

God Works Despite Evil

Lesson Scripture: Judges 2

Focus Scripture: Judges 2:6-15

Key Verse: *The Israelites did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals. Judges 2:11*

JUDGES 2:6-15 (NRSV UE)

6 When Joshua dismissed the people, the Israelites all went to their own inheritances to take possession of the land.

7 The people served the Lord all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work that the Lord had done for Israel.

8 Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at the age of one hundred ten years.

9 So they buried him within the bounds of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.

10 Moreover, that whole generation was gathered to their ancestors, and another generation grew up after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel.

11 Then the Israelites did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals,

12 and they abandoned the Lord, the God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; they followed other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were all around them and bowed down to them, and they provoked the Lord to anger.

13 They abandoned the Lord and served Baal and the Astartes.

14 So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers who plundered them, and he sold them into the power of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies.

15 Whenever they marched out, the hand of

JUDGES 2:6-15 (KJV)

6 And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land.

7 And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord, that he did for Israel.

8 And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being an hundred and ten years old.

9 And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash.

10 And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.

11 And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim:

12 And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger.

13 And they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth.

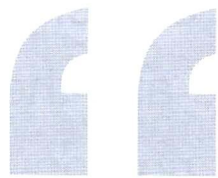
14 And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies.

the Lord was against them to bring misfortune, as the Lord had warned them and sworn to them, and they were in great distress.

15 Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil, as the Lord had said, and as the Lord had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed.

KEY TERMS

- **Judge (verb)** – To discern, decide, or govern, to distinguish between truth and falsehood, right and wrong; **(noun)** a person acting as a representative of divine justice.
- **Ashtoreth** – Goddess of fertility and sexual love; pagan goddess and physical idol of the Canaanites. Ashtoreth was frequently paired with the male god Baal. The term is used as deliberate corruption of the name *Astarte* by interspersing vowels with the word, *bosheth*, which means *shame*.



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- **Bosheth** – Hebrew word meaning *shame*, *confusion*, *disgrace*, or *disillusionment*; frequently used as a replacement for the name of the Canaanite god Baal.

INTRODUCTION

Judges chapter 2 serves as the theological introduction to the book. It details Israel's failure to drive out the Canaanites, leading to a recurring cycle of idolatry, divine punishment, and mercy through the establishment of divinely appointed judges. The chapter highlights a new generation unfamiliar with the

almighty God of their ancestors and the covenant of obedience sworn by them. This introductory section of Judges sets the stage for an ongoing fateful pattern of turmoil and deliverance for the Israelite people. The covenant established by God provides an open door for prosperity and hope.

The next stage is the rebellious trend of the people, abandoning the Lord's commands, resulting in God's punishment and loss of God's favor. In response, the people cry out to God for forgiveness and deliverance from their

distress. This leads to God raising a deliverer, a judge to rule over and bring the people back to God.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

In the opening verses of Judges 2, the angel of the Lord brings a harsh rebuke to the people of God at the place named *Bochim*, which means *weeping*. The people who receive this message are warned of the future

demise of the people. The writer illustrates that Joshua's death was a pentacle point of the Israelite narrative, marking the decline of moral accountability and obedience to Yahweh. As foretold by the angel, Judges 2:10 describes a generation that lacked knowledge of the God of their ancestors, resulting

in the fulfillment of the oracle. Thus, the people fell into spiritual decay, and worshiped the false Canaanite gods, Baal and Ashtoreth. As seen in the past, their rejection of Yahweh left them vulnerable, without the power and might that brought them through seas and

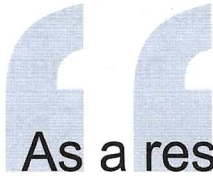
gave them victories over great armies. Their aggression in battle was futile for they fought under their own power, not the covering of almighty God. This section illustrates the contrast of Israel's failed attempts of success and prosperity under their own hands and under the influences of theological falsehoods. This passage presents the harsh realities of the consequences forewarned by God through Moses and Joshua. As a result

of their disobedience and the lack of sound righteous leadership, the Israelites found themselves in grave distress.

