

**WELCOME (15 minutes)**

- **Ice Breaker:** How old were you when you learned to ride a bike? What do you remember about it?

**WORSHIP (10 minutes)**

- Sing #17, "In Christ Alone" from the **2015 SG Worship CD**.

**WIN (15 minutes)**

- **PRAY** for your list of people who don't yet know Jesus as their Savior.
- **PLAN** something to do to reach out to these people (*and maybe have fun together!*)

**WORD (25 minutes)**

**Read:** The book of Judges presents a cycle of sin and salvation that becomes a pattern for God's people. We will see how the Israelites did what was right in their own eyes, leading to an ongoing cycle of sin, judgment, and deliverance. God raised up deliverers who brought temporary peace but ultimately demonstrated their own need to salvation.

***Have everyone open their Bibles to Judges 2.***

Point #1 – God's people did evil by worshipping idols – Read Judges 2:11-13

**Discuss:** Forgetting the promises of the Lord leads to making decisions apart from the Lord! The book of Judges may be best known for the last verse – Have someone read Judges 21:25. This supposed independence leads to abandoning God in order to serve idols. They found their new objects of worship "from the surrounding people" (2:12) We may shake our heads at their disobedience and chide them for their idolatry, but what if we are more like them than we care to admit? God calls us to be distinct from the world, not merely so we can be different but so we can make a difference. What are some ways we can fight against "spiritual amnesia" in our own lives? What are some ways we are tempted to do what is right in our own eyes? What are the dangers of deciding for ourselves what is right for me or right for you?

Point #2 – God punished His people by giving them over to their enemies – Read Judges 2:14-15

**Discuss:** God's anger over idolatry should not surprise us. God is angered by our sin because of the harm our sin does to us and because of the offense our sin is to Him. If you want God to love you, you can't expect God to be happy when you choose idols over Him. For God to be passive and nonchalant over your sin, for Him to simply shrug

His shoulders at your rebellion, would not be love at all. What are the consequences for persistent rebellion against God? How can you help others see God's discipline in your life as an expression of fatherly love toward you?

**Discuss:** God's anger toward sin is expressed in 2 ways – Passive: God allows us to experience the natural consequences of our sinful choices; and Active: God disciplines us and calls us back to Himself. In this passage we see elements of both – “He handed them over” (v. 14) and He “brought disaster on them” (v. 15). What are some bad consequences that follow naturally from our sin? What are some consequences that are a direct result of God's discipline?

Point #3 – God saved His people through a chosen leader – Read Judges 2:16-19

**Discuss:** God handed His people over to the enemy, and then He saved them from the enemy! God is both just and gracious at the same time. God delivered His people from their enemies not because His people fully turned their hearts away from idols and back to Him and not because they were truly repentant. He delivered them because of His great love. He was compassionate toward them in their misery, and so He showed them undeserved kindness through the judges He raised up to save them. How does God's kindness lead us to repentance?

**Read:** Since humanity has sinned by failing to live up to God's righteous standards, God has taken it upon Himself to make provision by being both just and the justifier of those who place their faith in Christ (Romans 3:25-26). The judges saved people from the consequences of their sin but could not change the cause of their sin. Jesus is the Savior and Judge who takes upon Himself the consequences for our sin and then offers us new hearts that seek righteousness.

**Discuss:** The cycles of the judges continued after each moment of deliverance. As you see at the end of this passage, whenever the judges died, Israel returned to their sin and their downward spiral of corruption. What Israel needed wasn't a temporary deliverer but a Savior who would change their hearts. The good news for US is that in the person of Jesus, God is both our great Judge and our great Savior. In Christ, we are set free from these continuing patterns of sin and destruction and set loose for God's mission in the world. How can we strengthen each other and create patterns of righteousness? How is God currently working on your heart?

***For next time encourage anyone who wants to read Judges 4-5.***

## **WORKS (25 minutes)**

- Break into smaller groups of 2 or 3's of the same gender to pray for each other.