

“Teaching the Next Generation”
Judges 2:1-12
(Preached at Trinity, November 23, 2014)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. God demonstrated His covenant faithfulness to His people Israel by delivering them by His powerful arm from their bondage in Egypt. He continually reminded them of this covenant blessing so that they would not forget.
Exodus 20:2-3 NAU - "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ³ "You shall have no other gods before Me."
2. God gave them the land of Canaan just as He promised. During their early days in Canaan they witnessed God's mighty power in defeating their enemies.
 - A. Jericho's fortified walls came crashing down at God's command
Israel didn't lay a finger on the walls
 - B. God continually demonstrated that the battle was His and He fought mightily on behalf of His people.
 - C. God demonstrated that it didn't matter how fortified their cities, how powerful their armies, how advanced their weaponry, He would destroy every enemy.
God's words to Joshua were clear:
"Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go."
 - D. But as we enter the Book of Judges we find the sinful heart of unbelief rising among the people of Israel
3. Even before the death of Joshua their hearts were growing cold in their obedience to God. We find at the beginning of Judges 2 the sad testimony – **Verse 1-4**
4. We saw in **Chapter 1** the seeds of failure as they failed to trust God and fight courageously. Their hearts had grown cold towards God and their zeal had become lukewarm.
5. At the beginning of **Chapter 2** we find a sharp word of rebuke for Israel. They had not followed God completely.
Judges 2:2 NAU - "But you have not obeyed Me; what is this you have done?"
6. In Joshua's farewell sermon he charged them to follow God without compromise.
Joshua 24:15-16 NAU - "If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." ¹⁶ The people answered and said, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods"

7. Israel recounted all of God's miraculous works that He had performed in their midst. **Joshua 24:17-18 NAU** - "for the LORD our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and who did these great signs in our sight and preserved us through all the way in which we went and among all the peoples through whose midst we passed. ¹⁸ "The LORD drove out from before us all the peoples, even the Amorites who lived in the land. We also will serve the LORD, for He is our God."
8. But Joshua warned them that hollow words and empty promises would be insufficient. **Joshua 24:19-24 KJV** - "And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the LORD: for he *is* an holy God; he *is* a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. ²⁰ If ye forsake the LORD, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good. ²¹ And the people said unto Joshua, Nay; but we will serve the LORD. ²² And Joshua said unto the people, Ye *are* witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the LORD, to serve him. And they said, *We are* witnesses. ²³ Now therefore put away, *said he*, the strange gods which *are* among you, and incline your heart unto the LORD God of Israel. ²⁴ And the people said unto Joshua, The LORD our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey."
9. That generation gave general obedience to God but they did not drive out the inhabitants of the land. They did not have wholehearted obedience.
As a consequence the pagan nations would continually draw them from God.
- A. Notice the text says:
Judges 2:7 NAU - "The people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of the LORD which He had done for Israel."
- B. But this became the pattern for Israel. They served God as long as they had a strong leader but it wasn't heart service. As soon as the leader was dead they fell into idolatry.
Judges 3:11-12 NAU - "Then the land had rest forty years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died. ¹² Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD. "
Judges 4:1 NAU - "Then the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, after Ehud died."
After Deborah: **Judges 5:31-6:1 NAU** - "And the land was undisturbed for forty years. Then the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD gave them into the hands of Midian seven years."
Judges 8:32-34 NAU - "And Gideon the son of Joash died at a ripe old age and was buried in the tomb of his father Joash, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. ³³ Then it came about, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the sons of Israel again played the harlot with the Baals, and made Baal-berith their god. ³⁴ Thus the sons of Israel did not remember the LORD their God, who had delivered them from the hands of all their enemies on every side"

10. Tonight I want us to understand another sad consequence when our hearts are not zealous towards God. It will have a sad consequence upon our children. There are generational consequences.
This is a truth taught clearly in the Word of God. The Ten Commandments describe the generational impact that our lives have upon our children.
Exodus 20:5-6 NAU - "I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, ⁶ but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments."
11. We find this here in **Chapter 2**. It's enough to make us weep.
Judges 2:10-13 NAU - "All that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel. ¹¹ Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals, ¹² and they forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from *among* the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed themselves down to them; thus they provoked the LORD to anger. ¹³ So they forsook the LORD"
12. It's not that they weren't religious. They still had the Ark of the Covenant. They still practiced their religious rituals. It isn't likely they didn't know about the Exodus or the Red Sea or of Jericho. But these acts of God were no longer precious to them. They did not have zeal for God and their children knew it.
13. Too often parents depend upon the church or youth groups or teachers to guide their children. This is not to diminish the importance of the teaching of the church. But too often parents fail to understand the importance of their own example in the lives of their children.
I have heard parents of grown children complain, "We had them in church every week." But God was not held high in the home.
14. It only takes one generation for a family to forget God. If your children do not see Him as grand and glorious, neither will their children nor their children's children.
This is why the Old Covenant stressed over and over the importance of teaching their children of the wondrous works of God.
Deuteronomy 6:4-7 NAU - "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! ⁵ "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶ "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up."
Deuteronomy 6:20-21 NAU - "When your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What *do* the testimonies and the statutes and the judgments *mean* which the LORD our God commanded you?' ²¹ then you shall say to your son, 'We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and the LORD brought us from Egypt with a mighty hand.'
Exodus 12:1 NAU - "And you shall observe this event as an ordinance for you and your children forever. ²⁵ "When you enter the land which the LORD will give you, as He has promised, you shall observe this rite. ²⁶ "And when your children say to you, 'What does this rite mean to you?' ²⁷ you shall say, 'It is a Passover sacrifice to the LORD who passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians, but spared our homes."

