

YOBL

Year of Biblical Literacy

Week 11: To Become a Holy Nation

Daily Reading for Week

- Joshua 22-24, Psalm 69
- Judges 1-3, Psalm 70
- Judges 4-5, Psalm 71
- Judges 6-8, Psalm 72
- Judges 9-12, Psalm 73
- Judges 13-15, Psalm 74
- Judges 16-18, Psalm 75
- Video: Judges

Focus of time together

To watch as Israel descends into chaos and destruction as “everyone did what was right in their own eyes” and to see the similar patterns in all humanity and in our own lives.

Connecting Exercise (12 minutes)

Share in one minute how you are feeling/what your day has been like so far.

Opening Prayer

Have someone open your time in prayer asking the Holy Spirit to be with you as you read a particularly confounding and even disturbing portion of Scripture. Ask God to help you leave your thoughts and feelings of the day for a while and be completely present for the session.

Intro to Discussion

This week, we end the book of Joshua and begin the book of Judges — a book that is depressing, hard to read, and at times downright disturbing. It chronicles Israel’s slow descent into chaos and evil as they consistently disobey and reject God in order to worship other gods. From the end of Joshua to the end of Judges, Israel goes from having successfully conquered and inherited the Promised Land and “serving the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua and had known all the work that the Lord did for Israel” (Joshua 24:31), to a nation that rejects God and becomes like the Canaanites, participating in idol worship, child sacrifice, and gang rape. Again and again, the book of Judges says “everyone did what was right in his own eyes” and describes the often brutal and horrific consequences this rejection of

God, His covenant, and His way of living (the Law) has for Israel and its people. Like a virus in a zombie movie, the wilful rejection of God's covenant by Israel's leaders spreads to its people and leads to carnage. The effects of this individual and systemic rejection of God's way of living culminates narratively in Judges 19, a story we will read together. It is a shocking and sickening example of just how pervasive evil was in the land by the end of the time of the judges.

Whole Group Discussion (40 minutes)

Hermeneutic Tool for the Week

Pay attention to the repetition and trajectory of the Scriptures, especially in narrative texts. When Judges repeats similar stories of disobedience and violence and ends with stories of shocking violence and evil, it is making a narrative point about the trajectory, severity, and consistency of Israel's actions.

Read Joshua 24:14-28 and Judges 19 aloud together.

Questions for Basic Understanding

These questions are to help us interpret and understand the text as it was intended to be interpreted and understood.

1. Have someone recap the book of Joshua. What happened, and what were the main events and themes of the book?
2. As you read the book of Judges, what do you think the author's intent was in chronicling this era of Israel's history the way that he did?

Questions for Listening to Scripture

These questions are to help us be affected by Scripture in the way it was intended to affect us

1. Were there any parts of Judges 19 that shocked, provoked, surprised, confused, disturbed, or confronted you?
2. Why do you think the author of Judges includes this violent, horrific story? What point might the author of Judges be trying to get across to his/her readers?

Questions for Interacting with Scripture

These questions are to help us slow down to taste and notice Scripture, savour its richness and meditate on the complexity of its meaning.

1. Where is God in this story? If you cannot identify where God might be in this story, how does that make you feel?
2. Is it disorienting to read such a gruesome and awful story in the Bible? What questions does it bring up in you about God, Israel, human nature, or the Scriptures?

Small Group Discussion (20 minutes)

Questions for Self Examination

These questions are to help us look at ourselves, be aware of who we are in the light of our interaction with Scripture and consider any appropriate action.

Before sharing, take a couple of minutes to sit in silence and invite the Holy Spirit to help you take an honest assessment of your day-to-day life over the past week. Ask the Holy Spirit for clarity in answering the following questions. You may find it helpful to write your answers down.

1. In what ways specifically can you identify with or connect to the recurring theme in Judges of the tempting and destructive power of only “doing what is right in your own eyes” with little regard for the people, community, and world around you, or even God’s notion of right and wrong? Have you seen this pattern in your own life?
2. Were there specific moments or choices you made in this past week where you chose to do what was right in your own eyes disregarding the people, relationships, or community around you? What was appealing and/or tempting about these choices? What were the consequences of these choices?
3. Based on what the Holy Spirit brings to mind, are there any conversations you need to have, apologies you need to make, confessions you need to keep, commitments you need to make, or practices you need to implement that the Holy Spirit could be inviting you into?
4. Give everyone a space to share and confess what they feel comfortable with to the group.

Closing Time of Prayer (15 minutes)

Pray with one another based on what was shared. Express whatever feelings you have at this moment as the Holy Spirit revealed these dark parts in your heart, and ask for His faithful forgiveness and help. Be very specific with what you feel and how you need God to help you. If you don’t truly see God’s ways as trustworthy and good compared with the allure of “doing what is right in your own eyes”, express this to Him in prayer and ask that He would reveal to you how the way of Jesus is life-giving and good.