

Consequences
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Judges 2:11-23

Opening: Let's take a poll. Growing up, which best describes the discipline in your home? (Choices) Too strict; About right; Too lenient; I "got away with murder." ☺ Looking back, what made discipline effective—or ineffective—in your home? What worked? What didn't? Why? What does the Bible say about discipline of children?

Some think the biblical stance on discipline is out of date. Interestingly, modern child-development research has affirmed many of the same principles of loving, consistent discipline that Scripture has taught for centuries.¹:

- Consistency matters.
- Explanation is more effective than punishment alone.
- Healthy discipline combines love with boundaries.

Those principles remind us of how our Heavenly Father "disciplines the one He loves" (Heb.12:6). He is always consistent. He explains obedience in His word. His discipline is loving correction so we can thrive as His child.

Today's text marks the beginning of one of the darkest periods in Israel's history—the time of the Judges. It reveals Israel's repeated "cycle of sin" and God's unwavering pattern of justice, mercy, and grace.

The Point: When we neglect God, we naturally drift toward sin. In His justice, God disciplines His people; in His mercy, through Christ and the Holy Spirit, He provides the grace and power to break the cycle of sin when we return to Him in faith.

Before we dive into the text, here is a very quick overview of this book of Judges.

- Author: Unknown (traditionally attributed to Samuel)
- Time Period: Approximately 300 years between the death of Joshua and the beginning of Israel's monarchy (c. 1380–1050 BC).
- Historical Setting: Although God had given Israel the Promised Land, the people failed to completely remove the Canaanite influences and gradually adopted their pagan practices.
- Major Theme: Judges reveals both God's justice in disciplining His people and His mercy in repeatedly rescuing them when they turned back to Him.
- Points Forward To: Israel's need for a righteous King who can transform hearts—a need ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Now, let's look at the text. Our first verse, verse eleven, sums up the problem and sets the stage. I'm reading from the New Living Translation.

(NLT) — 11 The Israelites did evil in the Lord's sight and served the images of Baal. **12** They abandoned the Lord, the God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of

Egypt. They went after other gods, worshiping the gods of the people around them. And they angered the Lord. **13** They abandoned the Lord to serve Baal and the images of Ashtoreth.

- Remember our study in Joshua 24? What challenge did Joshua give the people? How did they respond? So, how did they get from that to what we just read?
- **Joshua 24:31 (NLT) — 31** The people of Israel served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him—those who had personally experienced all that the Lord had done for Israel. [So far, so good...however...]
- Look at **Judges 2:10 (NLT) — 10** After that generation died, another generation grew up who did not acknowledge the Lord or remember the mighty things he had done for Israel.
- Even if the generation Joshua had challenged sincerely meant their commitment, what can we assume they did NOT do well if the new generation fell so far?
- As we discussed last time, God's people have an obligation to pass our commitment to Him to the next generation (Deut. 6:20-25; 11:18-21)
- Back to the sinful behavior of the Israelites:

14 This made the Lord burn with anger against Israel, so he handed them over to raiders who stole their possessions. He turned them over to their enemies all around, and they were no longer able to resist them. **15** Every time Israel went out to battle, the Lord fought against them, causing them to be defeated, just as he had warned. And the people were in great distress.

- If Israel's idolatry provoked that much anger from God, how bad was it?
- Of course, their greatest sin was serving "other gods" instead of Yahweh.
- "Canaanite worship centered on sexual immorality and child sacrifice."
- "In some Baal cults, the deity expected an offering of a living sacrifice—specifically, the firstborn child... They were quite literally burned alive." ⁱⁱ
- "Canaanite religion represented the most morally depraved cultic system the ancient world produced; [it] centered on sexuality as a religious practice." ⁱⁱⁱ
- This explains why God's condemnation was so severe. Israel didn't merely turn to foreign gods—they embraced a system that turned sexual depravity into worship and demanded the murder of their own children.
- A just and holy God had no choice but to discipline His people for participating in these things; yet He is also a God of mercy. Look at verse 16:

16 Then the Lord raised up judges to rescue the Israelites from their attackers.

- These "judges" were not just judicial figures. They were God-appointed leaders raised up temporarily for specific crises—not kings over the whole nation.
- God sent these judges to rescue the Israelites from defeat and oppression.
- Wouldn't gratitude have caused the people of Israel to turn back to God? Nope.

17 Yet Israel did not listen to the judges but prostituted themselves by worshiping other gods. How quickly they turned away from the path of their ancestors, who had walked in

obedience to the Lord's commands. **18** Whenever the Lord raised up a judge over Israel, he was with that judge and rescued the people from their enemies throughout the judge's lifetime. For the Lord took pity on his people, who were burdened by oppression and suffering. **19** But when the judge died, the people returned to their corrupt ways, behaving worse than those who had lived before them. They went after other gods, serving and worshiping them. And they refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways.

- This takes us back to what I call the “cycle of sin” in Israel in that day:
 - Israel sins by serving the Baals (vv. 11–13).
 - God disciplines them by handing them over to their enemies (vv. 14–15).
 - God raises up judges to deliver them (v. 16).
 - When the judge dies, the people fail to remain faithful (vv. 17–19).
 - The cycle repeats, with each generation becoming more corrupt.

