

## SMALL GROUP SESSION 1 God in the Chaos

### When the People Wander: *Judges* 1–2

#### WELCOME

##### Icebreaker *Option A* — One-Word Weather Check

Each person gives one word describing their spiritual ‘weather’ this week (foggy, sunny, stormy, calm).

**Facilitator prompt:** ‘Say the word and, if you want, one short phrase why.’

**Link to *Judges*:** Israel’s spiritual weather shifts from bright to stormy — God notices even small changes.

#### OR

##### Icebreaker *Option B* — Two-Minute Pair Story (5–10 mins)

In pairs, each person has one minute to tell a short story of a time they/someone they love started well but slowly compromised. Partner prays a 30-second blessing. Swap.

**Facilitator prompt:** ‘Keep it short and non-judgemental — we’re noticing patterns, not shaming.’

**Link to *Judges*:** *Judges* shows how small compromises become patterns; we’ll look at God’s patient response.

#### WORSHIP

**Suggested Song: ‘Faithful One’** <https://youtu.be/2ml2eljy-xw?si=59TwoYkjZ6VdxUqK>

A simple, grounding song that centres us on God’s constancy in every season.

**Short Prayer** Acknowledge our dependence on the Lord in bright days and stormy ones.

#### WORD

**Background to *Judges*:** *Judges* is a heavy but important book. It shows Israel repeatedly drifting from God and falling into a cycle of compromise, oppression, repentance and deliverance. With no settled leadership after Joshua, God raises *Judges* — temporary deliverers — during times of crisis.

#### Summary of *Judges* 1–2

##### 1. A Mixed Beginning (*Judges* 1)

After Joshua’s death, Israel begins well with some local victories, especially by Judah and Simeon. But the chapter repeatedly notes that many tribes **failed to drive out** the Canaanite peoples and their altars. This **partial obedience** leaves space for future compromise.

##### 2. God’s Rebuke and Israel’s Tears (*Judges* 2:1–5)

The angel of the LORD appears at Bokim and rebukes Israel for making covenants with the nations and leaving pagan altars standing. The people weep and offer sacrifices — but the deeper issue remains.

##### 3. A New Generation Forgets (*Judges* 2:6–15)

A generation arises that ‘did not know the LORD or the work he had done for Israel.’ This is the hinge of the whole book: **when memory fades, obedience fades.**

##### 4. The Cycle Begins (*Judges* 2:16–19) The author summarises the pattern that will repeat throughout *Judges*:

- Israel disobeys
- God allows oppression
- Israel cries out
- God raises a deliverer
- Peace returns
- Israel drifts again

*Judges* 1–2 sets the stage for the entire book: **small drift becomes big drift, but God remains faithful.**

#### Two Pastoral Takeaways:

**1. Small drift matters.** Partial obedience accumulates. What seems minor now can reshape a community’s future.

**2. God's mercy and judgment work together.** God allows consequences for disobedience but remains the rescuer who raises up leaders/deliverers when people turn back.

**Voices That Help Us Read the Text:**

**John Goldingay:** *Generations easily forget covenant history; remembering God's acts is essential to keep faith alive.*

**Tim Keller:** *Judges makes us long for a permanent Saviour. God often begins his rescue before people are fully ready — shaping how we are to reach out in mercy.*

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS** (Choose 2–4 depending on time.)

