

“Abandoning God’s Plan for the Family”
Judges 12:8-15
(Preached at Trinity, June 7, 2015)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In **Verse 7** we find the summary of the judgeship of Jephthah. As I’ve pointed out, the Book of Judges describes Israel as a nation in decline. They were drifting further and further into sin and we are seeing the escalating results.
 - A. With the earlier judges we read the judge delivered Israel from their enemy they enjoyed a period of peace. It was usually an extended peace.
 - Ehud - **Judges 3:30 NAU** - "And the land was undisturbed for eighty years."
 - Deborah - **Judges 5:31 NAU** - "And the land was undisturbed for forty years."
 - Gideon - **Judges 8:28 NAU** - "And the land was undisturbed for forty years in the days of Gideon."
 - B. But now with Jephthah we find his judgeship lasting only six years and there is no indication that they enjoyed a season peace. This is further evidence of the blight of sin upon the land.
2. Jephthah is followed by the consecutive rule of three minor judges.
 - Ibzan who judged Israel for seven years
 - Elon who judged Israel for ten years
 - Abdon who judged Israel for eight yearsCompared with the earlier judges their season of leadership was short. Israel is suffering under ever increasing weakness of leadership.
3. The backdrop for the Book of Judges is God’s redemptive purpose. The history of the judges bears testimony of the need of an ultimate Savior. All of the judges were flawed. All of them were tainted by sin and as the years passed their sin became more and more pronounced. We must recognize this ultimate truth in the Book of Judges. No earthly deliverer will ever bring lasting peace. None are able to bring ultimate peace. This can only be accomplished through the Prince of Peace.
Isaiah 9:6-7 NAU - " For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this."
4. Something else we must notice is the increasing weakness of the family life of the judges.
 - A. One of the great strengths of the first judge Othniel was his family life. He had found an excellent wife which made a mark upon his leadership. George Schwab makes the observation: “Othniel is presented as a conquest-era hero, with a strong woman behind him, a family man related to famous Caleb. He settles down and begins to build a home and family with a good marriage.”
 - B. But Israel is continuing to decline. After Othniel’s judgeship there seems to be an ever increasing decline in the strength of the family in Israel.

5. As I've pointed out, the Book of Judges is a chronicle of the twelve judges who God raised up to deliver Israel from their oppressors. There are six major judges and six minor judges. The distinguishing difference between the minor judges and the major judges is the amount written about them. At the end of **Chapter 12** we find the last three of the six minor judges—only eight verses are devoted to these three judges.
 6. There isn't much said about these judges—who were the oppressors they battled, how were they defeated? We have to be careful about drawing much from them. One can't help notice the great contrast between Jephthah's lone daughter who would die leaving him without an heir and these judges with many children. In fact, Jephthah is sandwiched between Jair who had 30 sons and Ibzan who had 60 children.
 7. As we read of one man with 60 children I don't think it is a stretch to assume he had more than one wife. In fact, it is pretty much a certainty.
 What we *can* see with these minor judges is the continuing decline in the strength of the family. I title this sermon, "Abandoning God's Plan for the Family."
 - A. From the beginning of time God has set forth clear instruction regarding the family.
Genesis 2:24 NAU - "For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh."
 - B. But from the beginning sin has been at work in weakening the family. When God's plan is abandoned the family is always weakened. Tonight I want to see two important ways Israel abandoned God's plan for the family and how it affected the family as well as the nation.
- I. The first way Israel abandoned God's plan for the family was the practice of polygamy or taking multiple wives.
 - A. At least two of the judges in this passage had multiple wives:
Judges 12:8-9 NAU - "Now Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel after him. ⁹ He had thirty sons, and thirty daughters *whom* he gave in marriage outside *the family*, and he brought in thirty daughters from outside for his sons. And he judged Israel seven years."
Judges 12:13-14 NAU - "Now Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite judged Israel after him. ¹⁴ He had forty sons and thirty grandsons who rode on seventy donkeys; and he judged Israel eight years."
 1. Again, while the text doesn't specifically state they had multiple wives, the number of children clearly implies they did. Izban had 60 children and Abdon had 40 sons besides his daughters.
 2. This had become the pattern for the judges. With Gideon we are clearly told the source of his many children.
Judges 8:30 NAU - "Now Gideon had seventy sons who were his direct descendants, for he had many wives."
 3. Of Jair, one of the other minor judges, we read that he had 30 sons besides daughters:
Judges 10:3-4 NAU - "After him, Jair the Gileadite arose and judged Israel twenty-two years. ⁴ He had thirty sons who rode on thirty donkeys"
 - B. God's original design was one man and one woman
Genesis 2:24 NAU - "For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh."

1. This was affirmed by Christ
Matthew 19:4-5 NAS - "And He answered and said, "Have you not read, that He who created *them* from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵ and said, 'For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh '?"
 Delitzsch – “In these words not only the deepest spiritual union, but a union comprehending the whole nature of man, an all comprehending personal communion, is represented as the essence of marriage; and monogamy is set forth as its natural and divinely appointed form.”
 2. By the fifth generation after Cain men were taking multiple wives
 Man rejected God’s way in favor of his own sinful reason
Genesis 4:19 NAS - "And Lamech took to himself two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other, Zillah."
 3. Multiple wives always resulted in weak families.
- C. One way we can apply this to our modern culture is the modern practice of divorce
1. The modern practice of divorce also results in multiple wives. It is the fruit of not being content with the bride of our youth.
Proverbs 5:18-19 NAU - "Let your fountain be blessed, And rejoice in the wife of your youth. ¹⁹ As a loving hind and a graceful doe, Let her breasts satisfy you at all times; Be exhilarated always with her love."
 2. It results in the abandonment of the wife of our youth, it results in a man having children with multiple wives.
- D. What are some of the ways polygamy weakens the family?
1. Polygamy presents insurmountable problems against nature
 - a. It is unnatural for a woman to be denied the monogamous affections of her husband.
 We can see the sad results of Leah selling her mandrakes for an evening with her husband – **Genesis 30:14-16**
 - b. It is impossible for a man or woman to share the love that was meant for a single mate
 Jacob loved only one of his wives
Genesis 29:30 NAS - "So *Jacob* went in to Rachel also, and indeed he loved Rachel more than Leah"
 - c. Women need the security and confidence of the single minded love of their husbands.
 The qualification of pastors and deacons, “husband of one wife” literally means, “a one woman man.”
 2. Multiple wives weaken the family by stifling the love between siblings
 - a. Ishmael had little regard for Isaac, his little brother
 - b. Jacob’s sons thought little of leaving Joseph for dead
- D. Multiple wives crush the influence of the father
1. From the beginning the father was to exercise headship over his home. This teaching continues into the New Testament.

