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JUDGES 6:1-10

HIDING FROM GOD

opening ILLUSTRATION

Bring three oversized beach towels or small blankets to class. Enlist six volunteers, two to hold up each towel next to each other such that they are all creating a curtain of sorts, each towel touching the floor as well as the towel next to it. Then invite one person to be a “hider,” (who needs to be a small enough student to easily hide behind one towel) and one to be a “seeker.” Instruct the hider to get behind one and only one of the towels. Instruct the towel holders not to look at the hider and give away his or her position. Ask the seeker, “Which towel is the hider behind: number one, number two, or number three?” If the seeker is right, choose a new seeker and hider. If the seeker is wrong, allow the hider the opportunity to move if she or he chooses and let the seeker try again. Say, “In today’s passage, the Israelites are hiding from a new enemy”; invite volunteers to guess why. (They should know by now!)

context

In today’s passage, Israel’s enemy is the Midianites. These people were descended from a son of Abraham, Midian, by his concubine named Keturah (see Gen. 25:2). Because Midian was not a child of God’s promise (similar to the story of Ishmael; see Gen. 16), God had sent Midian away, and he journeyed east. We see the Midianites again in Genesis 37, when some Midianite traders passed by and Joseph’s brothers sold him to them (see Gen 37:28). Moses, after killing an Egyptian and fleeing Egypt, went to the land of the Midianites and married a daughter of a priest of Midian (see Ex. 2:11-22). In today’s passage, the Midianites had strategically joined with another group from the east, the Amalekites.

expository OUTLINE

JUDGES 6:1-2 *We are fearful and live in hiding when we live outside of God’s will.* At this point, you’re probably not surprised to see that the Israelites were, once again, doing “what was evil in the sight of the Lord” (v. 1). But reflect on that statement for just a second: this has been going on in a cycle for many years now. They disobey, live in oppression, finally call out, find victory through the Lord, and live in peace as they choose to follow Him. Then the cycle starts all over again. The Midianites weren’t especially powerful or strong; God simply gave them a temporary advantage over the Israelites. For seven years, God’s people were forced to hide, even in their own land! The caves, mountains, and strongholds that had been a hiding place for David (see 1 Sam. 23:14) were now a refuge for God’s people.

JUDGES 6:3-6 *God allows the triumph of our enemies when we turn away from Him.* This series of oppression was different from the previous times in the book of Judges; it seems like the Midianites didn’t try to control the entire land of Israel; they just robbed it of all its produce when the time to harvest came. Like the advanced technology of King Jabin’s iron chariots (see Judg. 4:3), the Midianites had camels that enabled them to enter the land swiftly, take what they wanted, and leave. Not only that, but they had help from the Amalekites and some other people around them. So the Israelites were losing their crops as well as their livestock. Remember, this was a time in history where there were not stores or shopping; you had to grow or trade for everything you needed. And no one had anything to trade or eat because it had all been stolen. Finally, after seven years, they cried out to the Lord.

JUDGES 6:7-10 *God makes Himself known to those who cry out to Him.* God was never powerless in this situation. At any moment, He could have stepped in and stopped the Midianites from stealing from the Israelites. But He didn’t; He was waiting for them to call out to Him, admitting their need and their dependence. God immediately responded, but perhaps not how they had hoped. Instead of instantly taking away their problem, He first reminded them of what got them into the predicament: they had not obeyed Him. God reminded them that He had delivered them from Egypt and had the power to deliver them from all oppression if they would follow Him and throw off the idols of the Promised Land. Had they heard all this before? Yes; several times. Would they obey this time? We’ll see next week.

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 6:1-2.

- .01** Look carefully at verse 1. Who had declared that the action of the Israelites was evil? How might God's opinion be different from the world's opinion of evil?
- .02** What image comes to mind when you hear "mountains, caves, and strongholds" (v. 2)? According to Nahum 1:7 and Psalm 18:2, what should our stronghold be?

ASK A STUDENT TO READ JUDGES 6:3-6.

- .03** The Israelites were hiding from their enemies in caves and watching them steal their food. What would this fearfulness do to them emotionally and mentally?
- .04** How are the Midianites described in verse 5? When have you felt like you were in the midst of trouble and couldn't escape?

ASK A STUDENT TO READ JUDGES 6:7-10.

- .05** Who spoke the words of the Lord to the people? What was a prophet at this period of time? Did a prophet only speak about the future?
- .06** Who speaks the truth of God to you? Who helps keep you obedient to the Lord?

session CONNECTION

We can see several similarities and contrasts in this week's passages of Mark 9:14-50 and Judges 6:1-10. We can see that forces oppose God and His people: in Judges, the Israelites find themselves subject to the marauding of the Midianites, and in Mark we see that a demon has possessed a boy for a long time. Though the Midianites were sent by God in order to turn the hearts of His people back to Him, the demon was not sent to the boy as a punishment. In both passages, we see the power of God and Jesus over those opposing forces: since God had sent the Midianites, He knew what it would take to drive them out. (That passage comes in the following weeks.) And Jesus, with a single command, drives out the demon and raises the little boy to his feet.

application

Remind students of the opening illustration, in which one student was "hiding" from another. Point out that the Israelites were hiding from the Midianites without recognizing their real problem: they were doing what was evil in the Lord's sight. Say, "Many times when we hide from our parents or our friends, it's because we're not living as the Lord has called us to live. We're ashamed, we're afraid, and we don't want to acknowledge our sin." If you have a time in your life when you lived in "hiding" from God or others, share that with the group. Help students see the importance of regular, genuine confession of sin so that they don't develop a lifestyle of hiding from God. Lead them in a sample prayer of confession or read Nehemiah 1:5-7 aloud.

Instead
of hiding
from God in our
sin, we should confess
and turn to Him in
obedience.