- 1. What surprised you about Israel's behaviour in *Judges* 1–2, and why does that matter for us?**  
**Aim:** Israel's superficial emotional reactions; connect Israel's ancient forgetfulness with modern complacency.  
**Practical prompt:** Name one thing our church might be overlooking which could become a bigger problem if ignored.
- 2. Where do we see 'partial obedience' in everyday life — personal, family, or church — and what small change would interrupt the drift?**  
**Aim:** Move from diagnosis of the issue to a concrete corrective.  
**Practical prompt:** Choose one small habit to stop (or start) this week that protects communal faith (e.g. honesty about how we're living, shared testimony time).
- 3. *Judges* 2 shows God both rebuking and rescuing. How does that shape your view of God when people fail?**  
**Aim:** The need to balance truth *and* grace in pastoral imagination.  
**Practical prompt:** How can we speak truth in love and offer mercy without reinforcing harmful behaviour?
- 4. (Goldingay says that forgetting God's acts is dangerous.) How can our church keep memory alive so the next generation 'knows the Lord'?**  
**Aim:** Stewardship of memory.  
**Practical prompt:** Suggest one regular practice (testimonies, story nights, family devotions) to pass on God's work.
- 5. (As Timothy Keller argues) God sometimes begins to rescue before there's full repentance. How does that alter how we reach out to people who seem unready for faith?**  
**Aim:** Encourage courageous, patient outreach.  
**Practical prompt:** Identify one person you'll engage this week with a small, non-judgemental act of care that may open a door for future gospel conversation.
- 6. *Judges* makes us long for a righteous leader. How does Jesus as Lord and King answer that longing, and how should that shape our church's witness in a messy world?**  
**Aim:** Connect the book's longing to the gospel.  
**Practical prompt:** Name one visible way our church can show Christ's justice and mercy in the community this month (service, advocacy, partnership with a charity).

**WITNESS**

**Short Closing Challenge:** Pick one practical prompt from the discussion and commit to it this week. Pair up, tell your partner what you'll do, and agree to check in by message before the next meeting.

**Closing Prayer:** Pray briefly for courage to act and for God to use small steps of obedience to shape your community.

## SMALL GROUP SESSION 2 God in the Chaos

### God Works Through Ordinary People: *Judges 3*

#### WELCOME

##### Icebreaker *Option A* — ‘Ordinary but.....’

Each person completes the sentence: ‘I’m pretty ordinary at..., but God might still use me to...’

**Purpose:** Normalises ordinariness and opens the theme of God using unlikely people.

#### OR

##### Icebreaker *Option B* — ‘Unexpected Heroes’

In pairs, share a story of someone ordinary (family member, colleague, neighbour) who made a big difference in a small way.

**Purpose:** Helps the group recognise God’s pattern of using everyday people.

#### WORSHIP

**Suggested Song: ‘Who You Say I Am’ (Hillsong)** <https://youtu.be/EcrOy1Pxq8c?si=apda5BocLr58Zib0>

A song that reminds us that identity and calling come from God, not from our qualifications.

##### Alternative Options

- ‘*Goodness of God*’ — God’s faithfulness across generations.
- ‘*Take My Life and Let It Be*’ — offering ordinary lives to God’s purposes.

**Short Prayer** Thank God for calling ordinary people, and ask for openness to His leading.

#### WORD

**Summary of *Judges 3*** *Judges 3* introduces the first three deliverers God raises after Israel’s initial drift.

##### 1. Othniel — The Faithful, Unremarkable Judge (*Judges 3:7–11*)

Othniel is the model judge: faithful, obedient, steady. He is not flashy or dramatic — simply a man who trusts God. Through him, God brings peace for forty years.

**Theme:** God often works through steady, faithful people who simply do what is right.

##### 2. Ehud — The Left-Handed Outsider (*Judges 3:12–30*)

Ehud is from Benjamin (‘son of my right hand’), yet he is left-handed — a cultural disadvantage. He is an unexpected deliverer, using his unusual trait to gain access to King Eglon.

**Theme:** God uses our weaknesses, brokenness, quirks and limitations as part of His plan.

##### 3. Shamgar — The One-Verse Judge (*Judges 3:31*)

Shamgar gets only one verse. He uses an oxgoad — a farming tool — to save Israel. He is not a warrior, not a leader, not from a famous tribe. He simply uses what is in his hand.

**Theme:** God uses ordinary tools and ordinary people to do extraordinary things.

#### **Voices That Help Us Read the Text:**

**John Goldingay’s contribution:** *Judges 3* trains us to expect God to work through the overlooked, the unqualified and the everyday — and to value the quiet faithfulness that sustains a community.

**Timothy Keller’s contribution:** *Judges 3* shows that God’s rescue comes through weakness, grace and surprising instruments — preparing us to recognise Jesus as the ultimate Deliverer who embodies strength through weakness.

