

BTL: Wk 10: Ses 10: Conquest and Judges Part 2

This is lesson 10, the Conquest and the Judges, Part Two.

Let's begin with prayer: In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Lord, we thank you for giving us direction in our life. We thank you that you will never leave us nor forsake us. Lord, we can't even imagine what life would be like without you. We thank you for giving us your word. And particularly these stories during the period of the Judges what it means to be without you and to adhere to your word. Remind us, Lord, every day to teach our children and our grandchildren, and to walk in an upright way. We also call on the intercession of our dear mother during these studies. Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen. In the name of Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Well, we are still on the green period, as you can see, right behind me here, the Conquest and the Judges, we've covered the Book of Joshua, now we're going into the Book of Judges, and it's the green period. They have occupied the land in the Book of Joshua, but they haven't utterly occupied the land. There are still pockets of the land that are filled with Canaanites. And this is going to be a problem for Israel, particularly as Israel now is going to lose their leader, Joshua. And so, this is going to be during the period of the Judges. This Book of the Judges is going to be one of the times where Israel really doesn't have a big visible leader. In fact, the Book of Judges kind of encapsulates the attitude at this time in that every man does what was right in his own eyes. Can you imagine living at a time where everyone does with what's right in their own eyes? I think that in some ways we're living in those days, even in the church, to some degree, some people say, *Well, I don't see it that way. That's not the way I see it*. And so, in some ways, we're living in the period of the Judges where every man does what is right in his own eyes, and *truth is relative*. So, as we begin to study this Book of Judges and we start to look at not only our own culture but look at your own life. Because as I studied, I see my own life in these incredible stories. During this time, we left off in our last Book, Joshua, right before Joshua, actually, where Moses said in Deuteronomy six that, If you're going to live over in this land of Canaanites, if you're going to live with only one God, **Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one**. And in Deuteronomy 6: 6 - 9, Moses said, **You're going to have to teach your children**. Listen to how the Book of Judges opens up in chapter two, starting with verse eight. *And Joshua was the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord died at the age of 110 years. And they buried him within the bounds of his inheritance, in Timnath Heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of the mountain of Gaash. And all the generation also were gathered to their fathers and there arose another generation after them, who did not know the Lord, or the work which he had done for Israel*. So, there you have it. In one generation, the story is lost. They're not teaching their children. It goes on in verse 11, And the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and serve the baals. And they forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods from among the gods of the peoples who were round about them and bow down to them. And they provoked the Lord to anger. they forsook the Lord and serve the Baals and the Ashtaroath. So, the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to the plunderers who plundered them. And he sold them into the power of their enemies' roundabout so that they could no longer withstand their enemies. Whenever they marched out. The hand of the Lord was against them for evil, as the Lord had warned, and as the Lord had sworn to them, they were in great distress. So, here's the people who suddenly **don't know the Lord**, this new generation that comes up, they don't know the Lord. And the reason they don't know the Lord is because they haven't been taught. And their parents didn't live their lives in such a way that it was a testimony that there's only one God. So, they didn't they didn't teach their children, they didn't worship just one God. Now, the question is, will Israel do what Moses said to do when they came into the promised land? Or will the Canaanites have a profound influence, a profound impact on Israel? And you're going to see towards the end of this work

