'll notice the glaring absence of one character: the Lord. Gideon and his men took it upon themselves to chase the remaining Midianites across Israel, and when a couple of cities refused to assist them, Gideon let loose with some serious revenge. It wasn't pretty. In fact, it was repulsive.

As if that's not bad enough, when Gideon returned home, he used the battle spoils to make a golden ephod (an ornamental breastplate worn by the high priest), which became an idol of a sort, leading Gideon and his family away from the One who had so graciously delivered them from Midian. Not a happy ending.

More than anything, Gideon's story shows us how very important it is to stay focused on God. As long as he trusted in the Lord, everything went well, but as soon as he started thinking, "I've got this!" and trusted in his own abilities, things spiraled out of control. His sinful heart took over, and he wrote God out of the story.

Our own sinful hearts can just as easily control us. The only remedy is to allow God to control us instead.



MONDAY, JULY 23 — National Hot Dog Day.
Sure, you may be a little skeptical of its ingredients, but you can't deny the hot dog as the official "sandwich" of summer. Gather your favorite toppings and throw a hot dog party!

Identifying Optical Illusions

WHAT'S WRONG WITH SELFISH AMBITION?

There's a great scene in the classic movie "The American President" (1995) when Lewis Rothschild (Michael J. Fox) tells President Andrew Shepherd (Michael Douglas) how it really is. In the weeks prior, Shepherd allowed his opponent to run rampant with wild claims about his character. While Shepherd sat on his hands, voter loyalty shifted to his opponent.

In a high-intensity oval office

grand promises. The distinction between genuine and false leadership is an important one to make. Can you tell the difference?

MANIPULATIVE APPEALS (READ JUDGES 9:1-6.)

The people of Shechem couldn't differentiate between a real leader and an imposter. When Abimelech stepped up to the microphone,

SELF-GIVING SERVICE (READ JUDGES 9:7-9.)

Your life is not about you. It's about God. Once that's fully understood, you live the life God intended you to live: one that honors and glorifies Him wherever you may be. According to the Westminster Shorter Catechism, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever."

That's exactly what the olive tree in Jotham's parable intended to do. In stark contrast to Abimelech, the olive tree was more concerned with fulfilling its life's purpose of honoring God than honoring itself. It wasn't interested in doing anything else, and so, it refused to reign over the other trees.

FALSE SECURITY (READ JUDGES 9:14-15.)

"The one who lives under the protection of the Most High dwells in the shadow of the Almighty," says Psalm 91:1. If it was shade they were after, the people of Shechem should've turned to the Lord, but they turned to a bramble instead. Foolishly, they preferred the rule of a scoundrel to the rule of God.

Don't fall under the guise of empty

DIG DEEPER

JUDGES 9:1-9,14-15,56-57

"THESE ARE THE YEARS WHEN A MAN CHANGES INTO THE MAN HE'S GOING TO BECOME FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE; JUST BE CAREFUL WHO YOU CHANGE INTO."

— UNCLE BEN PARKER, "SPIDER-MAN"

WATCH

For a good visual of distinguishing selfish ambition from selfless sacrifice, watch the 2011 version of "The Three Musketeers."

ON THE WEB

For added emphasis on the topic of purposeful living, read the article "Living a Life Less Ordinary" by L.C. Baker at threadsmedia.com.

LISTEN TO ...

Song: "Give Me Faith"
Artist: Elevation Worship
Album: *For the Honor*
(Deluxe Edition)

IF YOU ALLOW SELFISHNESS TO CONTROL YOU, IT'LL BE YOUR UNDOING AS WELL.

meeting, Rothschild confronts Shepherd: "People want leadership, Mr. President, and in the absence of genuine leadership, they'll listen to anyone who steps up to the microphone. They want leadership. They're so thirsty for it they'll crawl through the desert toward a mirage, and when they discover there's no water, they'll drink the sand." Shepherd replies, "People don't drink the sand because they're thirsty. They drink the sand because they don't know the difference."

It's far too easy to fall under the spell of a charismatic leader with

they listened, and the results were disastrous. Both Abimelech and the people of Shechem were to blame: Abimelech for allowing his greed to control him, and the Shechemites for following such a worthless leader.

Our life's aim is to elevate God, not ourselves. We do that by placing God first, above all else, even above our own hopes and dreams. We also elevate God by standing up for our convictions and refusing to follow leaders who don't honor Him. To do that, you must know the difference between water and sand.