#### Theological Shape

- **God raises deliverers, not heroes.** The emphasis is always on God’s initiative.
- **God uses the unexpected.** A quiet man (Othniel), a left-handed outsider (Ehud), and a farmer (Shamgar).
- **God works through weakness.** *Judges 3* prepares us for Gideon, Deborah, and others — the pattern is consistent.
- **God’s deliverance often begins small.** A simple act of obedience becomes the seed of liberation.

## Why This Matters for God's People Today

- **Ordinary faithfulness matters.** Most kingdom work is done by people who never make headlines.
- **Your limitations may be your calling.** God often uses the very thing we see as a weakness.
- **God uses what is in your hand.** Skills, tools, relationships, opportunities — nothing is too small.
- **Courage grows through obedience, not confidence.** Like Ehud, we step forward even when we feel unlikely.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS *(Choose only 2–4 depending on time.)*

1. **Which of the three Judges — Othniel, Ehud, or Shamgar — do you relate to most, and why?**  
**Aim:** Help people see themselves in the story.  
**Practical prompt:** Name one ordinary part of your life that God might use.
2. **Othniel is faithful but unremarkable. How does his story challenge our culture's obsession with 'big' impact?**  
**Aim:** Affirm quiet, steady discipleship.  
**Practical prompt:** Identify one small, faithful habit which you might strengthen this week.
3. **Some parts of Judges 3 include violence that feels very uncomfortable. What helps us stay focused on what the passage is *teaching* about God and His work through ordinary people, rather than getting stuck on the details of the violence?"**  
**Aim:** The stories of Ehud and Shamgar include acts of violence that feel uncomfortable. These passages are descriptive, not prescriptive — they show us the brokenness of the world and the cost of living without faithful leadership. The emphasis is not on celebrating violence but on God's surprising grace in using ordinary, flawed people to bring deliverance.
4. **Shamgar uses an oxgoad — a farming tool. What 'ordinary tools' has God placed in your hands?**  
**Aim:** Encourage practical imagination.  
**Practical prompt:** Choose one ordinary tool (phone, car, skill, hobby) to specifically use for God this week.
5. **Judges 3 shows God working through unexpected people. How can our church better recognise and empower 'ordinary' gifts?**  
**Aim:** Build a culture of encouragement.  
**Practical prompt:** Suggest one way your group could affirm hidden/overlooked gifts in the church.
6. **How does this chapter help us trust God in seasons when we feel small, overlooked or inadequate?**  
**Aim:** Connect the text to emotional reality.  
**Practical prompt:** Each person names one area where they know that need God's courage.

## WITNESS

### This Week's Challenge: Use What's in Your Hand

Choose one simple, ordinary act of witness: eg.

- Send an encouraging message to someone who needs hope.
- Use a hobby or skill to bless someone.

**Closing Prayer** 'Lord, thank you for using ordinary people. Take what is in our hands and use it for your kingdom. Give us courage to act, humility to trust, and eyes to see your work in the everyday. Amen.'

## SMALL GROUP SESSION 3 God in the Chaos

### Courage in the Midst of Fear: *Judges* 4–5

#### WELCOME

##### Icebreaker *Option 1* — Quick Courage Check

Each person names one small thing they were afraid to do this week. No explanation required.

**Purpose:** Normalises fear and opens the theme of God-given courage.

#### OR

##### Icebreaker *Option 2* — Pair Encouragement

In pairs, share one fear and one small positive step you could take this week. Partner offers a short encouraging sentence and prays. Swap.

**Purpose:** Moves from acknowledging fear to mutual support and action.

#### WORSHIP

**Suggested Song: ‘Whom Shall I Fear (God of Angel Armies)’** — Chris Tomlin (to be listened to rather than sung) <https://youtu.be/yUybdCzVJjl?si=XPH27EEstxcsS4sV>

This song names God as the true warrior who goes before His people — echoing *Judges* 4–5, where victory belongs to the Lord and His people act in obedient trust.