2. This is greatly hindered with multiple wives. The issue isn't the size of the family, although a large family stresses the need for good parenting. It's hard to imagine a Izban as a father effectively shepherding 60 children. The problem with polygamy, however, was each wife living separately with her children.
The influence of the father was hindered. The same occurs with divorce.
3. As far back as the life of Jacob we find this reality.
Genesis 34:1-2 NAU - "Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the daughters of the land.
² When Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her, he took her and lay with her by force."
4. Dinah was allowed to wander more freely than wisdom would dictate
 - a. She was probably around 15-16 years old
 - b. She wanted to go and meet some new friends
Genesis 34:1-2 NAU - "Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the daughters of the land.
 - c. She was not properly chaperoned. Jacob did not exercise oversight over his own daughter.
 - d. The blame is to rest upon both Dinah and Jacob
Robert Candlish placed Dinah's sin in the proper perspective – "Instead of being a "keeper at home," as a discreet and chaste maiden would have done well to be, especially in the neighborhood of seducing worldly society, at once ungodly and impure, this frail and fair child of a pious parent is suffered to be on terms of familiarity with the giddy throng frequenting the haunts of pomp and pleasure."
Calvin: "She ought to have remained quietly at home, as both the Apostle teaches and nature dictates; that they should be keepers of the house. Therefore fathers of families are taught to keep their daughters under strict discipline, if they desire to preserve them free from all dishonour."
5. The Israelite fathers had a high duty to teach their children
Deuteronomy 6:4-7 NAU - "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! ⁵ "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶ "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up."
 - a. With multiple wives this was diminished with fearful consequences
 - b. God's plan is still for fathers to teach their children. Fathers are far too absent today, even when they live in the same home as their children. How involved are you in the lives of your children.

II. The second way Israel abandoned God's plan for the family was the intermarrying of God's people with pagans

Judges 12:8-9 NAU - "Now Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel after him. ⁹ He had thirty sons, and thirty daughters *whom* he gave in marriage outside *the family*, and he brought in thirty daughters from outside for his sons. And he judged Israel seven years."

- A. It could be that the reference to "outside" was only speaking of outside his tribe.
1. Many commentators assume this. All the text tells us is they had marriages "outside." We aren't told exactly what this means
 2. But knowing the spiritual culture of Israel it more likely refers to outside of Israel. We are told that Israel was continuing to embrace the idolatry of the neighboring nations. It is not a stretch to see foreign marriages.
 3. We will see this with Samson in the coming chapters:
Judges 14:1-2 NAU - "Then Samson went down to Timnah and saw a woman in Timnah, *one* of the daughters of the Philistines. ² So he came back and told his father and mother, "I saw a woman in Timnah, *one* of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife."

B. This has always been strictly forbidden

Deuteronomy 7:1-4 NAU - "When the LORD your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and stronger than you, ² and when the LORD your God delivers them before you and you defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them. ³ "Furthermore, you shall not intermarry with them; you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons. ⁴ "For they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods; then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you and He will quickly destroy you."

1 Corinthians 7:39 NAU - "A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord."

2 Corinthians 6:14-15 NAU - "Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? ¹⁵ Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?"

B. Intermarriage of believers and unbelievers has often had dreadful consequences

1. This was the background of the Noaic flood.
Genesis 6:1-2 NAU - "Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, ² that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose."

2. There are times when a believer Providentially finds himself or herself married to an unbeliever when God saves one but not the other. In this situation the believer must live a life of purity before their mate; a life in faithfulness to Christ. Such a life may even convince the unbeliever to depart.
1 Corinthians 7:12-13 NAU - "if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he must not divorce her. ¹³ And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away."
1 Corinthians 7:15 NAU - "Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace."
- C. But too often the unbelieving mate turns the heart of the believer away
1. There is always the threat of the believer compromising his faith for the sake of his wife or visa-versa, wife for the sake of her husband
 2. This was the great downfall of Solomon
1 Kings 11:3-4 NAU - "He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away. ⁴ For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father *had been*."
 3. This was always the case with Israel
 4. This has always been detrimental to the family
 - a. A strong family needs faithful moms and dads
 - b. The children need continual training. Only a home with Christ at the center will truly be a strong home.

Conclusion:

1. The polygamy and intermarriage of these judges were only symptomatic of the terrible spiritual decline of Israel.
2. The decline of the family in the U.S. is only symptomatic of the terrible moral decay of our land. As Israel struggled to define marriage and as they abandoned the need to keep the family holy the blessing of God departed from their homes. The same is true today in our own land.
3. We must speak with a clear voice regarding the nature of the family. And we must maintain the purity of the home. We must proclaim loudly the words of Israel's former leader who called them to faithfulness,
Joshua 24:15 NAU - "If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."