the answer is that *the Canaanites are the ones who had the profound influence on Israel, because Israel fails to heed the word of the Lord*. And so, to start off by looking at this cycle that takes place throughout the Book of Judges. You'll notice on the green on the chart, the green period, you'll notice this is 12 Judges, and there's a cycle that takes place that I want to walk you through. But before we look at that cycle, I want to just pause there for a moment and let that factor sink in, that **this generation didn't know the Lord**. They didn't know the Lord; You know that was raised right after Vatican two. I was born in 1957. And right after that, when I was just a little guy, Vatican two took place, and the Church was at that point, kind of trying to find herself and what Vatican two meant, and as a result, a lot of people my age that simply were not catechized, they didn't know the faith. So, by the time that I was 18 years old, I really didn't know much about the Catholic faith. And today, over 50% of Catholics, by their own admission, do not believe in the real presence in the Eucharist, the real presence of Christ, about only 38 to 40% of registered Catholics go to Mass on a regular basis. **Somewhere along the line, we've lost the story**. And that's what happens to Israel during this period. You can see on your chart, how this cycle takes place. There's a cycle that it starts with sin. Certainly, if you're not teaching your children, and you're not living as though there's one God, you're going to get involved in sin. And that's what Israel did during this period, they started worshipping the Baals, worshipping the Ashtaroath. And once they were involved with sin, sin has a way of grabbing you. And it's kind of mixes up your life. And this is what happened to Israel sin, and sin leads to what? Servitude. They become servants of the neighboring nations, slaves. Sin will always lead to slavery in your life. It might look fun, it might look enticing, but the end of sin is death. The end of sin is bondage. The end of sin is pain. And so, **they start off with sin, and it ends up in servitude**, and they become slaves of the neighboring nations. And what do they do? They begin to call upon the Lord. So, sin moves to servitude, servitude ends up with supplication, they cry to God help us out, really, we won't do this anymore. We need your help, and God hears them. And what does He do? He brings salvation, He raises up a Judge, and that Judge delivers them from their enemies. And we have 12 Judges that are listed here. Now, these aren't Judges like we know Judges today. This isn't like Judge Wapner or Judge Judy. When we talk about a Judge, we're talking about like a warrior leader, either someone who's great at waging war or a strategist, someone who can rally the troops like Deborah, the only female Judge. Well, these Judges are divided up into what can be called major Judges and minor Judges. Major Judges are Judges who have quite a bit written about them, like Samson and then there are minor Judges who are just barely mentioned. But over seven cycles, or seven times around the mountain, if you will, different Judges are raised up at different times to deliver Israel from her enemies. And it's in the midst of these incredible stories that we begin to see more and more of the hands of God, and we see **God revealing Himself in words and deeds**. So let's take a look at this. I want to read to you something in chapter three, verses 7 through 11, which is the first of these seven cycles, and you can actually see the cycle as I'm reading. It says, this is dealing with the Judge, Othniel, you can see on the timeline chart, *And the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, forgetting the Lord*.

1. Sin #1: **They did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, forgetting the LORD their God, and serving the Baals and Ashtaroath**. So, sin, verse eight, *Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of the enemies*. He sold them into their hands, right? And the sons of Israel served their enemies for eight years. So, you have sin, and you have servitude, verse nine. *But when the sons of Israel cried to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliver*. He raises up a Judge, and He delivered a Judge who delivers them from their enemy. In this case, it's Othniel. And then verse 10, *The Spirit of the Lord came upon him and he judged Israel. He went out to war and the Lord gave the enemy, the king of Mesopotamia, into his hands, and his hand prevailed over his enemies*. Some of these names are so long, I just wish they would call him Hank. So, the Lord had rest, the land had **rested another 40 years**. And then it says in verse 12, *Then the sons of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord*. And so, it starts up this cycle again. Now, when I read that, I got to be honest with you, when I read that, sometimes I read the Old Testament of book of Joshua and book of Judges, and I say to