##### Alternative Worship Option

- ‘Oceans’ — stepping out in times of fear and calling forth trust.  
[https://youtu.be/Md\\_ytigVkDU?si=ry1stzwzwCZ3g2Qe](https://youtu.be/Md_ytigVkDU?si=ry1stzwzwCZ3g2Qe)

#### WORD

##### Summary of *Judges* 4–5

##### Overview (*Judges* 4)

Israel is oppressed by Jabin, whose commander Sisera terrorises the land with 900 iron chariots — the height of military technology! God raises Deborah, a prophet and judge, who summons Barak with God’s command to confront Sisera. Barak hesitates and asks Deborah to go with him; she agrees but prophesies that the honour will go to a woman. In the battle, God throws Sisera’s army into confusion. Sisera flees to the tent of Heber’s wife, Jael, who kills him with a tent peg — an unexpected, shocking act that completes Israel’s deliverance, at the hands of a woman.

##### A Poetic Reframing (*Judges* 5)

The Song of Deborah retells the story in triumphant poetry. It celebrates God as the true warrior, honours the tribes who stepped forward, then praises Jael as ‘most blessed among women.’ The song reframes the entire event as God’s saving act, through the obedience of his human agents (*the song names and shames individuals who did/didn’t obey the summons*).

##### Theological Shape

- **God is the true ‘warrior’.** The victory is God’s, not Israel’s. Technology, strategy and human strength are secondary.
- **God uses unexpected people.** A female prophet leads; a hesitant general obeys; a non-Israelite woman delivers the final blow.
- **Courage is obedience, not bravado.** Barak’s hesitancy does not disqualify him — he moves forward with Deborah’s support.
- **Worship interprets reality.** The Song of Deborah teaches Israel to remember the victory as God’s work.

##### Voices That Help Us Read the Text:

**Goldingay’s Insight — Narrative Forms Identity** *Goldingay emphasises that biblical stories shape the community’s identity. Judges 4–5 trains Israel to remember God’s past deliverance so that courage arises not from current circumstances but from memory.*

**Keller's Insight — God as the Hero** Keller stresses that Judges has one true hero: God. He highlights the moral irony that women bring down a man who embodied violence against women, calling the church to active, faith-shaped engagement against injustice. Courage is obedience to God's call, not self-confidence.

### Why This Matters for God's People Today

1. **Memory forms courage.** Churches grow timid when they forget God's past faithfulness. Testimonies and the retelling of Scripture cultivate courage.
2. **God uses the unexpected.** Leadership and service often come from surprising people — women (surprising in that culture, though not in today's), newcomers, the overlooked. Churches should expect and equip diverse gifts.
3. **Courage is communal.** Barak's dependence on Deborah shows that mission is shared. We encourage and accompany one another into obedience.
4. **Worship reframes victory.** Like the Song of Deborah, our worship centres on God's action, not our own.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (Choose 2–4 depending on time.)

**1. Who is the true agent of victory in Judges 4–5, and how does that change how we take responsibility for justice today?** **Aim:** Re-centre God as the primary actor while clarifying human responsibility. The New Testament repeatedly locates salvation and power in God/Christ while calling believers to active service of others (e.g., Romans 12; James 2). This balances divine initiative with human obedience.

**2. Deborah's leadership and Jael's action subvert cultural expectations. What does that teach us about who God might use now?** **Aim:** Expand imagination for leadership and instruments of God's deliverance. The NT affirms God's use of unexpected people (women prophets, marginalized believers) and gifts across the body (Acts 21:9; 1 Corinthians 12).

**3. Barak's hesitancy is met by Deborah's prophetic assurance. How should communities accompany hesitant leaders into risky obedience?** **Aim:** Explore communal accompaniment as a model for courageous action. Paul's pastoral letters model mutual encouragement and accountability (Hebrews 10:24–25; Galatians 6:2). **Practical prompt:** Pair people for "obedience accountability" for one mission step this month.

**4. The Song of Deborah frames the victory as God's work. How does worship shape our memory and courage to pursue justice?** **Aim:** Show how an Act of worship and testimony form communal identity and courage. Early Christian worship and confession (e.g., hymns, creeds) shaped identity and mission (Philippians 2:5–11).

