

Truth or Consequences  
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Opening question: What do we mean by the term: MID-LIFE CRISIS or “middle age crazy”? It appears that person was doing all the right things and then BAM...they went off the deep end. Is that usually how a life of sin happens? Just BAM, off a cliff? Question: How do you build a brick wall? One brick at a time. How do we normally SLIP into SIN? (Gradually...one SIN at a time)

Judges 2:11-23

The book of Judges is a history that documents continual dysfunction and disobedience by God's people.

We could skip ahead to Judges 21:25 to SUM UP the book in this one key verse: “In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes” Isn't that the very definition of sin? No KING in your life; you just do what is right in YOUR OWN EYES.

John MacArthur shares this overview of Judges:

*“The book bears the fitting name ‘Judges’, which refers to (14) unique leaders God gave to His people for preservation against their enemies.” [The men were more than just judges who settled disputes...they DID that, but MORE. They were also MILITARY LEADERS.]*

*“Judges spans about 350 years...”[after Joshua's death]*

*“Judges is a tragic sequel to Joshua. In Joshua, the people were obedient to God in conquering the Land. In Judges, they were disobedient, idolatrous, and often defeated.”*

*“A four-part sequence repeatedly occurred...1) Israel's departure from God 2) God's chastisement in permitting military defeat and subjugation [slavery] 3) Israel's prayer pleading for deliverance; and 4) God raising up ‘judges’, either civil or sometimes military champions who led in shaking off the oppressors.”*

- That FOUR PART CYCLE OF DISOBEDIENCE we just described is summarized for us in Judges chapter 2.
- It contrasts TWO VERY DIFFERENT generations of Israelites:

Judges 2:7

7 The people served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had seen all the great things the Lord had done for Israel.

- But then, at age 110 Joshua died, and so did all those around him...

Judges 2:10

10 After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel.

- To repeat, the NEW generation “knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel.”
- Question: What does it mean when someone uses the phrase: “God doesn’t have GRANDCHILDREN, only CHILDREN?”

God doesn’t have any GRANDKIDS. The faith our parents and grandparents had worked for them because they KNEW GOD PERSONALLY. If we don’t KNOW HIM PERSONALLY...He will become a DISTANT ABSTRACTION and we’ll SLOWLY FADE away from Him and into SIN.

- Let’s go verse by verse in Judges 2:11-23 to learn about this cycle of DISOBEDIENCE.

11 Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord and served the Baals. 12 They forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed and worshiped various gods of the peoples around them. They provoked the Lord to anger 13 because they forsook him and served Baal and the Ashtoreths.

- Verse 11: These same words show up over and over again in Judges (3:7; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1)
- The Israelites...served the Baals...and the Ashtoreths.
- Question: Who were the Baals and the Ashtoreths?
- Here’s what we know about them:

*“Baal was the god of the storm and rains; therefore, he was thought to control vegetation and agriculture. Ashtoreth was the mother goddess of love, war, and fertility. Temple prostitution and child sacrifice were a part of the worship of these Canaanite idols.”* (Life Application Study Bible)

- Verse 12: “They forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers...”
- Question: What does verse 12 say INFLUENCED the Israelites to FORSAKE God?
- PEER PRESSURE. How many times does a DOWNWARD SPIRAL into SIN start with trying to FIT IT with our neighbors and friends?

• Look back a few pages to Joshua 24:19-20 (Someone read those verses)  
19 Joshua said to the people, “You are not able to serve the Lord. He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins. 20 If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you.”

- Joshua had warned the fathers and mothers of this bunch but the kids; the NEW GENERATION didn't pay attention...look at verse 14:

14 In his anger against Israel the Lord handed them over to raiders who plundered them. He sold them to their enemies all around, whom they were no longer able to resist. 15 Whenever Israel went out to fight, the hand of the Lord was against them to defeat them, just as he had sworn to them. They were in great distress.

- "...the hand of the Lord was against them." Question: How could that apply to ALL BELIEVERS today? Have you ever experienced this or seen someone who has been so disobedient that it appeared the hand of God was against them?

**Ray Stedman** asks the question all believers need to consider...

*Have you ever had the Lord's hand against you? Have you ever sensed that He was against you in everything you did? What you thought you were doing in dedication and sincerity was so opposite to what He had said that you discovered His hand was against you. This is what Israel discovered: Nothing seemed to work out right. They found themselves in bondage. One after another of the tribes around them was allowed to rule over them. These tribes came in and made slaves out of them, year after year after painful year. ([Ray C. Stedman. Adventuring through the Bible](#))*

- But, God is not only a JEALOUS God...who punishes and chastises those who stray.
- Question: Even when we've strayed from God he is still...WHAT? Longsuffering.