Deuteronomy 31:10-13 NAU - "Then Moses commanded them, saying, "At the end of every seven years, at the time of the year of remission of debts, at the Feast of Booths, ¹¹ when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place which He will choose, you shall read this law in front of all Israel in their hearing. ¹² "Assemble the people, the men and the women and children and the alien who is in your town, so that they may hear and learn and fear the LORD your God, and be careful to observe all the words of this law. ¹³ "Their children, who have not known, will hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live on the land which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess."

Psalms 78:4-6 NAU - "We will not conceal them from their children, But tell to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, And His strength and His wondrous works that He has done. ⁵ For He established a testimony in Jacob And appointed a law in Israel, Which He commanded our fathers That they should teach them to their children, ⁶ That the generation to come might know, *even the children yet to be born, That they may arise and tell them to their children*"

15. How can you avoid such a tragic end?

I. You must hold God high in your home

A. Israel had grown cold towards God

1. His covenant promises were insignificant. His Law was ignored. Their children witnessed this.
2. They soon began to allow other gods into their lives. It's not that they did not look to Jehovah. They denied His supremacy. They became syncretistic.
3. A new generation rose up that found it easy to dismiss God. But you have to ask yourself, did the previous generation fail to display His glory?
Matthew Henry - *Be astonished, O heavens! at this, and wonder, O earth! Hath a nation, such a nation, so well fed, so well taught, changed its God, such a God, a God of infinite power, unspotted purity, inexhaustible goodness, and so very jealous of a competitor, for stocks and stones that could do neither good nor evil?*

B. Your children will see where God lies in your heart

1. Do we truly believe God has dominion over everything? That He is Lord over business and politics, over education, over science and mathematics, over marriage and family, over art and music and literature – that He is Lord of our lives.
Your children will be able to tell if this is true to you.
2. They will witness your attitude towards the things of God
 - a. Do they see you pray – and what do they hear you pray?
 - b. Do they see you reading God's Word?
3. Is God at the center of everything?
Your children see your priorities. They watch how you make decisions – how you direct your life.
4. Your children see the place the church has in your life. It's one thing to merely bring them to church. It's another for them to see you love the church. Your children watch how you worship.
5. Being born into a Christian home is a glorious blessing. But being born into the home of a hypocrite is like falling into a pot of poison.

II. You must teach your children diligently

- A. Israel ceased telling their children about God because they didn't see God as worthy of declaring.
1. They ceased witnessing God's greatness
 2. It all took place gradually over time.
It's like the proverb of the frog in boiling water.
Psalms 78:10-11 NAU - "They did not keep the covenant of God And refused to walk in His law; ¹¹ They forgot His deeds And His miracles that He had shown them."
 3. They ceased teaching their children about God and the next generation did not know Him.
Judges 2:10 NAU - "there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel."
 4. They didn't know of God's covenant promises or His covenant demands. They didn't know of God's mighty deeds.
But this only tells half the story. Their ultimate problem was not that they did not know about Jehovah God, they didn't know Him.
The earlier generation knew *about* Jehovah but did they truly *know* Him?
- B. What will your children know about God?
1. How do they view Him? Do they see Him as glorious? Do they see Him as a God who will not be ignored? Do they see this in your life?
We must now merely be satisfied that they know *about* God. We want them to *know* Him. Do you demonstrate to them that you *know* God?
 2. Is your home filled with God or does every other activity take the place of priority? Is God the priority of your home?
 3. What are you teaching your children? You ARE teaching them. The question is WHAT are you teaching them?
 4. Your greatest duty is to teach your children a holy reverence for God. This must be your greatest priority. There are many things you can emphasize to your children. Some parents stress sports and every sort of pleasure but give little attention to God, His Word, the church.
 5. **Spurgeon**: "Teach him what you will, if he learn not the fear of the Lord, he will perish for lack of knowledge. Grammar is poor food for the soul if it be not flavoured with grace. Every satchel should have a Bible in it. The world may teach secular knowledge alone, it is all she has a heart to know, but the church must not deal so with her offspring; she should look well to every Timothy, and see to it that from a child he knows the Holy Scriptures."

Conclusion:

1. And yet, even with the greatest of diligence, we know that salvation is a supernatural work of God. We must pray with all our heart, pray without ceasing for our children. The faith of the fathers does not automatically become the faith of the children.
2. We don't want them to merely know *about* God. We want them to *know* Him. This demands that we hold the glory of God before them continually. And we must pray that the Lord of salvation would have mercy upon their souls.
3. There is one more element to this passage. We must not miss the corporate aspect. We are laying the foundation for the future of our church. We are the fathers of the next generation. We are setting the pattern of holiness for the future. We are setting the standards. If we lay a weak foundation based upon pragmatism and weak principles the next generation will follow our lead.
4. Too often the children in a church grow up and then leave and join another church. Could it be that the church of their fathers did not hold God high? We need to lift high the great work of our God. We need to extol His mighty deeds and keep it in their memory. It's been said, amnesia produces apostasy.