**5. Jael's violent act raises ethical questions. When is force or decisive intervention compatible with seeking peace and righteousness?** **Aim:** Wrestle with the tension between peace-making and confronting evil. Jesus calls peacemakers (Matthew 5:9) and also calls for righteous resistance to evil; the New Testament ethic requires discernment. Use prudence, law, and love as guides.

**6. How does remembering God's past deliverances (the narrative memory which Goldingay highlights) fuel present courage to pursue justice?** **Aim:** Connect corporate memory to our present mission. The New Testament repeatedly calls the church to remember God's acts (Lord's Supper, testimonies) so faith becomes active hope (1 Corinthians 11; Hebrews).

### WITNESS CHALLENGE (Practical)

This week, take **one concrete step of courageous and compassionate witness:**

- Practical prompt: List one or two local injustices your church cares about; pray, then identify one concrete step the group can take this month that trusts God but acts practically.

## SMALL GROUP SESSION 4 God in the Chaos - God Uses the Weak:

### Judges 6–7

#### WELCOME

##### Icebreaker *Option A* — ‘One Sentence Weakness’ (5 minutes)

Each person completes the sentence: ‘*I feel weak when...*’ (one short sentence only).

**Facilitator prompt:** ‘Keep it brief — this is about naming, not fixing.’

**Purpose:** Creates honesty and vulnerability before opening Scripture.

**Link to *Judges*:** Gideon begins from weakness; God meets him there.

#### OR

##### Icebreaker *Option B* — ‘The Empty Cup’ (10 minutes)

Pass around an empty cup. Each person names one way God might use their sense of emptiness or inadequacy to help them grow.

**Facilitator prompt:** ‘Think of emptiness as a place God fills.’

**Purpose:** A tangible symbol of weakness becoming space for God’s power.

**Link to *Judges*:** Gideon’s tiny army becomes the vessel for God’s victory.

#### WORSHIP

**Scripture to begin** Read aloud: [2 Corinthians 12:9](#) ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Pray briefly, thanking God for meeting us in our limitations.

**Suggested Song:** ‘Everlasting God’ (Brenton Brown / Ken Riley) <https://youtu.be/nuudVoMyZyE?si=FVr7PW>

A song that names human frailty and celebrates God’s sustaining strength: ‘*Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord.*’ It fits *Judges 6–7* because Gideon’s victory comes not from human power but from God’s strength made perfect in weakness.

#### WORD

##### Biblical Summary: *Judges 6–7*

*Judges 6–7* tells the story of God calling Gideon — a fearful, ordinary man — to deliver Israel from Midianite oppression. Israel has again turned from God and now their land is devastated. They cry out but first God sends a prophet to expose the root issue: disobedience.

Then the angel of the LORD appears to Gideon, calling him ‘mighty warrior’, although Gideon insists he is the weakest in his family. God commissions him to tear down his father’s altar to Baal and gather an army. When Gideon assembles the troops, God deliberately reduces the numbers — first by sending home the fearful, then by a water-drinking test — until only 300 remain. This ensures the victory cannot be credited to human strength. God then gives Gideon reassurance through overhearing the report of a dream in the enemy camp. Strengthened, Gideon leads the 300 men in an unconventional attack using trumpets, jars and torches. The Midianites panic and flee, then Israel enjoys peace.

##### Christ-Centred Framework

Gideon’s story points beyond itself.

- God chooses the weak so His power is seen clearly — a pattern fulfilled in Jesus.
  - Jesus calls the fearful and the ordinary.
  - Jesus works through smallness, humility and apparent weakness.
- Jesus wins victory not through force but through obedience and sacrifice.
- Jesus forms a people who depend on God, not on numbers, status or technique.

Where Gideon’s weakness becomes the stage for God’s strength, Jesus embodies perfect dependence — and invites us to follow Him in the same posture.

