

“Othniel”
Sermon Notes

- **“Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did.”**
-1 Corinthians 10:6, 11

**The cycle of the judges teaches God's people...*

1. ...the horror of our rebellion (v.7)
2. ...the gift of God's reprimand (v.8)
3. ...the importance of our repentance (v.9a)
4. ...the wonder of God's rescue (vv.9b-10)
5. ...the grace of God's rest (v.11)

MEFC Community Group Study Guide

For the week of December 11th-17th

Getting Started

1. When you come to a section of Old Testament narrative, what is your basic approach to its interpretation? One of our favorite tools at MEFC is the **C.O.M.A.** method of Bible study (Context, Observation, Meaning, and Application). Why are each of these four steps mission-critical when we seek to understand the message of Holy Scripture? What's the particular risk that we run when we leave any given one of these steps out?

Digging Deeper

2. In 1 Corinthians 10:6, the Apostle Paul gives his readers a couple of keys to Old Testament interpretation when he says that: "Now *these things took place as examples for us*, that we might not desire evil as they did. And just a bit later, we read in verse 11: "Now these things happened to them as an example, but *they were written down for our instruction*, on whom the end of the ages has come." Stunning, isn't it? How does it make you feel to be living at this point in salvation history (some 2,000 years even since Paul wrote those words)? Given all of the resources and advantages that are ours in Christ, what are his expectations of us in this moment (Luke 12:48)?

Open Your Bible to Judges 3:7...

3. This verse describes the first step in the cycle of the judges. What is it? In what specific ways does the author detail the depravity of God's people? The Puritan Ralph Venning once wrote of *The Sinfulness of Sin* (1669). It's a striking thought, is it not? As in Judges 3:7, could it ever be said of us that: "They forgot the LORD their God..."? Explain.
4. The second step in the cycle is outlined in 3:8. What's happening here? In the sermon, we reflected on this as a *gift* of God. No doubt it was an awfully painful one for the Israelites. How is it that we might understand this step as an evidence of God's mercy? Compare what's happening here to what the author of Hebrews says in Hebrews 10:5-11. Do you have a personal experience of the Lord's corrective discipline in your life that you'd be willing to share with the group? If so, please share it.
5. Sometimes the cycle of the judges isn't exactly linear. As a matter of fact, there are occasions where we get stuck vacillating between step one and step two. Do you know what this is like (running back and forth between your *rebellion* and God's *reprimand* without coming to the point of repentance)? Explain.
6. Let's take the next two steps in the cycle together (vv.9-10). What are they? Do you suspect the author is describing genuine repentance in the hearts of the Israelites here? Whether simply in response to the misery of their suffering, or repentance from their sinning, the LORD does indeed deliver them. How about in our lives? What assurance do we have from God's Word when we confess our sin to him (1 John 1:9)? How often do you lay hold of this particular promise in your day to day walk with the Lord? How often do you remind others around you

of this promise?

7. The last step in the cycle is more than a step, it's actually the goal of creation itself. Compare Judges 3:11 with Genesis 2:1-3. Fascinatingly, Judges 3:11 speaks specifically of rest for "the land" of Israel. Why the land? What's the author communicating here?
8. To what does Jesus call us in Matthew 11:28-30? Sounds pretty spectacular, doesn't it? So why is it so challenging for us to receive this from him, or to remain within it with him? Put another way, why do we rebel against this rest (see Isaiah 30:15 and following)? In what specific ways is the cycle of the judges a warning and a reminder for us to stay close to Christ, dwelling in the rest he offers, as well as inviting others into that rest?