Last Man Standing

HOW ARE YOU USING YOUR LIFE?

"Trivial Pursuit" isn't for the faint of heart. It's a game for masters of trivia, history, sports, and pop culture. Trying to win a game of "Trivial Pursuit" without any knowledge of American culture would be futile. It's impossible.

As believers, God has empowered and enabled us to master whatever pursuit He has set before us, but doing it without Him is impossible.

but with His empowering and enabling Spirit, nothing is impossible. If you wait until you're good enough for God, you'll be waiting forever.

God doesn't discredit using you for His glory because of your past failures. He turned a murderer into a law-giver (Moses), an adulterer into a king (David), and a persecutor into a missionary (Paul). Samson wasn't perfect either; in many ways, he was

ible strength for the glory of God. He had never known a life apart from the presence of God, and He took that presence for granted. Sadly, his extraordinary potential lay untapped.

The Lord gives gifts to His people for one reason: so that He may be glorified. When we hoard our gifts or use them to our own benefit, we're not using them as God intended. Don't fool yourself into thinking that it's your talent or your abilities that enable you, for it's God's power that's at work within you.

GOD DOESN'T DISCREDIT USING YOU FOR HIS GLORY BECAUSE OF YOUR PAST FAILURES.

EMPOWERED BY THE LORD (READ JUDGES 13:24-25.)

From the moment his parents learned of his impending arrival, Samson was set apart for God. As a Nazirite, there were three specific things he was to avoid: wine, dead bodies, and haircuts. Strange? Yes. But in his time, those three things were symbols of his separation from the rest of society. As long as he was different, God blessed Samson with His presence — and Samson needed Him.

And so do we. Apart from God, you and I are ordinary human beings,

worse. But God used him anyway. If God could use such flawed men in extraordinary ways, then He can certainly use you and me.

UNREALIZED POTENTIAL (READ JUDGES 16:4-5,15-17.)

For all of his outward strength, Samson was a weenie when it came to matters of the heart. His greatest weakness was his inability to walk away from bad relationships. The longer he stayed with Delilah, the weaker his resolve grew, and when he was with her, he wasn't using his incred-

THE TRUTH (READ JUDGES 16:19-20.)

God didn't choose Samson because of his strength. Samson was extraordinarily strong because he was chosen. Yet Samson had played casually with his God-given calling and gifts; now they were gone. But he had become so spiritually insensitive he didn't even know God's presence had left him.

Since New Testament times, the Holy Spirit lives permanently in the lives of all believers. But in the Old Testament, God's presence, or the Holy Spirit, came on a person to accomplish a specific purpose or task. If the person

DIG DEEPER

JUDGES 13:24-25; 16:4-5, 15-17,19-20

"GOD MADE MAN IN HIS OWN IMAGE, AND ONE OF THE NOBLEST FEATURES OF THE DIVINE LIKENESS IN MAN IS HIS CAPACITY TO THINK."

— JOHN STOTT

RECOMMENDED READ

For a look inside the mind of an athlete whose faith and ability have made him one of the most provocative figures in football, read *Through My Eyes* by Tim Tebow (available at lifeway.com).

WATCH

Watch the 2011 version of "Captain America: The First Avenger" for an inspiring look at how the weakly character Steve Rogers is used in extraordinary ways in spite of his personal flaws.

LISTEN TO ...

Song: "Inheritance"
Artist: Danen Kane
Album: *Love Is Waiting*





The Domino Effect

ARE YOU CONSISTENTLY LIVING BY GOD'S STANDARDS?

In November 2008, a group in the Netherlands toppled the longest domino chain in history: 4,345,027 carefully arranged dominoes tipped against their neighbors and fell one after the other. It only took one tiny push to start the chain reaction, but once it started, it couldn't be stopped. The domino effect was in motion.

The principle applies to more than dominoes. It only takes one

misunderstanding of God and His ways had disastrous results for her son, who walked headlong into sin with the approval and encouragement of his "faithful" mother.

It's easy to lead others astray when you don't know what you believe. As Christ followers, we're charged with bringing people closer to God, but if we're not careful, our ignorant actions can have the opposite

participated in it, giving them a false sense of security and righteousness.