97 myself, Hey, Israel, get a life .I mean, get real. It's just you keep going over and over and over. Here's
98 God trying to reveal Himself to you; trying to demonstrate Himself strong, and you don't seem to get it,
99 you keep falling into these patterns over and over and over. And then all of a sudden, I look into the
100 mirror at myself and I realize, that's me. That's me. How many times have I stood in a confession lines,
101 with the same thing I'm dealing with? You know, I've gone to confession all of these years and I wish I
102 could say to you, I've never repeated anything. They're all original. God doesn't want us to come up with
103 original ones. He doesn't mind some of the old ones, we just need to start working on them. It's rough
104 when we have to come up with original ones all the time, but I find myself saying the same thing and
105 that God is trying to speak to me, but I'm not listening. So, I can really learn from these incredible
106 stories. Well, in the Book of Judges, where you have quite a bit of period of time between these Judges
107 where there's rest, for example, Othniel, he Judged for eight years and dealt with the Mesopotamians
108 and then there were 40 years of peace. The Moabites and the Philistines came against Israel in chapter
109 three and Ehud and Shamgar where the Judges that rose up and then there was 80 years of rest. And
110 then they started to sin again, and after Deborah and Barak, there were 40 years after Gideon, 40 years,
111 and Tola and Jair for 45 years, Jephthah, 6 years, Samson 20 years. So, you have all these periods of rest
112 after the greatest victories, and then they get right back into the cycle again. So, what we're going to do
113 today is we're going to take a look at three of the Judges, Deborah, Gideon, and Samson, and then I'd
114 like to take a look at Ruth as it fits in the context of the Book of Judges. The first one is the only woman,
115 that's Deborah. Deborah is one of the great and mighty Judges. And of course, it's the Canaanites who
116 are coming against Israel in chapter four and five, and God raises up Deborah, and she leads Barak in
117 beating Sisera. And she is a mighty strategist, not so much a warrior herself but more like a prophetess
118 who is very, very strong. She has a very spiritual sense of warfare, and she leads the call against Sisera.
119 What's interesting about it is that Debra's name in Hebrew (*Dabūrāh*) is hornet. And (Deborah) *Dabūrāh*
120 means **buzzing bee**. And what I find fascinating is that way back in Exodus chapter 23, (I don't know if
121 you remember this from your reading before), but clear back in Exodus chapter 23, do you remember
122 the story of how God said that He would drive the Canaanites out by Israel as if being *chased by bees*
123 *and hornets*? You remember that? He said, clear back in Exodus 23. That really the idea was that God
124 would drive out the enemies before Israel if Israel would obey. And they would be driven out as if they
125 were chased by bees and Hornets. And Deborah name is a *buzzing bee*. And she is a mighty warrior.
126 The second one is Gideon, and I really enjoy the story of Gideon a lot because sometimes I feel like
127 Gideon. Have you ever felt like Gideon? Ever felt like *Hey, who am I?* You know, I don't have any
128 particular talent. I'm nobody. Why in the world would God want to use me? God only uses talented
129 people. He only uses fast people, people with money, clever people, not me. So, we have the story of
130 Gideon, which is really God calling on the unlikely one and this is in chapter six. I'm going to start with
131 verse 11. It says, *Now the angel of the Lord came and sat under the oak of Ophrah, which belonged to*
132 *Joash the Abiezrite, as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press to hide it from the*
133 *Midianites. And the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, The Lord is with you, you mighty*
134 *man of valor*. Now I'm a lot like Gideon and the last thing, I think, when looking in the mirror, you think
135 *YOU are a man of VALOR*, do you think of yourself like that? I don't think of myself like that. And to have
136 somebody come up to me and say, You are a man of valor. I would look at them thinking, *you've been*
137 *drinking. You don't know me*. And so, he gets this message from the representative of the Lord, *You are*
138 *a man of valor*. And Gideon said to him, *Please, sir, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this befallen*
139 *us? And where are all his wonderful deeds which our fathers recounted to us saying, Did not the Lord*
140 *bring us up from Egypt? But now the Lord has cast us off and given us into the hands of Midian*. And the
141 Lord turned to him and said, *Go in this might of yours and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian; do not I*
142 *send you?* And he said to him, *"Please, Lord, how can I deliver Israel? Behold, my clan is the weakest in*
143 *the Manasseh, and I am the least in my family*. So, you can see the self-image that Gideon has here,
144 and that is that he is from Manasseh. And he's from the weakest clan in Manasseh, he's the weakest
145 member. So basically, saying to God, *you just chose the weakest link in the entire family, you chose me*.

