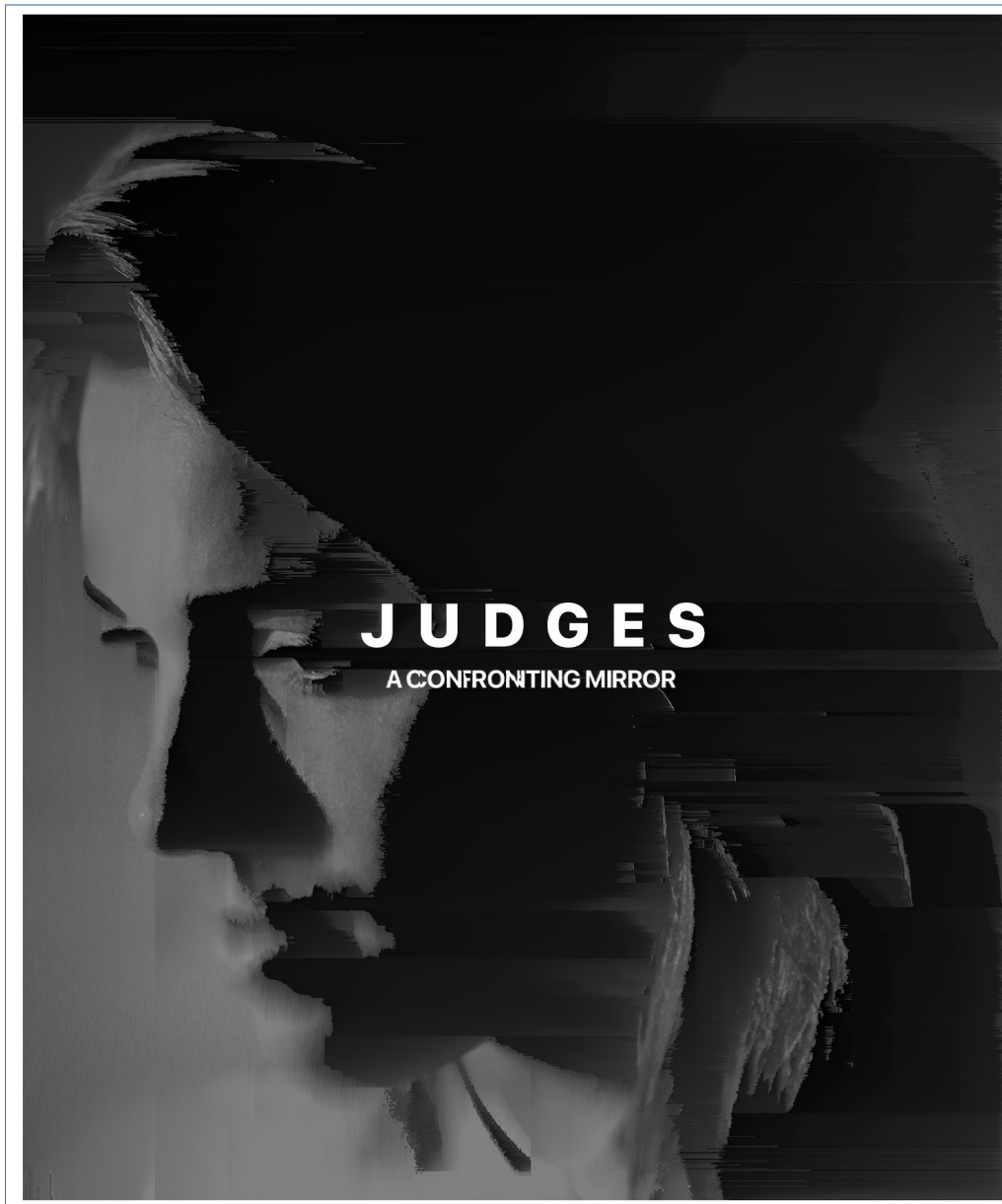


**Series on the Book of
Judges
Term 2 2019**



ST PAUL'S
CASTLE HILL

Acknowledgements

Resources:

Judges – such a great Salvation by Dale Ralph Davis

Judges for You by Timothy Keller

Judges and Ruth – God in chaos by Barry Webb

Judges, Galatian, Ephesians by Timothy Keller and Richard Coekin

Some of the questions have been taken from these various resources combined with those written by St Paul's staff members.

