

## 102

JUDGES 2

## FROM DEFENDER TO ENEMY

## opening ILLUSTRATION

Ask for three volunteers who are pretty good at blowing bubble-gum bubbles to come to the front of the room. Give each of these volunteers a piece (or two or three, whichever they prefer) of bubble gum and let them start chewing as you explain the activity. Explain to your volunteers: “We’re going to have a contest to see who can stand on tiptoe on one foot the longest. If your heel touches the ground, you’re out. But as long as you have a bubble blown, you can place your hand on the wall. Once your bubble pops, you must take your hand off the wall, until you have a new bubble.” Set a timer, let the volunteers blow a bubble, and see who can stand on the front of one foot the longest. After the contest concludes, say, “It was much easier to accomplish the task when you had the help of the wall; but you needed to obey my rules and blow a bubble.” Explain that a similar requirement happens in today’s passage.

## context

We aren’t actually introduced to the judges this book is named after until chapter two. These “judges” were men and women who were “raised up” by the Lord (see v. 16) between the conquest of Joshua and the period of the monarchy, starting with King Saul. Spanning around 300 years, the period of the judges is marked by the rebellion and disobedience of the people along with pity and anger from the Lord. Through the judges, the Lord revealed His love and compassion for His people, compelling them to return to Him and be His people. Just as the character and morality of the people fall throughout this book, so does the character of the judges.

## expository OUTLINE

**JUDGES 2:1-5; 20-23** *God calls us to obedience; we anger him when we don’t obey.* We’re going to look at the opening and closing paragraphs of this chapter because together, they are the summary. We see in verse 1 that “the angel of the LORD,” who represents God and speaks for Him, came with a message: the Israelites had broken God’s covenant. (We studied that last week: they had been charged with driving the inhabitants out of the Promised Land, but most of the people simply didn’t do it.) They didn’t obey, so God revealed His consequence: He would not drive the people out. At every successful campaign, the Israelites had known that God had provided them with victory; they could never have won those battles apart from Him. And though they wept (see v. 4), we see no outward repentance or act of obedience. “The LORD’s anger burned” (v. 20) against them; they had proven they would not obey Him.

**JUDGES 2:11-15** *We worship idols whenever we put anything above the Lord in our minds, hearts, and lives.* In the first five verses, we see that the Israelites had chosen not to obey the Lord. In these, we see that they had even gone to the next level: they had done evil, worshipping other gods. God had previously revealed that He wanted the pagan people out of the Promised Land, and assured the Israelites that those idolatrous people would cause them to stumble if they didn’t. No one should be surprised at the fact that God was right; the Israelites began worshipping the Baals and the other gods from the people in the Promised Land. We see clearly here that the Lord was angered (see vv. 12,14,20) and for good reason: He had freed them from slavery, and they had rejected His commands. God’s anger is not like our anger; He isn’t petty and He is always compassionate. But His anger also comes with consequences, and the Israelites suffered for their disobedience.

**JUDGES 2:16-19** *In His compassion, God sends people to keep us on the right path.* Here we see God’s plan for the judges: He would raise them up, one at a time, and they would lead the people to obedience and success against their enemies. The rest of this book, and the rest of this series of lessons, will look at some of those judges and how God used them to guide His people. But—spoiler alert!—we know how this lesson is going to end: “but they did not listen to their judges . . . They quickly turned from the way of their ancestors, who had walked in obedience to the Lord’s commands” (v. 17). Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, and others had clearly revealed that God rewarded those who fervently followed Him; this group of Israelites chose instead to live idolatrous, disobedient lives. Not only that, but the people got worse and worse in their evil throughout time.

## group DISCUSSION

The following are suggested discussion questions on each section of verses. They can be used for leading a small group session, or in sermon deliveries that include discussion.

### ASK A STUDENT TO READ JUDGES 2:1-5,20-23.

- .01** What had God done for the Israelites? How had they responded? Can you see a parallel in your own life in terms of disobedience to your parents, teachers, or coaches?
- .02** What does a test in a class reveal about your knowledge of a subject? What did God's test (see v. 22) reveal about the Israelites?

### ASK A STUDENT TO READ JUDGES 2:11-15.

- .03** What evil had the Israelites done, (see vv. 11-13)? What might a similar act of disobedience look like today?
- .04** What happened when the Lord's anger burned against people? What does that reveal about God's protection up until that point?

### ASK A STUDENT TO READ JUDGES 2:16-19.

- .05** This passage is a summary of the rest of the book. What do you expect from the judges? What do you expect from the people?
- .06** Who has God sent as a "judge" in your life? How do you respond to her or him?

## session CONNECTION

There are a couple of similarities between Mark 1:35-45 and the second chapter of Judges. In Mark 1:35-38, we get an intimate glimpse of Jesus praying before dawn in a deserted place. Though "everyone" (v. 37) was looking for Him, we can see clearly that Jesus prioritized submission to His Father through prayer. Unfortunately, this wasn't the habit of the Israelites, who in Judges 2 seemed to outwardly submit to God but did not obey Him in righteousness or obedience. We also see Jesus's power over enemy forces in Mark 1:39-42 when He heals a man of leprosy with only His word; in Judges 2 we see the ultimate power of God turned away from the enemies of the Lord's people and, tragically, toward His own people. No power can stand against the Lord or His Son.

## application

Draw the hopefully obvious comparison between the opening illustration and Judges 2: God gave a very simple instruction to His people: obey. As long as they would obey Him, He would be on their side. But when they stopped obeying, He would be against them. Living was much easier with God fighting for them. Say, "The same is still true today. Jesus promised us that we would have suffering in the world (see John 16:33), but that He had conquered it. When we live for Him—walking in obedience, trusting in His promises, and seeking His presence—we have the extraordinary benefit of knowing He is with us every step of the way." Invite students to join you in a time of silence to consider their own willingness to walk with the Lord. Lead in a prayer of confession to close.

When we live  
for the Lord, we can  
trust that He is with us  
every step of the way.