146 But what I find really fascinating about Gideon is that Gideon was not out filling out applications to be
147 used by God in a mighty way. What was he doing? He was doing his daily job. He was at work, and God
148 chose him. And this is a **beautiful thing about the kingdom of God is that when it comes to being used by**
149 **God in His Kingdom, you don't have to take out ads in the newspaper.** You don't have to wear special
150 clothing, you don't have to wave banners, **you just have to be faithful.** And you have to be is willing to
151 be used by God. Mother Teresa said that **God is not looking for people with great ability, but he's**
152 **looking for faithfulness.** And that's why Gideon is chosen here because he is faithful. When I used to be
153 a pastor, I used to have people come up to me, particularly women, and in their late 20s. And they
154 would come up to me and they were so worried. They were so worried that they had missed the boat.
155 They weren't going to get married, the biological clock is ticking, and they don't know what they're going
156 to do. And some would actually feel like they've got to go out there in an almost in a hunting campaign
157 for a husband. And I would say to them, *Do you trust God with your eternal soul? Do you trust God for*
158 *eternity? For salvation? Absolutely. Then can you trust Him for a husband? Do you believe that God*
159 *knows where you're at and that He can bring Mr. Right into your life? Yes, I do. Then be about God's*
160 *business. Be faithful, day in and day out, and God will be faithful, and God will show you who your*
161 *husband has, or who are, who your wife is.* And so that that is a wonderful thing. Every time I read that
162 about Gideon, it reminds me of the fact that **God has called me to be faithful-not clever,** but to be
163 faithful. But Gideon asks that question in verse 13. It's a question that I've asked a lot in my life at
164 different time. And that is, **If God is with us, and God is the God of miracles, why don't we see Him now?**
165 *How come we don't see Him anymore?* Now, that question might be more of a subjective question,
166 *How come I'm not seeing Him anymore?* because I know that God does still do miracles and that God
167 does still heal and deliver people from bondage. I just read recently of a wonderful healing of a deacon
168 who prayed to Cardinal Newman. And he was instantly healed as his body was heated up. And he felt
169 God moving through his body, and he was healed. See, God does still work in miraculous ways today, in
170 marvelous ways today, but he has a tendency to work around those who trust Him and are willing to get
171 out of the boat and walk on water. I like what Paul said to the Corinthians, he said, *Consider your call.*
172 *Not many wise, not many powerful, not many of noble birth but* **God chose what is foolish to confound**
173 **the wise.** Sometimes, I think of myself as Gideon, because what I do almost on a daily basis is something
174 that I was terrified of doing. That is public speaking. When I was in junior high and high school, I had a
175 deathly fear of standing up in front of people. My GI tract did not agree with public speaking. And I
176 became very frightened. And three out of the first five times, I passed out cold, because I couldn't stand
177 the idea of being in front of people. And so, this isn't something I chose but God chose me. And then He
178 transformed me and gave me a love and a joy in serving Him in this capacity. So, I understand going
179 away with Gideon feeling like, *Lord, I think you chose me, but I think you made a very poor choice.* God is
180 the faithful one and God is going to use Gideon here, just like Paul said to the Corinthians. But then
181 Gideon, he's not quite sure, and he fleeces the Lord. This is in chapter six and verse 36. How many of you
182 read this? How many of you have ever fleeced God? Okay, I'm the only one. Okay, I'll tell you my story. I
183 have done this in the past, you know, fleece God is one of these things where you throw something
184 out there, well, if this happens, and that happens, then I'll know, like a sign, give me a sign. And so,
185 Gideon has to have a sign. So, what does he do? He has a fleece. So, he throws it out there and he says,
186 *If there is dew on the fleece alone, and it is dry on all the ground, then I will know that you will deliver*
187 *Israel by my hand,* Then I'll know that wasn't good enough, so he has to reverse it. And I think that he
188 finally got the message that this was God; he's looking for some kind of sign. I used to play with toys and
189 games all the time and when I was growing up in high school, I would ask, *Lord, if you want me to go*
190 *into work today,* may five green VW drive by in the next minute. You want me to go out with that
191 beautiful girl over there, may a car go by in the next hour, you know, so I know how to set my places up.
192 So that God would speak very clearly in my life, but this is what he is doing. And he wants God to give
193 him a sign in the end and in chapter seven, verse 22, Gideon is triumphant and once he's triumphant,
194 what happens? People want to make him a king. See they have been looking for good leadership. We