Some things to keep in mind.

As you go through the book of Judges it is important to keep a couple of things in mind. Firstly, the flow of the book and that it sits between Joshua and Ruth. Joshua is a book where we see Israel claiming her inheritance under God's hand, as well as being an instrument of judgment. Under Joshua Israel obeyed God and they trusted him. The book of Judges begins with a reminder of the ending of their time under Joshua. The book of Ruth, which follows Judges, is set in the time of the Judges and has a mix of the corruption of the Israelites coupled with hope. We meet a man, Boaz, who does treat women well, who recognises his obligations and obeys. We also meet Ruth who is faithful and true. At the end of this book we see a genealogy that leads to the king and redeemer that is desired and needed.

Secondly, Judges sits within the greater story of the Bible. The Bible is one big story made up of lots of smaller stories. To take the book of Judges out of this bigger picture is to leave the reader without hope and a proper understanding. It is a stark critique of the human condition and our need of rescue. As we look forward from the book of Judges to Jesus we see redemption but also how Jesus reforms relationships, trust in God, reorients our distorted desires and idolatrous ways.

Judges follows the time when the God's people entered their inheritance of the promised land under the leadership of Joshua. Judges gives a realistic yet stark view of a people that live without a leader. There is a need for not just a leader but a king who will bring rest and justice that lasts. Judges points us to the need for someone who would fulfil this. It is left with God himself. Judges shows how much greater Jesus is, how much greater his sacrifice, how much greater his kingship, how deeper his grace, how much deeper his power in setting things right rather than seeing them constantly fall into decay. God provided Messiah types to rescue his people each time they cried for help but none of these could lead the people and each judge was worse than the one before. Jesus is the answer to the Judges dilemma of violence and injustice. In books like Judges we can tend to place the blame on God for such decay and allowing such liberty (everyone did as they saw fit Judges 21:25) rather than seeing that he is the remedy for it.

Intro: Judges

“The book of Judges begins by looking back to the time of Joshua. To understand the peaks and troughs of this time of Israel’s history – to appreciate the triumphs and (more often) tragedies of God’s people in the time of the Judges – we need to begin, as 1:1 encourages us to, by looking over our shoulders.” Timothy Keller (90 days in Galatians, Judges, Ephesians)

1. Read Joshua 1:1-9. What promises does God make and what commands does he give?

2. Read Joshua 23:1-13. What has God done and what is left to do?

3. What warnings does Joshua leave with the people?

Watch Bible Project video

4. In what ways does the book of Judges contribute to the bigger story of the Bible?

5. Read Deuteronomy 7:1-6. What is God asking the Israelites to do? Why is he asking them to do these things?

6. In what ways does this make the conquest of Canaan in Joshua and the beginning of Judges “just war”?

7. In Joshua 1 the people are told to be strong and courageous. In what ways did the people ignore this encouragement from God in the book of Judges?

8. What are your expectations for studying Judges?

9. The book of Ruth is set in the time of the Judges (Ruth 1:1). How does the book of Ruth bring hope out of the book of Judges?

10. How would you talk to people about the book of Judges who might be struggling with the violence and that God could let such things happen?

Pray for God to challenge and grow you as you read and study this book.

Study 1: Is God even here? (Judges 1:1-3:6)

“The picture Judges 1 gives us is of an Israel in substantial control of Canaan, a people clearly successful though certainly disobedient. Pragmatic success and spiritual failure – a strange but possible combination. So Israel is dominant if not obedient; she enjoys superiority even if she does not maintain fidelity. This text carries its admonition for God’s people in any age. For one thing, it tells us that it is possible for the believer’s life to display the marks of success and yet be a failure in the eyes of God. Christian success (whether personal or in the form of a glossy evangelical enterprise) is not necessarily the same as pleasing God.” Judges by Dale Ralph Davis.

Background

Judges begins with the death of Joshua. We are presented with the stories of the Israelites receiving the land that God had promised them.

1. **Read Judges 1.** What were some of the good things happening after the death of Joshua?

