

The Loop of Lost Faith  
Judges  
Faithfulness Under Pressure

By Dave Urbanski

If you've been a Christian even for a short time, it becomes clear that God is eager to teach us truths about him ... and us ... and the world around us.

But after we learn such truths, an equally important task awaits us: *Remembering those truths.*

Why? As Pastor Scott pointed out this past Sunday, remembering truths about the Lord and how he brought us through difficult circumstances in our lives is essential ... because the remembering helps us!

"Remembering" has been a command since the oldest writings in the Old Testament. Pastor Scott shared from Joshua 4:1-7 that God instructed Joshua to construct a monument of stones that "when your children ask in time to come, 'What do those stones mean to you?' then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it passed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial forever."

When we remember that God was good to us and helped us in the past, we're more likely to trust him to take care of us in the present and in the future.

Further, the history of Israel that Pastor Scott led us through this past Sunday covered a time when the Jewish nation didn't have a king — and Pastor Scott said as a result, the Israelites were doing their own thing and getting in trouble. Which brings us historically speaking to the book of Judges. Again, Pastor Scott noted to us a key statement repeated regularly in the book of Judges: "In those days no king in Israel everyone did what was right in their own eyes." (21:25)

This certainly is true for us today. It's a human sin condition that has repeated itself down through the centuries. Pastor Scott called this "The Loop of Lost Faith." It starts with an attraction to sin ... then oppression because of it ... then our crying out to the Lord ... then him delivering us ... and finally him giving us his peace. Five stages. Unfortunately, since this is a loop, it repeats. Over and over again. In other words, despite ending up with the Lord's peace in the end, we become attracted to sin once again, and the the cycle starts up again.

What attracts us to sin? Pastor Scott wisely noted that it's not the sin itself but the *empty promises* of sin. That we will "be happy" or "feel better" or be "satisfied" when

we get angry or take revenge or do whatever else it is that flies in the face of God's commands. Which is why Peter in his first letter warns us, "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." (5:8) So whether it's immorality or materialism or bitterness, Pastor Scott said our hearts tend to move toward such sin, and we need to be careful to stay away. Pastor Scott also took us through the life of Gideon in chapters 6 through 8 in the book of Judges, in which the five stages of the Loop of Lost Faith play out.

**Attraction to sin:** "The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord gave them into the hand of Midian seven years." (Judges 6:1)

Pastor Scott said the Israelites — despite all they've learned about the Lord and his love for them — started worshiping other gods. But we, too, can drift into idol worship, can't we? To begin combatting it, we must ask ourselves, "What do I worship apart from God?" Idol worship, at its core, is placing primary importance on something — anything — apart from God in our hearts.

And what is the result of us getting involved in sin? Besides the breaking of our fellowship with the Lord, sin also ends up oppressing us, and that is not a good place for us.

**Oppression:** "For whenever the Israelites planted crops, the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the East would come up against them. They would encamp against them and devour the produce of the land, as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel and no sheep or ox or donkey." (Judges 6:3-4)

Pastor Scott told us that when oppression comes as the result of sin, it's debilitating. It robs of blessings, and it robs us of peace. It's harmful.

**Crying out to the Lord:** "And Israel was brought very low because of Midian. And the people of Israel cried out for help to the Lord." (Judges 6:6)

Which led Pastor Scott to ask, how low do we need to get before we cry out to God? Still, he's always ready to listen — every time we cry out to him, not just once or twice and then he's had it with us. The Lord always always is ready to rescue us.

Pastor Scott also took us through Psalm 121 as an expression of crying out to the Lord. Let's look at it again in full:

"I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade on your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore."

We need to regularly make space in our hearts to be humble enough to call upon the Lord in all we do, Pastor Scott told us.

Further in the life of Gideon, we learned that God made him the deliverer of the Israelites — and despite the fact that he was afraid of the Midianites!

**Deliverance:** “And the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, ‘The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor.’” (Judges 6:12)

Pastor Scott then went through the stages of Gideon’s doubt, and him asking the Lord for proof — and how after God provided proof, the Lord removed all of Gideon’s comfort by reducing his fighting force, all so that there would be no doubt that the Lord alone was responsible for the Israelites’ success on the field of battle. In the end, such a miraculous victory would spur on the Israelites to declare God as solely responsible for their victory — and subsequently increase their faith in the Lord.

“And the Lord said to Gideon, ‘With the 300 men who lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hand, and let all the others go every man to his home.’” (Judges 7:7)

Finally, there was **Peace:** “So Midian was subdued before the people of Israel, and they raised their heads no more. And the land had rest forty years in the days of Gideon.” (Judges 8:28)

But as Pastor Scott previously noted, by the end of chapter 8, the Loop of Lost Faith is replaying: “As soon as Gideon died, the people of Israel turned again and whored after the Baals and made Baal-berith their god. And the people of Israel did not remember the Lord their God, who had delivered them from the hand of all their enemies on every side ...” (Judges 8:33-34)

Rather than letting this get us down, instead let us rejoice in the truth — namely that remembering this history can help us avoid the Loop of Lost Faith and increase our strength from the Lord.

Let us, therefore, share this history with each other ... and share our own testimonies ... and continue to study the lives of believers who’ve gone before us ... and be reminded that God loves us and has great things in mind for us.