are made for leadership. We're not made to go this alone. We're not made to be isolated, were made to be in community; we are made to follow leadership, godly leadership. And they want to change now in just a little bit. Now this is in the green period right here. They're asking Gideon to be their king. Gideon is not going to be their king. But what's going to happen in a purple period here in our next lesson in First Samuel, chapter eight, is that the people are going to formally ask Samuel for a king, *we want to King like all the other nations*. And so, we're actually moving now closer and closer toward a king in Israel, and eventually we're going to see the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, Jesus Christ. So, they asked Gideon into rule over them, which is a cry for leadership, and he doesn't. And then in chapter 10, what do they do they start worshiping again the gods of the bordering people. And so, they get back into the cycle, and Jessica raises them up. But it's in chapters 13 through 16, that I think a lot of people find the most interesting story. And that's the story of Samson. Samson takes up the lion's share of the text because it's just a fascinating character. He's from the tribe of Dan. And the tribe of Dan is located in the south west corner of Israel. Remember, Israel was about 15 miles wide, hundred and 50 miles long. In the southwest corner, we have the tribe of Dan, that is on the on the edge, right next to what it would be today called the Gaza Strip. And so, the tribe of Dan is right down by the five Philistine cities, Gaza is one of these cities that are down in the southwest corner occupied by the Philistines. And the Philistines are pretty good warriors. And the Danites are not very strong at all. In fact, later on in the Book of Judges, the Danites are going to move north toward the Sea of Galilee, because they cannot withstand the attack of the Philistines in the southwest part. Well, the story is a story about Samson, and Samson is a big guy, strong guy, and he likes to date women. And he likes puns and puzzles and things like that, and his name means *sunshine*. The name Samson means sunshine. And I want to take you through this story because the story on its own is fascinating. But you can also see in the story of Samson as a micro vision of the macro reality of Israel. In other words, what's happening to Samson is happening to Israel, the way Samson becomes weak is the way Israel becomes weak. The way Samson becomes blind is the way Israel becomes blind. The source of Samson strength is the source of Israel's strength. Philistines want to weaken them, and they want to destroy them. So, we see this story of Samson and a woman by the name of Delilah. Now before we get into the description of Delilah here, it's important to realize in chapter 13, that it tells us a little bit about Samson, and Samson was under what was called a Nazirite vow. It tells us in verse five, *For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. (Speaking of Samson) No razor shall come upon his head for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God, from his birth*. So, Samson isn't as a Nazirite vow. What's a Nazirite? A Nazirite is someone who has taken a private vow to God, about of faithfulness to God that is different from a covenant. It's not a covenant, but a vow, Like going on in the church today we have private vows that are made to God or private consecration; people might be a consecrated virgin, or there might be an order in the church where they're making a private vow to God. That's what Samson is under here, his hair is the Nazirite vow. The hair is an outward manifestation of his fidelity to God. You don't cut the hair under the nazarite vow. If the hair is gone, then it's a sign of infidelity, personal private vows to Yahweh were made to consecrate yourself to service and holiness. So that's where Samson is. So, when people ask, you know, what's the source of Samson strength, a lot of people say, it was his hair. Well, if hair was the source of strength, then in high school, I could have whupped all of you. It's not the length of his hair that is his strength, it is what his hair stands for that means something. It's a Nazirite vow. He is in a special relationship with God if he gives up that special relationship with God, he will be like all other men and that's what Delilah is going to go after. Delilah wants to know, how do you who's strong and unique? How did you become weak? And just like any other name? How do I unlock this mystery? Now let's look at the wireless for a moment. Who's Delilah? Delilah was a Philistine but not just any Philistine. She had a talk show at night on radio. Love Songs. You've heard of this before, Delilah. Samson liked to listen to the radio. I noticed a couple of you over here we're writing that down. That wasn't true. Actually. That was a joke. Delilah was a Philistine woman who took a liking to Samson took a liking to the while now. Delilah (*Lilah-Hebrew for night*), her name doesn't literally mean nighttime. But

it is kind of interesting. And it gives you a way to remember sort of the moral of the story herein the Hebrew to say *night* is *Lilah*. And an easy way to remember this is that the nighttime of the Philistines - *Lilah*, the night of the Philistines in this story is going to eclipse the sunshine of Israel- Samson. The light is going to go out in Israel because of infidelity. They're not faithful to God. So that's the **key insight to the story is that night eclipses the sun, the darkness of the Philistines, eclipses the light of the Israelites**. And through seduction and giving up their strength, which is their covenant relationship with God, they become weak. Now what does she do? She comes to Samson. And she says, *tell me the secret*. She's so strong. *Tell me the secret. How do you become weak? And how do you become just like any other man?*

