

Judges: R-rated Redemption
 “The Forward Spiral”
 Judges 2:6 -3:6

Thoughts to Shape and Spark Discussion:

“If God were not angry at injustice and deception and did not make a final end to violence- that God would not be worthy of worship... If I don’t believe that there is a God who will eventually put all things right, I will take up the sword and will be sucked into the endless vortex of retaliation. Only if I am sure that there’s a God who will right all wrongs and settle all accounts perfectly do I have the power to refrain.”

- Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*

“Think how we feel when we see someone we love ravaged by unwise actions or relationships. Do we respond with benign tolerance as we might towards strangers? Far from it . . . Anger isn’t the opposite of love. Hate is, and the final form of hate is indifference . . . God’s wrath is not a cranky explosion, but his settled opposition to the cancer . . . which is eating out the insides of the human race he loves with his whole being.”

- Rebecca Manley Pippert

“This life, therefore, is
 not righteousness but growth in righteousness
 not health but healing
 not being but becoming
 not rest but exercise.

We are not what we shall be, but we are growing toward it.
 The process is not yet finished, but it is going on;
 This is not the end, but it is the road.
 All does not gleam in glory but all is being purified.”

- Martin Luther

Themes and Questions to Guide Reflection and Response:

- What from the Scripture passage or the sermon made an impression upon you? Are there lingering questions to be answered or rabbit trails to be followed for you?
- This overture to the book of Judges presents in broad strokes the cycle of the book - the spiral of evil-forsaking the Lord-discipline-distress-deliverance-rest (for a season).
 - What routines, cycles, holding patterns, spirals are you dealing with in your own life? Family? Work? Relationships?
 - What resonates with you about the cycle the introduction describes? Is it true to your life and experience as a Christian?
- Chapter 2:10 is a chilling verse and pushes many anxiety buttons for families and for the church: an entire generation that does not know the Lord!
 - How do you account for the gap between the generation that sees “all the great work the Lord has done for Israel” and this generation that “did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel”?
 - What is the connection between not “knowing the Lord” (intimacy with him) and “doing evil in the sight of the Lord”?
 - Why does the cycle of the book of Judges always begin with the heart and not necessarily facts and behavior?
- Which aspect of the cycle intrigues you most and troubles you most?
 - Where are you most vulnerable?
 - Where do you want to be?
- What breaks the cycle of the book of Judges?
 - How does the finished work of Jesus provide hope and patience with the process of growing in grace and progressive sanctification?