

Today we continue with the stories in the Bible, particularly in the book of Judges. The era of the Judges was one of spiritual darkness for Israel even though these are the stories of God's people after settling in at their new home in the Promised Land. Its overall message is the self-destruction of God's people when they are complacent. There were a few good men and women in those days.

Last week, we heard about the first self-destructive mistake God's people made—failing to transfer their love of God to their children. Because of this mistake, the new generation grew up who knew neither God nor what God had done for Israel, which led them to do evil things in the eyes of the Lord (Judges 2:10-11).

We have briefly mentioned that we, God's people in the 21st Century, are somewhat failing to transfer our love of God to our children also. Many young people in our days reject a religious identity or affiliation and become "nones"- "N-O-N-E-S" and then "dones"- "D-O-N-E-S."¹ Our young people still have their faith to some degree but no longer attend church. Making up a large percentage of these groups is Generation Z, born between 1999 and 2015. The study shows that they are not interested in religion but open to a relationship.² The ministry with young people needs to start from where they are—at their home with their parents, grandparents, and the adult Christians whom they trust.

To transfer our love of God to our children and to turn around the trend of losing our young people in a Christian community, we were encouraged last week to spend at least 10 minutes per day with our children, grandchildren, the young people under our care. This 10-minute time with our children is not about checking on their schoolwork but about telling the story of Jesus and how the story of Jesus has transformed us. I hope some of you have started to invest your 10 minutes of your day to build a relationship with your children by telling them about your God and how your God has changed your life. Once again, I strongly encourage all of us to invest 10 minutes of our life per day for our children as we take our faith

¹ Packard, J. & Hope, A. (2015). *Church refugees: Sociologists reveal why people are DONE with church but not their faith*. Loveland, CO: Group.

² Riess, J. (2020). Gen Z is lukewarm about religion, but open to relationships, study shows. Retrieved September 4, 2021, from <https://religionnews.com/2020/12/21/gen-z-is-lukewarm-about-religion-but-open-to-relationships-study-shows/>

seriously, and we seriously care about our children, grandchildren, and the young people under our care.

Unfortunately, today we have another story of God's people making mistakes because of their ignorance of God. After the Israelites moved into the Promised Land, each tribe has given a portion of the land (Judges 13-21). After capturing the land of Canaan, Joshua and the Israelites divide up the land as an inheritance for the twelve tribes.

The tribe of Dan is one of those tribes receiving land. They were given a tract of land that was smaller than the other land grants but was fertile and also had a boundary along the Mediterranean Sea where there was fishing and commerce available to them. Yes, they were given a smaller portion of the Promised Land than other tribes. But it was the most fertile of the territory between the mountain and the sea.

However, the tribe of Dan did not like what they were given. And so, they look for new land that will please them. This showed their lack of faith in God. This was true of the other tribes as well, as the book of Judges states that "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25).

Everyone was doing what was right in their own eyes and yet wanted to affirm that their conduct had God's stamp of approval. They were not rejecting the faith from their perspective. They are silencing their conscience, ignoring Biblical convictions, and convincing themselves that God supported their path of comfort and prosperity. Aren't we sometimes, if not often, making the same mistake?

Anyway, the people of Dan did not like the territory that was given. So, they looked for new land as it pleased them (Judges 18:1-31). They sent out spies to find a better area and found an area, Laish, where a peaceful group of people lived. The tribe of Dan took things into their own hands and then conquered it. There they established their main city and called it Dan.

Now to all outward appearances, it looks as if the tribe of Dan has finally received their promised inheritance. They acted on the good report of their spies. But their spying and their conquering were actually a parody of the God-ordained conquest of the land. They seized the land that God had not intended them to take. Their

conquering of this land did not fall under the Lord's command and blessing to inhabit the Promised Land.

So, while it looks as if they are fulfilling the Biblical pattern of conquering the Promised Land, they are actually doing so out of greed, not obedience. They are fighting the wrong people. Yet, in all this, they feel they have the blessing and guidance of the Lord (Judges 18:5-6, 10).

And if we look down the road a few hundred years, we will see that this paradise of their new land would eventually become a major center of idolatry. King Jeroboam established one of his two golden calves right there in the middle of Dan (1 Kings 12:28-30).

The tribe of Dan had a formality of God-worshipping and God-following. But they worshiped themselves. Idolatry! The story of Dan teaches us not to confuse material prosperity with the blessing of the Lord. It also teaches us to be content with the portion we are given and be thankful. "Being content" means we believe that our God is not going to give us less than His best for our lives.

Paul, the apostle, wrote, "I don't say this out of need, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am" (Philippians 4:11). He makes such a bold statement because he knew that contentment lies not in what he has but in whose he is.

When we come into a relationship with God through His Son, Jesus Christ, we understand whose we are and what we have. A lack of contentment causes us to look at what others have and what we don't have. Contentment invites us to look at God and what God has given us. When we fully tune in with God, we know that our God is enough and what God has given us is enough. God so loved us that He gave His begotten Son to us. Isn't He enough? He is. Amen.