The Levite's problem was the same as the rest of Israel, including Micah's family. He didn't have a relationship with the Lord or His Word, and because he didn't experience God as Lord, he did whatever seemed best at the moment. His ignorance displays the shocking condition of the people of Israel in all their pitiful splendor: They were in bad shape if their own priests didn't know the difference between God's ways and the world's.

No one is excused from the tendency toward sin. Everyone — even those in positions of leadership — is prone to it apart from a saving knowledge of God. Without the Living Word coursing through your veins, you're just as powerless to stop the spread of sin as the Levite. Only knowing the Word of God truly and deeply can protect you from falling into the same trap.

IT'S EASY TO LEAD OTHERS ASTRAY WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU BELIEVE.

spark to ignite a raging inferno, and a sudden impact can cause an avalanche. The same is true for sin. One tiny little sin can spread like the plague, infecting all who come in contact with it. When that happens, the only effective antidote is the Word of truth.

effect, and we, like Micah's mother, will end up leading people we love farther away from God. That's why it's so important to measure your beliefs and actions by the Word of God. It's the only standard that matters.

A SQUANDERED CALLING (READ JUDGES 17:7-8,12-13.)

If anyone should've known better, it was the Levite. As a priest, he bore the responsibility of instructing others in the ways of God, but instead of correcting the appalling ignorance of Micah's family, he

A TRAGIC MISUNDERSTANDING (READ JUDGES 17:1-6.)

The weak faith of Micah's mother was so watered down and tainted by Canaanite traditions that it could hardly be recognized as sincere. Her tragic

AN APPALLING CONDITION (READ JUDGES 18:30-31.)

It's chilling to consider the results of one thoughtless action. Micah's story demonstrates how quickly sin spreads

DIG DEEPER

**JUDGES 17:1-8,12-13;
18:30-31**

"AN UNEXAMINED LIFE IS NOT WORTH LIVING."

— SOCRATES

RECOMMENDED READ

As this lesson points out, the Word of God firmly planted in our hearts and minds can protect us from the domino effect of sin and destruction. Check out George Guthrie's *Read the Bible for Life* to help you better know and understand the spiritual discipline of Scripture reading (available at lifeway.com).

LISTEN TO ...

Song: "Nothing Holding Me Back"
Artist: Bryan & Katie Torwalt
Album: *Here On Earth*





Beyond Status Updates ARE YOUR LOVE AND ACTIONS GENUINE?

When we're in love, we send text messages declaring our feelings and update our Facebook statuses to reflect our emotions. But when it comes down to it, we all know that text messages and status updates are shallow expressions of love. Love that doesn't cost anything isn't love at all. You have to back up your words with actions. As believers, we're called to love one another with

It would, of course, have been most convenient for Naomi to request their continued presence, but Naomi wasn't driven by convenience. She was driven by love, and that love placed their well-being over her own. Real love puts others first, and Naomi's selflessness placed her in good company. The clearest picture we have of such sacrificial love is Jesus Christ, who laid aside

love compels us to help each other in times of deepest need — even at the risk of losing everything.

Orpah left, but Ruth vehemently refused to abandon Naomi, pledging to remain with her mother-in-law all the days of her life. It couldn't have been easy to leave behind all that was familiar to her, but Ruth wasn't motivated by ease. She was motivated by love, and that love compelled her to do everything she could to help her mother-in-law. She promised to stick with Naomi, no matter what.

WE'RE CALLED TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER WITH A CHRIST-LIKE LOVE.

a Christ-like love, which we should express in meaningful ways.

SACRIFICIAL EXPRESSION OF LOVE (READ RUTH 1:11-13A.)

They were all she had left. After fleeing from famine in Israel, first Naomi's husband, then her two sons died, and she was left with only her two daughters-in-law. You would think that she would cling closely to the two women, but instead, she lovingly urged them to return home to their own people. She had nothing to offer them, and she knew it.

heaven to die a criminal's death. And He did it for each of us.

When you love people with that same type of sacrificial love, you broadcast a beautiful picture of the way Christ has loved you. As a recipient of that love, sharing it with others is the least you can do.

DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT (READ RUTH 1:15-17.)

Commitment can be scary. Point blank. It requires letting go of what we desire in order to put another's needs before our own. But Christ's

DEMONSTRATION OF COMMITMENT (READ RUTH 1:18; 2:2-3.)

The old adage says that actions speak louder than words, and there's perhaps no better way of proving love. Ruth didn't just say she'd stick with Naomi. She actually did it. She said she would do something, and she followed through, demonstrating that her devotion was true.