##### ***Voices That Help Us Read the Text:***

**John Goldingay “God does not wait for people to be brave; he works with them as they are.”**  
(*Goldingay, Joshua, Judges & Ruth for Everyone*) Goldingay emphasises that Gideon’s fear is not a barrier to God’s call. God meets him in his timidity, not after he becomes courageous.

**Tim Keller “Gideon is not a model of strength but of how God patiently grows faith in the weak.”**  
(*Keller, Judges for You*). Keller frames Gideon not as a hero to imitate but as a window into God’s gracious character. The story is ultimately about God’s initiative — reducing the army, reassuring Gideon, securing the victory — so that His power, not human competence, is seen.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

(Use no more than four. Read the passage, allow quiet reflection, then invite responses.)

1. Read: [Judges 6:11–16; 7:2–7](#)  
**Where do you see Gideon’s fear and insecurity in the text, and how does God speak into that fear?**  
**Leader prompt:** Contrast Gideon’s self-assessment (‘I am the least...’) with God’s naming (‘mighty warrior’).  
**Practical step:** Invite one person to name a place they feel small and how God’s words might reframe it.
2. Read: [Judges 7:2–8, 16–22](#)  
**Why does God shrink the army, and what does this teach us about how God wants to be known?**  
**Leader prompt:** Contrast human strategy with divine purpose.  
**Follow-up:** Where do we rely on numbers, reputation, or technique rather than God?
3. Read: [Judges 6:36–40; 7:9–15](#)  
**What role do the fleece and the dream play in Gideon’s story? How should we seek confirmation from God today?**  
**Leader prompt:** Distinguish between seeking God’s reassurance and testing God.  
**Application:** What healthy ways do we look for God’s guidance now?
4. Read: [Judges 7:16–22](#)  
**How do trumpets, jars, and torches shape your understanding of God’s methods?**  
**Leader prompt:** Invite examples of small, creative, or ‘odd’ acts of faith that led to surprising results.  
**Application:** How might God use simple, low-status means through our weakness?
5. Read: [Judges 6:12; 7:15–18](#)  
**How does Gideon’s story call the church to witness even when we feel inadequate?**  
**Leader prompt:** Ask each person to name one small act of witness they could attempt this week that feels risky.
6. Read: [Judges 6:34–35; 7:19–23](#)  
**How does the narrative move us from self-reliance to God-reliance?**  
**Leader prompt:** Encourage concrete habits (daily prayer, short Scripture reading, accountability).  
**Application:** Each person chooses one habit to try this week.

## WITNESS

### Mission and Care

Gideon’s call shows that God equips the weak to witness boldly. Our witness flows from dependence on God, not human confidence. As a church and as individuals, we are asked to pray for our mission partners. That’s a great start. Now go on to ask God to make us courageous signs of His mercy and love in everyday life.

### Practical Steps to Shine for God This Week — *Choose One*

- Pray daily this week for one of our mission partners and, as a group, send them a short message or gift.
- Serve visibly: volunteer for a church outreach or community task as an act of love.
- Share a short testimony with a friend about how God has met you in weakness.

## SMALL GROUP SESSION 5 God in the Chaos - God's Faithfulness in a Messy World: *Judges* 17–21

### WELCOME

#### Icebreaker *Option 1* — 'Headlines from the Mess'

Invite each person to offer a one-line 'headline' describing a moral or relational mess they noticed this week (personal, local or in the news). No explanation needed.

**Purpose:** It opens honest conversation about disorder and brokenness — the very world *Judges* 17–21 depicts.

### OR

#### Icebreaker *Option 2* — 'Lament and Hope' (Pairs)

In pairs, share one thing that makes you ache for justice and one small sign of hope you've seen recently. Pray for one another for 30 seconds, then swap.

**Purpose:** It trains the group to hold lament and hope together — the posture needed for reading these chapters.

### WORSHIP

**Suggested Song:** 'O Church Arise (Arise, Shine)' [https://youtu.be/B-GhP7GbjY0?si=z\\_O\\_fSYcaQ2EzAbw](https://youtu.be/B-GhP7GbjY0?si=z_O_fSYcaQ2EzAbw)

This song re-centres us on God's covenant faithfulness and our calling to be a faithful, visible people in a world of moral confusion.