2. What are the first signs in this chapter that God’s people are failing to listen to God?

3. Read Judges 2:10-15. In what ways did the people who were living in Canaan influence God’s people? Can you think of some modern day Baals?

4. Read Judges 2:16-3:6. What is God’s response to the disobedience of the people? How did the people respond to God?

5. There is a spiral or cycle we see in Judges 2:16-3:6. What does this cycle look like?

6. In Judges 2:1-5? What warnings does the messenger give to the people?

Going Deeper

7. What part does the book of Judges have in the overall story of the bible (what would be lost if we did not have it)?

8. Why was it important to eliminate the Canaanites?

9. Israel knew all that God had done for them on many occasions. Why did they still turn away from God to the gods of the Canaanites? What does this say about their relationship with God?

10. What was the groaning of the people? Is it the same as repentance? (Judges 2:18)

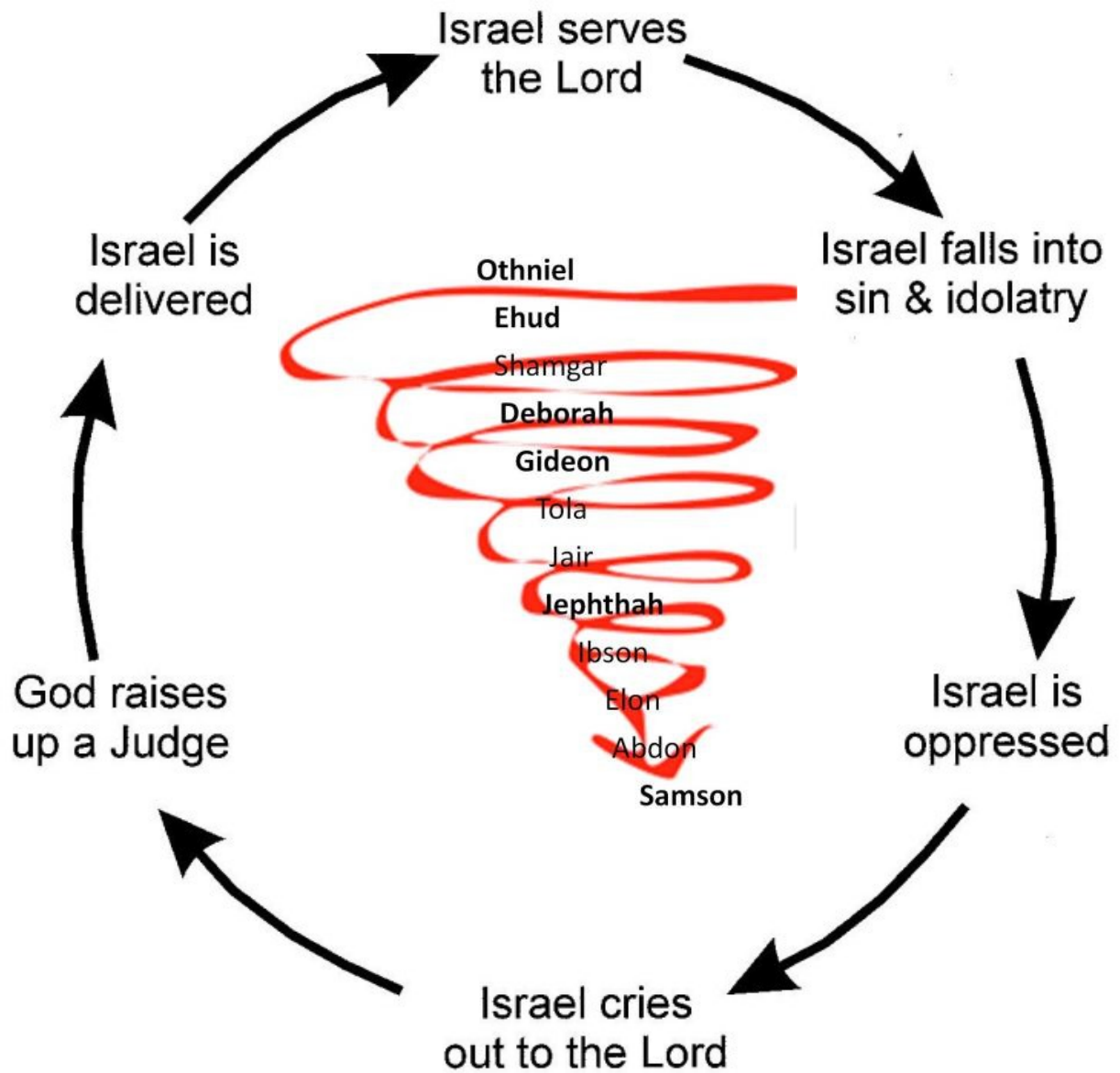
Making it Stick

11. In what areas of your life do you struggle to trust God? How has God proven that he can be trusted with everything?

12. What can you do to trust God more? What can we do to make this a reality?

Study 2: Wild grace comes (Judges 3:7-31)

From 3:8-16:31 there is a repeated cycle that spirals further and further into depravity. This cycle is evident in God's own people.



1. Read Judges 3:7-11. What did the Israelites do that was evil? Why is this evil?

2. What was God's response? What do you think of God's response?

3. What is the significance of Ehud being left-handed?

4. Can you think of a time when God has used unexpected people or unpredictable means to do great things?

5. What do you think is the theme of this story of Ehud?

Going Deeper

6. In verses 9 and 15 the Israelites cry out to the Lord. What do you think it means to cry out to the Lord? What was Jesus cry to his Father that the Israelites really needed?

7. What is wrong with the way victory comes to Israel through Ehud? What do you see as God's part in it?

Making it Stick

8. In what situations or circumstances do you cry out to God?

9. From this story why is there a need for the gospel?

Study 3: Shape up! (Judges 4-5)

1. Read Judges 4. When did Israel again begin to do evil in the eyes of the Lord? Read Judges 2:19. What is similar about this verse and Judges 4:1? What does this tell us about the people of Israel and what warning does it give Christians today?

2. What do we learn about God in this chapter?