Far too often, we offer empty promises to our brothers and sisters in Christ, agreeing to whisper prayers that are never prayed and promising to be there when we have no intention of showing up. There's nothing

DIG DEEPER

**RUTH 1:11-13A,15-18;
2:2-3,11-12**

"GOD NORMALLY CALLS US ALONG THE LINE OF OUR GIFTEDNESS, BUT THE PURPOSE OF GIFTEDNESS IS STEWARDSHIP AND SERVICE, NOT SELFISHNESS."

— OS GUINNESS

FOR FURTHER STUDY

As we learn from Ruth and Naomi, relationships are critical. For more about how to relate well with others, read *Relate: Knowing, Loving, and Forgiving the People in Your Life* (available at threadsmedia.com).

WORD STUDY

RUTH — The woman, an ancestor of David and Jesus, and the biblical book which tells the story of the reversal of fortunes for Ruth and her mother-in-law, Naomi.

LISTEN TO ...

Song: "Made for More"
Artist: B. Reith (feat. Lecrae & Lisa Gungor)
Album: *How the Story Ends*





Embracing the Mission

HOW ARE YOU MANAGING YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES?

In *Gone with the Wind*, Scarlett O'Hara finds herself in a very difficult situation following her retreat from Atlanta during the Civil War. She returns home to Tara only to discover that there's little food, hardly any money, and no one to provide it apart from herself. So she squares her shoulders and gets to work, taking care of her family members in their deepest crisis. She took responsibility for their welfare when they needed it most.

own business when an opportunity for marriage landed at his feet — literally. As a man whose character had been shaped by the character of the God He served, he chose to accept Ruth's bold proposal and offered her redemption.

Redeeming someone doesn't mean that you have to marry them, as Boaz did Ruth, but it does mean accepting some measure of responsibility for their physical and spiri-

and obedience to God's plan. Are you doing your part today?

ACTING WITH INTEGRITY (READ RUTH 4:1-4A.)

Boaz was willing to provide for Ruth and Naomi as their redeemer but only if the proper steps were taken according to the law. By law, the closest relative had a prior claim. So by first offering Naomi's land and Ruth's hand to a closer relative, Boaz showed respect both for his family and for the law of God. He was a man of integrity.

There's a right and a wrong way to go about everything. Even if our hearts are in the right place, doing the right thing in the wrong way can cause more harm than good. The ends don't always justify the means. Choose to be a person of integrity who honors God by doing the right things in the right way.

EMBRACING A SECURE FUTURE (READ RUTH 4:9-10,13,17.)

Redemption is a churchy sounding word to us, but it originated as a commercial term that referred to buying something back or canceling out debt. A redeemer was one who

DOING THE RIGHT THING IN THE WRONG WAY CAN CAUSE MORE HARM THAN GOOD.

Scarlett wasn't perfect. In fact, her conduct on many occasions was deplorable. She took care of her family, but she did it at the expense of her honor and integrity. Believers, on the other hand, are called to a higher standard. Not only are we expected to take care of the helpless, but we're to do so with integrity as we follow the lead of God.

tual well-being. Maybe your Sunday School class can adopt a needy family in the area to care for, or perhaps your friends can help build a home for someone less fortunate. When we care for people in the same way God has cared for us, we proclaim a powerful testimony of His mercy and grace to a world that desperately needs redeeming.

ACCEPTING RESPONSIBILITY (READ RUTH 3:10-13A.)

Boaz was simply going about his

The Book of Ruth shows us how different people, each one carrying out his or her responsibilities, painted a beautiful picture of redemption

DIG DEEPER

RUTH 3:10-13A; 4:1-4A, 9-10,13,17

"YOU ARE NOT ONLY RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT YOU SAY, BUT ALSO FOR WHAT YOU DO NOT SAY!"

— MARTIN LUTHER

RECOMMENDED READ

If you've ever felt devastated, struggled as a stranger, longed to be loved, or wept along the way, you'll find a loyal sister in Ruth. Check out *Ruth: Loss, Love, & Legacy* by Kelly Minter for a great read and further study (available at lifeway.com).

WORD STUDY

INTEGRITY (noun) — The state of being complete or undivided.

LISTEN TO ...

Song: "Solid Rock"
Artist: Austin Stone Live
(feat. Aaron Ivey)
Album: *Austin Stone Live*