You see, this is what we're dealing with as Catholics today in America. Yes, I am a man. Yes, I am different. I have weaknesses but God has called me to be different. God has called me to be strong. God has called me to be different, sanctified. Not like any other man, but to be His son and to be a witness of Him in the community. The world is trying to make me just like them and try to get me to agree to what they teach me. But what makes me different? What makes me different is my covenant relationship with God, my fidelity. What makes me different as a husband is my fidelity, and my faithfulness. How do I become like just any other man? Become unfaithful.

And so, what does she do? She asks him these questions. And what does he say? He says, *Well, if they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings that happens*. He goes to sleep; she ties him up. And then she yells *Samson, Samson, the Philistines are upon you*. And he breaks free. And what does she say? *You didn't tell me the truth. You lied to me. You didn't tell me the truth*. So, she asks him again. And then he says, *Well, if they tie me up with new ropes*. So, it happens again, *Samson, Samson, the Philistines are upon you*. He breaks free. And she comes back and says, *Awww. I thought you didn't tell me the truth*. And what happened in the third temptation? She starts to get closer to the hair, but he doesn't say, *cut the hair*. But he's getting closer to it. You can see a weakening withstanding the temptation. And what does he say? He says, *If you tie up my hair and put on like a stick through it, I'll become weak. I will become like any other man*. Well, it happens again. He breaks free strong and she comes back strong, *All Come on. Come on, Sunshine, Sweetie, I thought you said you love me. You told me everything reveal your heart*. What does he do? He tells her everything. He says that a razor has never come to my head. I am a Nazarite. You know that the Anchor Bible Dictionary says that the cutting of the hair of the Nazarite is a reversal of the initiation of the rite. So, he is consciously reversing the initiation of the Nazarite Vow as opposed to the priestly rites. This brings the person back to the **profane status** where he or she began. So, he becomes profane, like any other man, and what happens? He assumes the Lord is going to be with him. He's presuming on the grace of God. And she cuts the hair, and he tries to break free and he cannot break free. It says in verses 20 through 22 that, (this is the saddest part of the story), **He did not know the Lord had left him**. This is presumption. You know that this story takes place all the time in America. It's a story that took place clear back in Israel's history. **But if you look at what's happening to Samson, you realize that it's happening to our teenagers today**. It's happening in the backseat of cars where young girls who have sanctified their life to God and tried to remain pure to save themselves for the man that they marry. They've had a couple of beers. Maybe they got into drugs that night. Some guy said, *If you really love me, you'll give me everything*. If you really love me, you will open your heart. And they do and they become blind and in bondage and shamed. So, these stories are happening today, all around us in America. The good news about Samson is that is **he began to grow again**, which in the story in the context of the story, you can say **he's beginning to repent**, beginning to even though he's blind to see the situation for what it really is. And he repents and regains his strength. You know that story, how he finds the pillars of the building and he pushes on them, and the stones come down on many Philistines that day. He triumphs. And then it was shortly after that in chapter 16 the Danites moved up north, north of the Sea of Galilee, incredible stories. In the midst of these incredible stories of these Judges that God raises up is this beautiful story of Ruth. And Ruth takes place right in the context of Judges even though Ruth is the next Book after. If you're reading through easy Joshua Judges, Ruth.