3. Who is the woman of verse 9 and where is it fulfilled? Why did Sisera trust this woman? How do you feel about the actions of Jael?

4. Read Judges 5. What stands out for you in this song? Compare it with chapter 4, what differences are there?

5. How are Deborah's last words in this hymn both a prayer to Yahweh and a call to Israel?

Going Deeper

6. Chapter 5 has a lot of detail and seems violent towards their enemies. How does this line up with what Jesus said in loving our enemies, praying for those who persecute you?

Making it Stick

7. Are there any ways you need to leave justice to God, and get on with loving, blessing and praying for your enemies? How will you use the cross to free you to do this?

Study 4: Faithfulness is trashed (Judges 6-9)

There is a change in the book from good judges to bad judges.

"The Gideon narrative is pivotal because it is the first time that Yahweh meets Israel's appeal with a stern rebuke rather than immediate assistance. DA Carson.

1. Read Judges 6:1-12. In these verses we see the cycle of Israel's rebellion and cry for help continue. In this chapter God does something different. What does he do different? Why do you think he does this?

2. Read Judges 6:11-40. What things do you learn about God in these verses (not just what he does but what things does it say about him)? In verses 36-40 what do we learn about Gideon and how people in general respond to God?

3. Read Judges 7. How does God reassure Gideon? Why does Gideon need such assurance?

4. Read Judges 8:1-21. Why Ephraim so upset with Gideon? How did their pride get in the way?

5. Read Judges 8:22-32? Why does Israel begin to lose the rest they had after God gave Gideon victory?

Going Deeper

6. How does Gideon's interaction with God in chapter 6 differ from Jesus in Matthew 26:36-46?

7. In these chapters we see God working through weakness. Why does God do this? Is there a danger in God using what we perceive as strong? What are the things that our culture sees as strong?

Making it Stick

8. Have there been times when God has weakened you and then worked your weakness? How does this move you to praise Him?

9. How often do you spend time sorrowing over your sin, so that you can appreciate more fully God's forgiveness? How does this move you to love him more?

Study 5: The Lord Falls Silent (Judges 10:1-12:15)

In this study tonight we encounter a father who makes careless and foolish oaths. The response of the daughter of Jephthah is also staggering and may appear incomprehensible to a 21 century mind.

