

The Story // 8 and 9—A Few Good Men ... and Women

Me // When Do You Stop Reading the Bible?

In the past, when you've decided to read the Bible from cover, where have you given up? I always stop somewhere around Judges and Ruth! God has given His people, Israel, everything they need to be a great nation: a set of guidelines on how to live, His presence in the tabernacle, a way to atone for their sins, and land He had promised to their ancestors. And, they've responded to Joshua, "We will serve the Lord and obey Him!"

We // The Story—A Few Good Men...and Women

Then, *The Story: The Bible as One Continuing Story of God and His People* continues in Chapters 8 and 9—A Few Good Men...and Women. Here, we look more closely at Judges and Ruth. Chronologically, these chapters span ~325 years. 1375 B.C.—1050 B.C. is the time when the Judges ruled. And, during this time, God's people get caught up six times in a four-stage cycle: 1) sin, 2) oppression, 3) repentance, 4) deliverance.

God // The Judges

How does God deliver them every time? The Judges! We tend to think of judges as older men and women wearing robes, listening to court cases. But, God's judges are warriors who wear helmets and carry swords. There were 15 of them. You know many of them: Deborah, Gideon, Sampson, Samuel, etc. During the time of the Judges, ~111 years was spent in oppression. Over and over, the Judges helped to deliver Israel.

God // Ruth

But, “in the days when the judges ruled”, a special gift of deliverance was given by God to all nations! God works through the faith of a foreign woman, Ruth. Following her mother-in-law, Naomi, back to Israel, from Moab, Boaz (Rahab’s son) becomes Ruth’s kinsman-redeemer. They marry. And, together, they, as **Ruth 4:21b-22 (NIV)** says, “Boaz was the father of Obed, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David.”

We // The Genealogy of Jesus the Messiah

Now. I know we all skim right past Matthew 1:1-17 in the story of Christmas. But, in 5-6 (NIV), we see Rahab, Boaz, Ruth, Obed, Jesse, and King David in the genealogy. **Read Matthew 1:5-6 (NIV)**. But, don’t miss **1:16 (NIV)**, “Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah.” This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah (Christ), the son of David, the son of Abraham.

You // Our Lower Story

So, how can we connect to *The Story*? The cycle of sin, oppression, repentance, and oppression repeats itself in us! Paul says, in **Romans 7:19 (NIV)**, “For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.” We all relate! But, if we look past the Judges (deliverers of Israel) and Ruth to Jesus, we hear Paul in **Romans 8:1-2 (NIV)**, “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.”

Pray // It All Points to Jesus!

Let's pray. Lord, Judges 21:25 (NIV) says, "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit." Over and over, we hear in *The Story* this week how the people of Israel did evil in the eyes of the Lord, forgot the Lord their God, and served false gods. Lord, we do the same thing in our lives today. Paul, in Romans 3:22b-23a (NIV) says, "There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." But, Paul, in Romans 3:23b-25a (NIV) says, "And all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith." Lord, for over 300 years, You used the Judges to deliver Your people, Israel and bring them peace. But, in the faith of a foreign woman, Ruth, You brought us hope for eternal life in Jesus. He is the Messiah (Christ), the Son of God and the Savior of the world He is our Rock and Redeemer. He is our King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is our Prince of Peace. He is the good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Lord, today, help us have beautiful feet that brings this good news to all nations, tribes, languages, and people. Amen

Scripture Reading

A Few Good Men ... and Women

Message Series

The Story

Message Topic

Chapters 8-9 - A Few Good Men ... and Women

Scripture Reading

Judges 2-4; 6-8; 13-16; Ruth 1-4

Message Points

NOTES:

Memory Verse

Ruth replied (to Naomi), “Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God.” - Ruth 1:16 (NIV)

Discussion Questions

- What does God’s choice of Deborah as judge during this time reveal about God’s view of women?
- Why does God often use weak and uncertain people like Gideon to do his work?
- If you ever feel uncertain about your gifts and abilities, how could the story of Gideon encourage and strengthen you?
- What reasons can you give for why the Israelites kept repeating their downward cycle of sin?
- What does Ruth’s story reveal about the love of God?

- What does Ruth's story reveal about how God views all people groups? What does that mean for you?
- Ruth left her home to follow Naomi and to follow God. How is God asking you to follow him?

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