

Covenantal Discord

The Book of Judges

It's Valentine's Day weekend – a time to celebrate love!

But what is love? Is it a feeling/emotion/attraction/choice/commitment?

The answers I hear from couples in pre-marital counseling usually differ, quite a bit, from what I hear from those who've been married for years!

- Love is passionate/**Love is patient!**
- Love is expressed with hugs & kisses/**Love is not being easily angered!**
- Love is satisfying/**Love is not self-seeking!**
- Love is finding Mr. Right/**Love is keeping no record of wrongs!**
- Love is about encouraging/building up one another/**Love delights in the truth!**
- Love is always exciting/**Love always endures!**

We discover what it means to truly love, not in the dating or honeymoon stage, but in the facing of the everyday realities of life together in marriage!

Love is covenanting together, even when it's not comfortable together! We see this kind of love played out in the relationship between God & His people!

But let me warn you, it will not always be a warm fuzzy, feel good, cozy up on the couch together kind of love story!

The book of Judges does not reveal love as a feeling, **but it does show us what God's love looks like** – a true covenant making & covenant keeping kind of love!

The covenant relationship between the people & God was re-established with Joshua & it was an exciting, hopeful, & fulfilling time - amazing battles were fought & won, incredible odds were overcome, & the promised land received!

But the people discovered that the promised land wasn't all milk & honey! And that **spoken covenantal vows are much harder to live out in practice!**

The book of Judges is like what some call the 7th year of marriage (the hardest year) – but for God's people it spans a 325 year period of time!

The questions that often get raised when reading this book are, “Will this covenant relationship endure?” “Will God's people ever fully commit to Him?” “Will God stay faithful to His promise even despite their rejection?”

The opening chapters of Judges exposes the fact that **the covenantal vows**

spoken by the people at the end of Joshua didn't last! Judges 2:1-4

We see here in ch. 2 the realities of the covenantal discord. **Judges 2:11-15**

Israel's unfaithfulness is apparent, & we would all probably say that God's response was justified, but how do we reconcile a God of love w/ such actions?

- “He gave them over to plunderers...”
- “He sold them into the hand of their surrounding enemies...”
- “Whenever they marched out, **the hand of the Lord was against them for harm...**”

This doesn't sound like love/covenantal faithfulness/God, from our perspective!

This is where our analogy of human marriage deviates from the covenant between God & His people! God requires obedience in this covenant; therefore, His response is completely just because of their disobedience!

But His response here was also temporary! His righteous anger/His just response of standing against them, was followed by Him raising up judges!

We can see God's love in His raising up of these deliverers! **Judges 2:16-19!** But His love & deliverance was continually met with unfaithfulness!

God raised up 12 judges to deliver His people from the consequences of their own actions, **but things just continued to get worse!** God's perfect love was for a people who continually turned away & were unfaithful to Him

Isn't it hard when you love someone who doesn't love you back in return? This is God's continual experience with His people, even to this day!

The last line in the book of Judges exposes the sad reality of mankind – **“Everyone did what was right in his own eyes!”**

How can a loving God allow His beloved people to continue to turn away and choose for themselves the way of destruction? He can't/ He won't!

But raising up judges, as interesting as their stories are, didn't work long-term – something else was needed/ someone else was needed!

The downward spiral of humanity needed a perfect judge/deliverer to overcome their sin permanently, **they needed Jesus!**

The gospel of the O.T. was that He, the embodiment of God's love, was coming!

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