### WORD

#### Biblical Summary: *Judges* 17–21

These final chapters of *Judges* show what happens when God's people abandon His ways. In chapters 17–18, Micah creates a private shrine and hires a Levite as his personal priest — faith becomes a consumer choice. The tribe of Dan then steals the shrine and makes idolatry part of *their* identity.

In chapter 19, a Levite's concubine is horrifically abused and dies. The Levite cuts her body into pieces and sends them throughout Israel to provoke outrage. Chapters 20–21 describe the civil war that follows, nearly wiping out the tribe of Benjamin. The people then scramble for human solutions to repair the damage they themselves caused.

The narrator wants us to feel the ugliness. This is what happens when 'everyone does what is right in their own eyes.' The point is not to glorify violence but to expose the cost of spiritual drift, moral chaos and the absence of godly leadership.

#### Christ-Centred Reframing

*Judges* ends in darkness — but the Bible does not. These chapters make us long for a leader who is wise, just, compassionate and faithful. Jesus is the King Israel never had:

- He protects the vulnerable rather than exploiting them.
- He absorbs violence rather than inflicting it.
- He brings justice without destroying mercy.
- He forms a community shaped not by chaos but by the Sermon on the Mount.

Where *Judges* shows the collapse of covenant life, Jesus restores it — and invites us to live as His faithful people in a messy world.

#### *Voices That Help Us Read the Text:*

**John Goldingay** "The horror of *Judges* 19 is meant to appal us; it shows what happens when covenant restraints disappear." (He names the deliberate shock of the narrative.)

**John Goldingay** “People do what is right in their own eyes, and the result is a community tearing itself apart.” (A succinct summary of the book’s closing message.)

**Tim Keller** “Judges ends not with heroic deliverance but with the terrifying consequences of self-rule.”

(Keller’s framing of the book’s final movement.)

**“These chapters make us ache for a king who will bring justice without destroying mercy.”**

(Keller’s Christ-centred reading of the book’s conclusion.)

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS** *These chapters are too many and too long to cover in an evening. You will need to choose a couple and read a selection of verses from those chapters. In the same way choose just a few questions (2-3) to look at depending on time and emotional capacity in the group.*

1. Read: Judges 17:1–13; 18:1–6  
**How does Micah’s ‘shrine at home’ show the danger of treating faith like a private hobby? What would a healthier, public faith look like in our neighbourhood?**  
**Practical Prompt:** Name one way our church can make faith less private and more communal this week.
2. Read: Judges 18:7–31 **When Dan adopts Micah’s idols, what does this teach about how groups can normalise wrong behaviour? Where might we be tempted to say, ‘That’s just how we do things’?**  
**Practical Prompt:** Identify one church habit to review so as to avoid unhealthy compromise (eg. worship, outreach, priorities).
3. Read: Judges 19:1–30 (selected verses only)  
**What shocks you most about this chapter? How should the church respond when people are abused, ignored, or silenced?**  
**Practical Prompt:** Who in our communities needs protection or a voice, and what step can we take to help them? How is The Branch modelling this for us?
4. Read: Judges 20:1–13, 18–28  
**Israel’s anger leads to war. How can we hold righteous anger without letting it become destructive?**  
**Practical Prompt:** Name one way to channel anger into constructive action (eg. advocacy, prayer, support services).
5. Read: Judges 21:1–25  
**The people try desperate solutions to fix what they had broken. When have you seen ‘quick fixes’ make things worse? How does the gospel offer a different kind of repair?**  
**Practical Prompt:** Choose one long-term, humble step our group can take to repair a local harm (relationship building, sustained volunteering).

## **WITNESS**

### **Mission and Care**

This week, choose one practical prompt from the discussion you’ve just had and commit to doing it.

- Pair up and tell your partner what you will do. Agree to check in by message mid-week.

### **Closing Prayer**

‘Lord, give us courage to protect the vulnerable, wisdom to resist easy fixes and the humility to live by Your justice. Make us signs of Your kingdom in a messy world. Amen.’