1. Read Judges 10:6-18. From the cycle of Study 2, what things do we see being repeated here?

2. What is different about God's response in chapter 10:11-14? What did Israel do in verse 16? Did God move toward them because of their misery or their change of heart?

3. Read Judges 11:1-11. Why is Jephthah an unlikely Saviour?

4. Read Judges 11:23-27. What do we learn from Jephthah about God from these verses?

5. Read Judges 11:28-40. Why is Jephthah's vow unnecessary?

"This is a terrible story. Many have thought Jephthah had promised God an animal sacrifice. But the noun is not in the form appropriate for talking about animals. And if he had promised God the first animal out of his house, he would never have considered himself bound to sacrifice his daughter. Jephthah promised human sacrifice. So why did Jephthah make, and keep, such a vow? God hates human sacrifice (Deut 12:31). But it seems Jephthah had been deeply desensitised to violence by the cruelty of the world around him. The world had squeezed him into its mould. Second, human sacrifice was how you could 'buy off' a pagan god – Jephthah

seems to have thought the Lord needed to be impressed and bought with a lavish 'gift.' The tragedy is that God has already been moved to save his sinful people (10:16), and had empowered Jephthah to bring this salvation (11:29)." from Judges, Galatians, Ephesians by Timothy Keller and Richard Coekin page 127-128.

Going Deeper

6. In making a vow the words of Jephthah carry some weight. He and his daughter seem not to question carrying through with the vow. When we speak foolish words is there anyway to not follow them with foolish actions?

7. In what ways is Jephthah mixing his knowledge of God, YHWH, with the pagan culture adopted by his people, that is, pagan worship, human sacrifice etc? What things in our culture do we we adopt that we mix in with Jesus rather than allowing him to be the only true God and our sole delight?

8. What questions are raised for people (believer or unbeliever) from a passage such as this? How would you answer them to show God's love?

Making it Stick

9. From this passage we see that Jephthah could not simply trust God, he had to make a deal with him. In what ways would you live differently - more radically or restfully - if you really believed God was completely committed to you to love you and bless you and work what is best for you?

Study 6: The Lord breaks in (Judges 13-14)

“Everything about this chapter tells us that Samson is a very, very special person. He is holy, separated to God from the womb. His birth is announced beforehand by an angel. He is declared to be a saviour – God’s saviour. Early in life he is claimed by the Spirit for his divine destiny. And if we read on we’ll see that he is rejected by his own people, arrested and handed over to their enemies, tortured and made a spectacle by them, until at last his calling is consummated in his death... So, brother and sisters, when you feel that all is lost, when you want to be in control ad can;t be, when everything is going past you, remember this: a Child has been born, a Son has been given (Isaiah 9:6), and by his death he has overcome the god of this world. He has begun our salvation and will complete it on the last day (Philippians 1:6). And if you believe that – however dark your present situation may be, and however powerless and hopeless you may feel – you need never despair (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)” Barry Webb.

1. Read Judges 13:1-25. The words “the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord” occurs again in verse 1. This is the last time it will occur in the book of Judges. In whose eyes was what the Israelites did evil? What does this say about how the Israelites saw the things they did?

2. What is the problem with the question asked in 13:12? What affect does a question like this have on the relationship between God and his people?

3. Read 14:1-20. Why do Samson’s parents not want to him to marry the Philistine woman?

4. Read Numbers 6:1-8. In what ways does Samson break the Nazarite vow in Judges 14?

5. What are Samson's weaknesses in this passage? What does Samson do or in what ways does he act that demonstrate his weaknesses? Are these weaknesses you have experienced?

Going Deeper

6. When has our culture done evil in God's eyes but is acceptable in ours? How do you feel about this? How would you answer this?

7. Why is becoming like the culture so attractive for churches and believers?

Making it Stick

8. What things, other than God, do you spend most time thinking about; become most excited about; care most about? How could these things become idols to you? How can you spot it happening?

