

Rossville Church of Christ Doorpost Devo



January 1, 2023



Encouragement from God's Word

Judges: Expect the Unexpected

Expect the unexpected. This is fair advice for those seeking to know and understand the God of Israel. Although unchanging and utterly faithful, this God surprises at every moment. Even in his consistent patterns of working, he baffles and undermines the wisdom of earthly eyes and minds at every turn.

Cont. on pg. 3 and 4

Scripture Plan: Read

The Great Commission

Mon, Tues, Wed.:

Matt. 28:1-15 Each Night

Thurs., Fri., Sat.:

Matt. 28:16-20 Each Night

Devo Plan

1. Mon.--Read and Pray Together
2. Tues.--Read, Pray, Ask Questions, and Discuss
3. Wed.--Read, Pray, and Think about how to Apply
4. Thurs.-Sat.--Repeat steps 1-3 with New Passage
5. Sunday--Pray and Reflect on What was Learned in Worship and Class

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Discussion Questions

Matthew 28:1-15

Discussion Question #1: Discuss the role of fear in this passage. Who is afraid? Why did the angels say to not be afraid?

Discussion #2: Reflect on the passage here. Why is the resurrection such good news? What difference does it make for our lives?

Discussion #3: Why would some people lie about the resurrection? Why would some people not want it to be true?

Matthew 28:16-20

Discussion #1: Why did some of the disciples doubt? What might they have been feeling at that moment?

Discussion #2: Discuss the importance of the Great Commission. Why is Jesus so serious about this? What does it mean to make disciples? What is a disciple?

Discussion #3: How does Jesus' promise impact us? Why did Jesus make sure to say this after He gives the Great Commission? How can we be confident that Jesus will be with us as we make disciples?

Apply and Obey

To obey what Jesus says in Matt. 28:1-20, this upcoming week I will...

I will share what I learned with...

Prayer Points

- Lord, Thank You--For raising Christ from the dead and giving us great hope in Him
- Lord, We Praise You--For being glorious God of all nations and people
- Lord, Help Us--To really make disciples as you have called us to. Help us to remember that Jesus is with us always, strengthening us for your purpose and glory

The strange ways and workings of the Lord are on full display in the book of Judges. Also on display are the predictable patterns of unfaithfulness in God's people Israel. In Judges, the cycle repeats over and over and they unsurprisingly do what they always do: they reject God and his ways, God hands them over to their enemies, they call out for help and deliverance, they thank God when he saves them, and then they soon after fall right back into sinful ways. As Judges 17:6 tells us, **"In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes."** The repetitive process is summed up early on in the book:

"Whenever the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge, and he saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge. For the Lord was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them. But whenever the judge died, they turned back and were more corrupt than their fathers, going after other gods, serving them and bowing down to them. They did not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways" (Judges 2:18-20).

Over and over, Israel fails to be obedient, they are conquered and forced to suffer at the hands other nations, God raises up a leader to save them, and then they do it all over again. Whereas God is consistent in his righteousness, humanity is often tragically unswerving in the habit of sin. Yet God, throughout the book of Judges, constantly keep his people on their toes and demonstrates his power by delivering his people in strange, unexpected, and surprising ways. In chapter 3, he raises up a judge named Ehud, a left-handed man, and uses that peculiar trait to save Israel from the reign of the king of Moab. In the very next chapter, we read about a woman Deborah who became the leader in Israel, a shocking choice for that day and time. When God raised up a timid man Barak alongside Deborah to lead the armies against Israel's oppressor Sisera, she tells him this:

"I will surely go with you. Nevertheless, the road on which you are going will not lead to your glory, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman" (Judges 4:9).

It is amazing enough that God would use a woman (an unlikely hero in these times) to win a great military victory. But even more surprises are in store for first-time readers of the book of Judges.

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the *doorposts* of your house and on your gates." --Deuteronomy 6:4-9

The reader is led to believe that Deborah herself is the woman referenced here as the source of triumph, but later in the same chapter we read that the mighty leader Sisera is brought to his demise by a non-Israelite woman named Jael, who lures him into her tent, lulls him to sleep, and drives a tent peg through his temple, thus saving Israel. One would be hard-pressed to come up with a stranger or more unexpected way for God's people to win victory. Yet over and over in Judges, God uses unlikely people in incredibly strange fashion. The doubtful Gideon is among the weakest in his house in the weakest tribe, yet God wins a mighty victory over Midian through him and just three-hundred men. Jephthah was a wicked man, an outcast, and son of a prostitute. Samson was rebellious and disobedient but still used by God to defeat the Philistines. And even when God brought deliverance through Samson's famed strength, he did it at Samson's greatest moment of weakness, when he was blinded by his enemies and being mocked. Why does God act in this way? Why so strange? Why so unexpected? We get a clue in Judges 7:2, when God commands Gideon to narrow down his army from thousands to a small few:

"The people with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand, lest Israel boast over me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.'"

God's unique way of providing salvation prevents anyone else from getting the credit because human wisdom would never come up with the wild and weird methods that we see in Judges. God stifles and subverts human wisdom to demonstrate the superiority of his wisdom and plan. When we see salvation come through the most unexpected means, there is no other explanation than the fact that the God of surprises is at work. Over two-thousand years ago, the world received the greatest shock of all. God chose to save the world through the son of carpenter and a humble young girl, and this instrument of deliverance looked like the exact opposite of what one would expect, even though he was predicted all along. He was the king, but he acted as a servant. He was mighty, but he was humble. He was beautiful, but he had no physical traits that he should be admired. He was born in a small town and had no earthly riches. And in the ultimate act of strange salvation, God thought it pleasing and right to save the world from sin by sending his son Jesus to die on the cross. All throughout Scriptures, the voices of the prophets and the echoes of the narrative ring clear—the Messiah is coming; expect the unexpected. A suffering servant is coming, and he will transform the world. If we don't think God can use us, expect to be surprised. God works in our lives in ways that we cannot imagine and through people we would not suspect to be prime candidates for his mission. We can be encouraged that we serve a Lord who is the same yesterday, today, and forever, but who is never boring or predictable. We serve a God of surprises.

"Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen" (Ephesians 3:20-21).

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the *doorposts* of your house and on your gates." --Deuteronomy 6:4-9