

Talk It Over 45: Bible Study Edition

Teaching Series: *The Story*

Message: A Few Good Men ... And Women (*Chapter 8*) – Todd Petkau

Passages: Judges

Date: November 11 and 12, 2017

How to use Talk It Over

This version of Talk It Over is designed for groups whose primary focus is studying the Word of God. There is lots of depth in information and questions about the principle passage of the weekend message. This study is designed to be done in 30 to 60 minutes. To take full advantage of the TiO created for our exploration of *The Story* it is recommended that you do the following (in this order): 1) Read the associated chapter in *The Story*; 2) Watch the sermon for the chapter; 3) Gather as a small group and talk together using this document as your guide. Because each chapter in *The Story* contains only pieces of the books of the Bible, please check out page 494-495 to see what parts of the Bible are actually being referenced.

The Main Idea

Obedience, apathy, and disobedience are a cycle. We see it clearly in the book of Judges. But every time the people of Israel fell away from God here was there to pick them back up when they called out to him.

Warm Up Questions: (Choose 1 or 2)

Q1: Do you see your life as a circle or a line?

Q2: If given the opportunity, would you be a judge?

Q3: In thinking about Todd's sermon, what questions or insights about this part of *The Story* did you come away with?

Dig a Little Deeper

The story of judges is centred on personalities but delivers a more profound message about how, when the people of Israel were not focussed on serving God, success fostered apathy and eventually turning from God.

Act 1: The People Forget God (pp. 103-104)

“After [Joshua’s] whole generation had been gathered to their ancestors, another generation grew up who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel. And the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD and served the Baals.”

It did not take long before the people of Israel forgot God. Joshua was dead and so was the whole generation who, along with Joshua, had seen the hand of God as he delivered the promised land into their hands. And at that point the people forgot God and began worshipping the Gods of the other inhabitants of the land. So, God decided that rather than driving those people out of the land he would use them to test the people of Israel and to punish them for abandoning him.

Act 2: Othniel (pp. 104-105)

“The LORD gave Cushan-Risgathaim king of Aram into the hands of Othniel, who overpowered him.”

The people of Israel were enslaved by Aram. God raised up a judge named Othniel and the land had peace for 40 years.

Act 3: Deborah (pp. 105-107)

“Now Deborah, a prophet, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time.”

The people of Israel were enslaved by Jabin, king of Canaan. With Deborah’s leadership, Barak defeated Jabin’s army led by Sisera. Sisera, himself, was killed by a woman who pounded a tent peg through his head while he was sleeping. The land had peace for 40 years.

Act 4: Gideon (pp. 107-111)

“‘Pardon me, my Lord,’ Gideon replied, ‘but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.’”

“The LORD answered, ‘I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive.’”

This begins the story of Gideon. Through a complex filtering process, Gideon’s army was reduced to 300 men with pots, torches, and trumpets and God used that band of men to drive out the army of the Midianites. And the land had peace for 40 years.

Act 5: Samson (p. 112-119)

“Samson said, ‘Let me die with the Philistines!’ Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it. Thus he killed many more when he died than while he lived.”

Samson was a complicated man. Full of the Holy Spirit he often exercised very poor judgement in his personal dealings. However, God used him to lead the people of Israel and, in the end, to rid them of the oppression of the Philistines.

Looking back at the stories of the Judges, we can see the cycle of sin that the people of Israel found themselves in:

- 1) The people serve God: While a leader lived who had been the Instrument of God’s deliverance the people obeyed God with their whole hearts. Chapter 8 of The Story begins with a note about the end of Joshua’s life and how the people served God until the generation who knew Joshua were all dead.
- 2) The people drift from God: when each leader died so too did the passion with which the people served God. Eventually this drifting led to the worshipping of the God’s of the people In Canaan who were not Israelites. Sometimes this was a slow drift, other times It was as though the people were just waiting for a leader to die so that they could abandon God.
- 3) The people are defeated and enslaved: True to his words at the beginning of the chapter, when the people abandoned God he used the nations around to defeat and enslave Israel to teach them what life was like without God.
- 4) The people cry out to God: Eventually the people realized that being enslaved was not good and In their oppression they cried out to God.
- 5) God raises up a leader to deliver the people: God, always watching for true repentance, hears the cries f the people and sends a leader to deliver the people of Israel.

Sadly, this is not a series of events that happens just once, it is a circle where once the people are delivered they experience peace, serve God, but then drift away. Frequently the stories end with “the land had peace for 40 years.” While the number 40 is probably close to the actual number of years of peace, it is also an other way of saying “a generation of people.” So, as with Joshua, the pattern of serving God while the generation who experienced his deliverance lived continues. It seems as though the people all need their own experience of the dramatic deliverance of God.

Q1: Go through the stories in chapter 8 and identify the elements of the cycle of sin, watch specifically for phrases that are repeated exactly.

Q2: In the repeating cycles of sin what details are the same from story to story?

Q3: In the repeating cycles of sin, what details are different? How are they different?

Q4: Comment on the personality characteristics of the judges who are mentioned In chapter 8. In what ways are they the same as each other? In what ways are they different? What do you conclude about the kinds of people God called to lead the people of Israel?

Next Steps

It is easy to see the cycle of sin as it is played out in chapter 8. It is more difficult to see this cycle in our own lives, especially as we begin to drift. But for most of us, this cycle is present and we have to be watchful. However, as Todd said, we are never forced to go through the whole cycle. Repentance and forgiveness are always available and we can jump straight to deliverance and following again.

Q1: Can you identify specific points in your life where you drifted from God after following him wholeheartedly? Share these with your group if you are comfortable doing so.

Q2: What can you do to avoid this cycle? If you cannot avoid it, what can you do to shorten the time between times of wholehearted service to God?

Pray with each other about specific areas where you tend to drift from God. Pray that you will spend your time in wholehearted devotion to God and not drifting and experiencing the consequences of that drift.