Study 7: The Lord does not give up (Judges 15-16)

“Samson’s story is Israel’s story. But it is also our story, and his tragedy may be ours too if we resist God’s call as he did. We too are holy people, or ‘saints’ in the proper biblical sense of the term (1 Corinthians 1:2; 6:1, 2; 14:33; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:1)... Incredible thought it may sound, it’s God’s intention to take the fight to the enemy through us, reveal his glory to the world through us, and expose its gods for the hollow shams they are. The question for us is, will we embrace that? Will we run with it and find our whole joy and reason for living in being what God has called us to be? Or will we be reluctant saints, as Samson was, always looking over our shoulder and wishing we could be as other people? Will we, too, be led by our eyes and the covetousness of our hearts? Will we serve God because we must or because we love him? Will we want out as Samson did? Or will the call of God to be his saints and servants still captivate our hearts, still fill us with a sense of wonder and privilege, and nerve us to continue as his faithful servants to the end?” Barry Webb (Judges and Ruth page 214)

1. Read Judges 15:1-20. There is a cycle of violence that escalates through this chapter. Samson takes care of the issue in the same way that his enemies do. What could Samson do differently to break this cycle?

2. Read Judges 15:14-17. What is the source of Samson’s strength? How can he be so empowered, and yet show no patience, humility or self control?

3. Read Judges 16:1-22. What weaknesses continue (even worsen) to show themselves in Samson’s life? As Samson’s success grew what also grew?

4. What do you notice about the way Delilah treats Samson? What do you notice about the way Samson treats Delilah? What causes Delilah to act the way she does? What causes Samson to act the way he does? What is the result of this?

5. Read Judges 16:23-31. In verse 28, Samson prayed. What is significant about his prayer?

Going Deeper

6. What is the difference between spiritual gifts and spiritual fruit? Can you think of times in the bible where God gives gifts that are used for his purposes but there is no fruit in the bearer of the gift?

7. Samson is a type of Saviour for Israel, albeit a corrupt one. One of the most important moments of Samson's life is his death. In what ways is Samson not like Jesus?

In what ways is Samson's death a shadow or picture of Jesus death?

8. In what ways do we see the gospel in the Samson story? What difference does this make in our lives.

Making it Stick

9. What do your prayers reveal about your view of gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit? Are you being prompted to pray more, or differently?

10. Where in your life do you need to rely on God's grace instead of your own strength? How would doing this change your actions and increase your joy?

11. How are you feeling weak today? It is god's strength that matters – how will knowing that enable you to have peace and purity in your weakness?

Study 8: We Long for a King (Judges 17-21)

The last five chapters of Judges leave the narrative structure of the rest of the book. "The earlier passages give us a bird's eye view of things, only saying that people 'did evil in the eyes of the Lord' (3:7, 12; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1). These next chapters give us a ground level, detailed view of what life was like in Israel during those times.." From Judges for You by Timothy Keller p167. As Dale Ralph David points out, 'There is no refrain of Israel's apostasy, no announcing of a new oppression, no central judge figure. The writer changes his style in order to portray the confusion of a depraved people.'" Judges p195.

1. Read Judges 17-18. What does 17:6 tell us about the story that follows? In what ways do the characters in this story do as they see fit? What are the consequences of this?

2. The refrain "In those Israel had no king" occurs in 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25. Why do you think the writer is reminding us of this?

3. Read Judges 19. The question that speaks most loudly from this story is why is this woman treated so poorly? This story is absolutely abhorrent yet we ought to be careful about trying to draw neat lines between this story and our own times. Are there ways in which we listen to our culture about how we should view (either treat, or look at) women? In what ways are we in danger of treating women as property, as things?

4. In Judges 20-21 what human solutions are attempted to solve a deep spiritual problem?

Going Deeper

5. How has unbelieving culture affected thinking and practice in the church? What do we need to do to get our house in order? What are we as a church doing right? What could be done better?

6. How does knowing that this story is part of a bigger story help to understand such tragedy?

7. Jesus brings justice for people who have been wronged in such a way. How does Jesus help us to think about things and act differently while we await his return?

8. If you had to sum up the message of the whole book of Judges in a few words, what would you say?

Making it Stick

9. How does knowing Christ's forgiveness of you shape your treatment of others?

10. is there anyone you need to forgive, as you meditate on Christ's forgiveness?