SANKOFA

During a church school class entitled "The Christian Home in a Modern World," the class was invited to explore current beliefs

and practices that shape the future. The comment was made by a member that "Children today have no home training!" Despite the robust discussion, there is evidence that this may be the trend. Parents and other guardians have a responsibility to intentionally



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teach children positive healthy life skills. However, there are varied views of what that means. The modern definition of “home training” focuses primarily on physical training and exercise. Apparently, training at home includes physical workouts like push-ups, and the use of home equipment. Behavioral training or what old school folks call “upbringing” is secondary in the lists of definitions. Yet social skills is critical to healthy living. The process of raising children and influencing young minds involves teaching manners, gratitude, humility, emotional control, and respect for others. Yet this appears to be secondary to the attention towards the physical attributes and condition of an individual which primarily entails appearance. This

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suggests that modern society is more focused on the acceptance or approval of a person's outer appearance, body shape, athletic abilities, and what may be considered physically attractive rather than one's social behavior. This argument certainly applies to parenting children

in this modern-day culture. Although parents' greatest desire is the welfare of their children, the strong influence of social media, marketing, and peer pressure *promote* alternative views and directions that often do not align with strong moral principles and Christian beliefs. Integrated with these challenges is the acceptance of relaxing responsibilities and even removing consequences for bad behavior, thereby shielding children from experiences that not only promote healthy moral character but build confidence and resilience to challenging situations. Thus, there is a concern for the absence of attention to the sacred text of Proverbs 22:6 which says: “Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he

will not depart from it.” This proverb does not refer to the way humanity goes, but in the way God leads us. It emphasizes guiding children toward moral, ethical, and spiritual values, laying a foundation for their adulthood. The lesson today is a friendly reminder for all parents. Don't let

this generation grow up ignorant of the Lord's instruction and the foundational laws of God.

CASE STUDY

Extensive longitudinal and cross-sectional studies demonstrate that church involvement and youth training programs provide significant psychological, social, and physical benefits for adolescents. Reports indicate that regular religious participation acts as a "protective buffer," reducing the likelihood of depression by 12%, illicit drug use by 33%, and risky sexual behavior by 30-40%. Affiliation and attendance in church communities have also

increased a young person's understanding of his or her self-identity and self-worth: studies by the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) show that religious 12th graders have significantly higher self-esteem and more positive life attitudes than secular peers. The involvement in

church activities also plays a positive role in leadership and life skills. Church programs may provide opportunities in leading prayers, organizing outings, and public speaking, which boosts confidence and prepares youth for future

leadership. Another finding that is found to have tremendous value is the church's impact on youth academic success. Data indicates that students in faith-based educational settings can score at academic levels nearly 12 months ahead of their counterparts. This is attributed to emphasis on discipline and achievement. These studies illustrate the importance of the church in supporting parents and reinforcing families' attempts to

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raise morally and ethically responsible adults. Studies have shown that involvement in a faith community that provides some form of mentorship and in some way emphasizes character development can promote behavior tendencies towards honesty, kindness,

and forgiveness. The church influences young minds and builds moral character that transcends to later civic engagement as adults. These findings and life experiences of children and families provide a strong argument to encourage adult parents and guardians to bring their children back to the church.

LIFE APPLICATION

Parenting in modern society is difficult. This can be considerably more concerning with increased exposure to unhealthy and inappropriate media and imagery. However, the church has the opportunity to supplement the needs of families and provide a model for a healthy and successful

future for young people. Churches have traditionally been the teaching ground for children and youth. The church provided a platform to learn not only moral, social, and leadership skills, but also strengthen and highlight young talent in music, arts, and oratorical abilities. With churches

reporting a growing deficit in young people's attendance and participation, every church must be intentional in establishing forums for young people to learn, grow, and thrive. Children must be taught the ways of their ancestors.

The AME Church has the gifts, tools, and most importantly the Spirit of God to build the future generations of God's people.

Questions

1. What goals has your church set regarding building ministries surrounding children, youth, and young adults?
2. How can your church support parents and other adults in teaching young people life skills?
3. Explore new ways to engage the community and build an intergenerational church that honors all ages and develops creative ways to grow the kingdom of God.

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CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Closing Hymn: *African American Heritage Hymnal* #577, "I Really Love the Lord"

Closing Prayer: "Thou my everlasting portion, more than friend or life to me. All along my pilgrim journey, Savior let me walk with thee." Lord, we pray for the extension of your hand to lead and guide us throughout this journey called life. Give us wisdom and understanding that we must be close to you and that everything

we say and do should be committed to you. Lord, give us the strength to resist all distractions and temptations while overcoming the barriers and attacks that may come our way. We pray for a disciplined spirit that is not lured by our weaknesses of the flesh, but instead we are strengthened and empowered through your Holy Spirit. All these things we pray in the precious name of our Lord Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Verse from "Close to Thee" – AMEC Hymnal #396

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

October 12-18

Monday	Philippians 1:21-30 (Courage to Live or Die)
Tuesday	Matthew 5:11-16 (Let Your Light Shine)
Wednesday	Psalms 84 (A Humble Servant of God)
Thursday	Hebrews 4:11-16 (Let Us Strive for God's Rest)
Friday	Hebrews 6:1-12 (God Will Not Overlook Your Work)
Saturday	Judges 3:1-7, 12-14 (God Tests God's People)
Sunday	Judges 3:15-23, 30 (Restoring Rest to the Land)