

Week of June 24, 2019: Judges Series: Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon and Abdon (Judges 9-12)

Discussion Questions Set #1

“After the time of Abimelek, a man of Issachar named Tola son of Puah, the son of Dodo, rose to save Israel. He lived in Shamir, in the hill country of Ephraim. He led Israel twenty-three years; then he died, and was buried in Shamir. He was followed by Jair of Gilead, who led Israel twenty-two years. He had thirty sons, who rode thirty donkeys. They controlled thirty towns in Gilead, which to this day are called Havvoth Jair. When Jair died, he was buried in Kamon ... (flipping to Judges 12:8-15) After him, Ibzan of Bethlehem led Israel. He had thirty sons and thirty daughters. He gave his daughters away in marriage to those outside his clan, and for his sons he brought in thirty young women as wives from outside his clan. Ibzan led Israel seven years. Then Ibzan died and was buried in Bethlehem. After him, Elon the Zebulunite led Israel ten years. Then Elon died and was buried in Aijalon in the land of Zebulun. After him, Abdon son of Hillel, from Pirathon, led Israel. He had forty sons and thirty grandsons, who rode on seventy donkeys. He led Israel eight years. Then Abdon son of Hillel died and was buried at Pirathon in Ephraim, in the hill country of the Amalekites.” (Judges 10:1-5 and then flip to Judges 12:8-15)

You’ll note that in the above passages, the classic Judges refrain – “the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD” – does not occur. The narrative associated with these five judges of Israel suggests that they led Israel in prosperous and relatively peaceful times, when the creation of Godly culture was functionally occurring.

1. Why is it important to note that the book of Judges is not all doom, gloom and oppression?
2. How might the success of these five judges and the people of Israel during their rule offer us encouragement as we seek to see Godly culture established through Hillside? What do these “high points” suggest about the possibility of seeing Godly culture established?
3. If one’s mindset is centered solely on doom, gloom and oppression, which of the five postures to culture do you think is most likely: critique, condemn, copy, consume, or cultivate/create? If you were to rank them 1 – 5, what would your ranking look like?

Discussion Questions Set #2

“Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD. They served the Baals and the Ashtoreths, and the gods of Aram, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammonites and the gods of the Philistines. And because the Israelites forsook the LORD and no longer served him, he became angry with them. He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and the Ammonites, who that year shattered and crushed them. For eighteen years they oppressed all the Israelites on the east side of the Jordan in Gilead, the land of the Amorites. The Ammonites also crossed the Jordan to fight against Judah, Benjamin and Ephraim; Israel was in great distress.” (Judges 10:6-9)

In sermon, we learned that Israelite culture went into hyper-drive consumption following the rule of Jair, indiscriminately absorbing the religious practices of the culture surrounding them. Looking at the map, it’s easily seen how surrounded by pagan culture the people of Israel actually were. The options for pagan worship were many and affected each part of Israel in a different way.



1. Thinking of the church as a body, it is quite possible that specific parts are susceptible to different cultural influences. What “parts” of the church might be susceptible to specific aspects of oppositional culture? Discuss. (ex. Our millennial generation is likely more susceptible to a “self-care” mindset than our boomer generation might be.)



Discussion Questions Set #3

In sermon, we learned about Jephthah, a twice rejected man from Gilead, who eventually led the people of Israel against their Philistine oppressors. Through the empowerment of God's Spirit, he liberated the people of Israel from pagan oppression and ushered in an opportunity for the creation of Godly culture.

1. Do you believe, not as a fanciful wish, but do you concretely believe that God will use us to lovingly and graciously create an incredibly Godly culture right here, right now?
2. What concrete steps might you take as a H2H group to see this come to pass?
3. God's use of the weak and lowly is also a challenge us to be a people who have hearts for the "discarded" ones of our world, a passion to minister to the marginalized and rejected. What might it look like if we became a people who regularly elevated the "discarded" of our world in the name of Jesus? To whom might God be calling us to reclaim for His purposes?
4. In sermon, we learned that Jephthah used a common cultural tool - a blood oath - in his service of God. God neither asked for nor encouraged this action, yet so steeped in pagan culture was Jephthah that he almost mindlessly made this vow. The results were incredibly tragic. Might we be so steeped in oppositional culture that we fail to recognize its influence upon us? What specific aspects of oppositional culture might we have failed to reject?