

## LIFEGROUP NOTES: JUDGES 1-5

*As ever, please use (or discard!) these ideas as is most suitable for your group. Don't feel you have to use everything.*

**Background and summary:** The book of Judges tells the story of Israel's history after the days of Moses and Joshua but before the first of her kings. It is a tale of human failure and God's faithfulness, demonstrating (often in shocking circumstances) our need of deliverance AND the amazing grace of God that is greater than all our sin. In ch.2, the writer outlines a pattern in Israel's history, highlighting the elements of sin, distress, deliverance – and further backsliding. From this pattern we learn –

- something about OURSELVES: we tend to backslide because sin is an active power in our lives from which we cannot deliver ourselves. We need a Saviour!
- something about GOD: He is faithful and gracious beyond our deserving. He delights to rescue His people.
- something about GOD'S WAYS of working: He brings salvation through unlikely people and unexpected means.

This should encourage us to pray for God's help – and expect results!

1. Read through 2:10-19 and recap the pattern of Israel's history. In what ways is your own spiritual life like theirs? Why do we tend to backslide? What steps can we take to counter this tendency? Why, in the end, do we need a Saviour?
2. Reflect on God's patience with the Israelites, and with you. Why does He go on forgiving and restoring us? How can we avoid taking God's patience for granted? Consider how God's mercy applies to you now if you are conscious of sin. How might you use these truths to help someone who is conscious of having failed God?
3. Many of Israel's deliverers (or "Judges") seem to have been unlikely characters, at least in the culture of the day (e.g., Ehud, 3:15; Deborah and Jael, 4:9,21). Often, their resources too were far from impressive (see 3:31)! Consider what we can learn from God's choice of the "disadvantaged" to fulfil His purposes. Compare 1Cor 1:26-31. How should this affect our thinking about "what it takes" to serve the Lord – and our own suitability?
4. It's striking that Hebrews 11 lists a number of Judges among the OT heroes of the faith (He 11:32), but then goes on to tell us to fix our eyes on JESUS (12:2) as the key to perseverance. Ultimately, none of the Judges could bring a lasting salvation – only Jesus can do that. Why? How are you "fixing your eyes" on Him today? How can we help one another to do this more and more?

### Responding in Prayer

- Where, in *your* life, has this study spoken most clearly? Prayerfully consider any action you need to take in the light of God's word.

*Eddie Larkman, October 2017*