16 Then the Lord raised up judges,[a] who saved them out of the hands of these raiders.

- Great! Our loving, longsuffering, Heavenly Father came to their rescue. In fact, the Hebrew word for "Judges" translates "deliverers" or "saviors".
- So the Israelites praised God for deliverance, and they lived happily ever after, RIGHT? WRONG.
- Question: Let's see if you know this quote:

The philosopher George Santayana said:

*"Those who cannot remember the past are (anyone know the rest?) condemned to repeat it"*

17 Yet they would not listen to their judges but prostituted themselves to other gods and worshiped them. Unlike their fathers, they quickly turned from the way in which their fathers had walked, the way of obedience to the Lord's commands.

- Verse 17: The KJV is more vivid rendering it as they went "**whoring after other gods.**" They prostituted themselves. This wasn't just SYMBOLISM or a figure of speech.
- BONUS QUESTION: Using a study Bible or commentary....why was this NOT just a figure of speech? The pagans who worshipped Baal and Ashtoreth would go up on the "high places" near the clouds so these false gods might better see and hear. And they would engage in sexual practices to try to COAX Baal and his girlfriend Ashtoreth to do the same.

18 Whenever the Lord raised up a judge for them, he was with the judge and saved them out of the hands of their enemies as long as the judge lived; for the Lord had compassion on them as they groaned under those who oppressed and afflicted them. 19 But when the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their fathers, following other gods and serving and worshiping them. They refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways.

20 Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel and said, "Because this nation has violated the covenant that I laid down for their forefathers and has not listened to me, 21 I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations Joshua left when he died. 22 I will use them to test Israel and see whether they will keep the way of the Lord and walk in it as their forefathers did."

Earlier I said the book of Judges depicts a CYCLE OF DISOBEDIENCE

- Step #1 – Look at Judges 2:10 – What was STEP ONE? They FORGOT what the Lord had done.
- Step #2 – Look at Judges 2:11 – What was STEP TWO? They DID EVIL in God's eyes.
- Step #3 – Judges 2:14-15 - What was STEP THREE? God removed his BLESSING and POWER.
- Step #4 – Verse 16 – What was STEP FOUR? There was a PLEA for mercy and God rescued them through the Judges.
- Step #5 – Verse 17 – What happened? Back to step ONE.
- As it says on the shampoo bottle: "RINSE AND REPEAT"! And the cycle of disobedience continues.
- Question: So, WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH ME...TODAY? (Discuss)
- Back to our opening question: TYPICALLY, how do BELIEVERS manage to stray far from God? One "brick at a time"; one compromise at a time.
- Question: When a ship is charting a course of hundreds of miles to a specific destination...if the captain gets off course by just a few degrees and doesn't correct course, what is the result? MISS THE DESTINATION BY MILES AND MILES!
- In fact, the further you go the FURTHER the MISS!

I thought of Mark Hall's lyrics of the song "Slow Fade" by Casting Crowns:

*It's a slow fade when you give yourself away  
It's a slow fade when black and white have turned to gray  
Thoughts invade, choices are made, a price will be paid  
When you give yourself away  
People never crumble in a day  
It's a slow fade, it's a slow fade*

Most believers who STRAY far from God, DRIFT away...one choice at a time.

The Holman Bible Commentary tells us:

*Here are some possible steps in a downward spiral toward sin. First, you tolerate sin in your life as "no big deal." Second, you begin to accept the sin as normal. Third, you begin to forget the way God once worked in your life. Fourth, you begin to ignore God's Word (Josh. 1:7-8; 22-24). Fifth, you stop seeing things as God sees them. Sixth, you begin to think that all the victories in your life are explainable in terms of you.*

Ray Stedman writes:

*The great lesson of Judges is that we must take God seriously, and we must take our enemy seriously. Occasionally, we hear the story of an outstanding man or woman of God who suddenly, unexpectedly is found to be caught up in dishonest or immoral behavior. A scandal erupts, then widespread disillusionment. People shake their heads in bewilderment and ask, "How could this happen so suddenly? What caused this abrupt change in this person?" I'm convinced that in almost every case, there was nothing sudden about this behavior. Long before this seemingly sudden moral implosion took place, there was a long period of inner deterioration, gradual compromise, secret sins, little sins. They took their toll, day by day, until a major moral collapse became inevitable. (Stedman, Ray: Adventuring through the Bible. Discovery House)*

So, What's The Takeaway?

There's an old saying:

*Sin will take you further than you want to go.  
It will keep you longer than you want to stay,  
and it will cost you more than you want to pay.*

- What about you and me? We have a MAP if we'll just follow it (God's Word)!
- But so many times we FORGET what God has done
- We FORSAKE him for IDOLS and the ACCEPTANCE OF OUR PEERS
- Then, ONE BAD CHOICE at a time...LITTLE BY LITTLE...
- Like the song says: It's a SLOW FADE. Just a few degrees off course with no course correction and soon...MILES AWAY from the DESTINATION.