Ruth belongs in the midst of Judges. Okay, so let's take a look at that. And see how the Book of Ruth is really kind of the opposite of what's happening in Judges. Judges is the story of Israel who was supposed to be worshipping the One God Israel but forsakes the One God of Israel and starts worshiping Baal and Asherah and all the gods of the Canaanites. In the midst of that is the story of Ruth who is a woman who though they worship multiple gods, she's going to forsake the multiple gods and worship the one, true God of Israel. Kind of like what I said in our last lesson that **those on the outside if they are faithful, find themselves on the inside. Those who are on the inside, if they're not faithful find themselves on the outside of God's family.** So, here's how the story goes. There's a woman by the name of Naomi and lives in the south of Jerusalem. She lives in Bethlehem and she was married to a guy by the name of Elimelech. So, Naomi and Elimelech live in Bethlehem and they have two sons, Chilion and Malhon. Very short Book, it's only four chapters. They have two sons Chilion and Mahlon. But then a famine hits the land. And Naomi and Elimelech and their two sons, Chilion and Mahlon, end up leaving and going over across the Jordan to the land of Moab. So, they go over there and Chilion and Malone meet up with a couple of sisters, couple of girls, and they fall in love with them, and they end up getting married. So now Naomi and her husband and her two sons are over in Moab and the boys get married to two Moabite girls. Then tragedy strikes. Naomi's husband, Elimelech dies over in Moab. And then it's even worse. Her two sons rather die, Chilion and Mahlon. So, there's Naomi over in Moab with two daughters-in-law and her two sons and her husband are dead. That's the setting of the story. And so now Naomi comes to her two daughters-in-law and says, *You guys don't have to go back over to Bethlehem with me. I'm going back over there. But you don't have to.* Now Orpah, whose name means to *turn the neck* says, *I'm not going to Bethlehem. I am staying over here.* Even more interesting little story is this. And this one's free by the way for all of you watching a DVD, totally free. Oprah Winfrey. Her original name was (this is out of an interview), I think 1991 and interview that she had); her name was originally Orpah because her family wanted her to have a biblical name. So, they actually took on the name Orpah, but people could not remember how to pronounce it. And they were saying Oprah and it stuck. Back to our story. That's a true story. That's an absolutely true story.

So, Orpah says, *I'm staying over here.* And Naomi said to Ruth, *You don't have to come with me either.* And Ruth thinks, *If I respond correctly, my words will be used in weddings around the world.* So, she responds in Ruth 1:15, (Naomi says to Ruth), *See your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods. Return after your sister-in-law, Ruth.* But Ruth said, *Entreat me not to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go, I will go and where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people and your God, my God, where you die, I will die and there will I be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also, if even death parts me from you.* So, Ruth came back over to Bethlehem with Naomi. And when she came back over, lost her husband, lost her brothers-in-law, she lost her father-in-law, she was back over in Bethlehem, and everything looks bad doesn't it? Doesn't look very good at all. Have you ever felt like that? Life has dealt you a hand that it just doesn't look good. I thought it was going to be good. I thought I had everything that I needed in life taken care of and all the sudden, the tables have turned. Everything that I've counted on is gone and I don't know what to do. That's ~~Naomi~~ Ruth. You can identify with ~~Naomi~~ Ruth. Ruth was faithful. She came back with them to Bethlehem with Naomi and she was allowed to glean the fields to find the grain. And it was in the midst of that gleaning, the humbling of herself, that she found a man by the name of Boaz. And Boaz turns out was her kinsman redeemer. And the kinsman redeemer is someone who will take care of you in the family if your husband dies. So, she has someone who cares for her. My friends, you have someone who cares for you, and that is Jesus Christ. No matter how bleak it is, no matter how difficult the situation is Jesus Christ. And he will redeem you. And guess what? Boaz and Ruth ended having children, they had a child by the name of Obed. Obed and his wife had a boy by the name of Jesse, Jesse and his wife had a boy by the name David. So, Ruth becomes, through her faithfulness, a member of the household of God, a part of the genealogy of Jesus Christ in Matthew's Gospel, she becomes the great grandmother of the Great King David. So, there's a lowly Moabite woman over in Moab, lost her husband, lost her father-in-law,

lost her brother-in-law, her own sister left her and she's just moments away from a relationship that is going to put her in the very center of salvation in what is a beautiful story of faithfulness. What a beautiful story of faithfulness.

And so that always reminds me, you know, no matter how difficult times are, no matter how tragic the story, God always has a purpose. And He's never done with us ever. He's not done with you. So, if you're in that situation, be encouraged today that God does have a plan for you. Be faithful, don't run, don't *turn the neck and go back*, but be faithful. So, I want to end this lesson by bringing out what might be the worst reading in the Bible for many people. Chapter 19, the Benjamites and the mistreatment of the concubine. A terrible story. A story that shakes everybody up. Some people might even say it shook my faith in the Bible; it shouldn't shake your faith in the Bible. But it's okay if it shakes your faith in humanity but not the Bible. The Bible is simply reflecting the truth about humanity and the fallen nature of humanity. It's a very tough chapter and there are some stories in the Bible where there's nothing that can be said that makes one think, I can live with that, I can understand that. What could I say? What can I possibly say about this concubine who was abused all night long then cut up into pieces scattered throughout the land? To say that there's some cultural reason for this that is acceptable. No, not at all. It should shock. Just like earlier, we found out that the human being's life was limited to 120 years and people will ask the question, *Well, how could people live to be 600 years old or 700 years old*. And my point back then, was that we were shocked at the wrong thing; **we should not be shocked that men live six or 700 years old, but you should be shocked why they are dying. Sin is causing death.** That's what should have shocked us. And in the same way here we're not shocked at the Bible and what a terrible story and I have less faith in God. No. It gives us a commentary on just how low man is. And the **influence of the Canaanites upon Israel is shocking.** It tells us in chapter 19 and in verse 22," and they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, base fellows, surrounded the house beating on the door, and they said to the old man, the master of the house, *bring out the man who came into your house so we may know him*. You know the story how he ended up sending out his concubine daughter. The translation here, there's one translation called the bowling translation. And it translates that phrase, local Hellraisers. The literal in Hebrew is quite different than what you see here. **Base fellows**, in the literal Hebrew is the *sons of beliel* which speaks of extreme perversion. In Second 2 Corinthians 6:15, Paul says, This term **beliel** is the term used of *satan*. And it's the opposite of God.

The spiritual lesson here, do not allow the little things to go unchecked, do not allow venial sin to go on checked in your life. Like Samson, who was not paying attention to the little things leading up to major sin, like the Israelites, who have lost their faith in God or not teaching their children, they're not living their life, as if there's one God your way. They are falling, falling, falling, and the story of what they did to these women should absolutely shock you. But what should wake us up in our life today is the realization that we too, can become what we never thought we would become. That our opinions can change. What we're willing to do, what we're willing not to do, is determined by the small decisions in our life, the daily decisions in our life, to worship God and God alone and to teach our children. If we fail to teach our children, you will be shocked in 30 years to what they are used to on TV, what will seem normal to them and shocking to you. You will be shocked at your children the way you are shocked at what's going on here. And that's what the great call to us today. Teach your children. **Teach your children and live your life in obedience to God. That's the lesson for us. We don't want to get so far out there that we are calloused and miss God's voice because if we do, **it doesn't take long to go one step further. And before we know it, we look back and we say, How did I become like us?** We'll see you in our next study that they asked for a king. Things will begin to turn.**

Let's pray name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Lord, we see in the Book of Judges just how bad things can get when we fail to serve you and failed to teach our children. Help us to avoid this word by what is written here. What you said and what you did. We thank you, Lord, for your faithfulness and we pray that we would be faithful in response in Jesus name. Amen. In the name of the Father Son.

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¹ **Nazirite**, (from Hebrew nazar, “to abstain from,” or “to consecrate oneself to”), among the ancient Hebrews, a sacred person whose separation was most commonly marked by his uncut hair and his abstinence from wine. Originally, the **Nazirite** was endowed with special charismatic gifts and normally held his status for life.

The **ten lost tribes** were the ten of the Twelve Tribes of Israel that were said to have been deported from the Kingdom of Israel after its conquest by the Neo-Assyrian Empire circa 722 BCE. These are the tribes of Reuben, Simeon, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Manasseh, and Ephraim; all but Judah and Benjamin (as well as some members of Levi, the priestly tribe which did not have its own territory). Claims of descent from the "lost tribes" have been proposed in relation to many groups, and some religions espouse a messianic view that the tribes will return.

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