20 So the Lord burned with anger against Israel. He said, “Because these people have violated my covenant, which I made with their ancestors, and have ignored my commands, **21** I will no longer drive out the nations that Joshua left unconquered when he died. **22** I did this to test Israel—to see whether or not they would follow the ways of the Lord as their ancestors did.” **23** That is why the Lord left those nations in place. He did not quickly drive them out or allow Joshua to conquer them all.

- Verse 21: In His sovereignty, God left some pagan nations “unconquered.”
- Verse 22: God said, *“I did this to test Israel.”*
- God allowed the Canaanites to remain in the land for four reasons:
 - To discipline Israel for breaking His covenant through idolatry.
 - To test each generation's faithfulness and obedience to Him.
 - To train Israel for warfare and prepare them for future battles.
 - To allow Israel's population to grow before fully occupying the land.^{iv}
- God sometimes allows hardships to discipline, test, train, and prepare us.
- Scripture backs that up:
 - God disciplines us – Heb. 12:6 – “The Lord disciplines those he loves.”
 - God tests our faith – Jas. 1:2–4 – “The testing of your faith produces endurance.”
 - God trains us – Rom. 5:3–5 – Suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope.
 - God prepares us – Rom. 8:28–29 – God works all things together for good to conform us to the image of His Son.
- How can we distinguish between the natural consequences of our own choices and the loving discipline of our Heavenly Father?
- Instead of asking, *“Is this discipline or just consequences?”* perhaps the better question is, *“Lord, what are You teaching me through this?”*
- Let's bring this home to our day and talk about the “cycle of sin.” [Illustration]
- Humanity's Problem: Left to ourselves, we naturally drift into the cycle of sin that leads to destruction (*Matt. 7:13–14*).

- God's Solution: Through Christ, God gives us new hearts and His Spirit to break that cycle by His justice, mercy, and grace (*Ezek. 36:26–27; Eph. 2:4–5*).
- The “sin cycle” in today's language: Neglect God → Sin → Feel God's Discipline → Cry Out in Repentance → Receive God's Deliverance → Drift Again
- Important point: The “cycle of sin” always starts with neglecting God.
- We “all have sinned” and “there is no one who is good” (*Rom.3:10-12 & 23*).
- None of us is perfect. Even after salvation we sin. The problem is the PATTERN:

1 John 3:6 (NLT) — 6 Anyone who continues to live in him will not sin. But anyone who keeps on sinning does not know him or understand who he is.

1 John 3:9 (NLT) — 9 Those who have been born into God's family do not make a practice of sinning, because God's life is in them. So they can't keep on sinning, because they are children of God.

Romans 6:1–2 (NLT) — 1 ...should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace? **2** Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it?

- Like the people of Israel in the time of the Judges, if we are saved and slip into a pattern of sin, God will discipline us. Here's the great news (for the saved):

1 John 1:8–9 (NLT) — 8 If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. **9** But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

- Here is the BEST news for followers of Christ: There is one enormous difference between believers today and the people of Israel during the time of the Judges.
- Under the Old Covenant, God's Spirit came upon certain individuals (i.e. the judges) to accomplish specific tasks. But under the New Covenant, every believer is permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit.
- **Ezekiel 36:26–27 (NLT) — 26** And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. **27** And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations.
- That promise was fulfilled for us through Christ and His sacrifice on the cross.
- **Romans 8:9 (NLT) — 9** But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you.
- The Christian life is not about trying harder. It is about surrendering daily to the One who lives within us. Left to ourselves, we'll drift. Walking by the Spirit, we have the power to live differently.

So, What's the Takeaway?

- Israel's story is our warning. When we neglect God, we naturally drift toward sin.
- In His justice, God disciplines His people; in His mercy, through Christ and the Holy Spirit, He provides the grace and power to break the cycle of sin when we return to Him in faith.
- Drifting rarely happens all at once. It begins with small compromises, neglected time with God, ignored conviction, and a gradual cooling of our love for Him.
- The good news is that God has not left us to fight this battle alone:
 - When we fail, He lovingly disciplines us.
 - When we repent, He faithfully forgives us.

- When we surrender, His Spirit empowers us to obey.
- To avoid drifting deep into the cycle of sin, Christ-followers should:
 - Stay close to Christ every day.
 - Walk by His Holy Spirit.
 - Pass our faith to the next generation so they too can know how to live a victorious life in Christ!

ⁱ Baumrind, D. (1966). *Effects of Authoritative Parental Control on Child Behavior*. *Child Development*, 37(4), 887–907.

- The landmark study introducing authoritative parenting: warmth + consistent boundaries.

Steinberg, L. (2001). *We Know Some Things: Parent–Adolescent Relationships in Retrospect and Prospect*. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 11(1), 1–19.

- Summarizes decades of evidence that the best outcomes come from parents who combine affection with firm, consistent expectations.

American Academy of Pediatrics. (2018). *Effective Discipline to Raise Healthy Children*. *Pediatrics*, 142(6), e20183112.

- Concludes that effective discipline should teach, guide, and protect rather than merely punish. It recommends consistent, loving discipline and discourages harsh punishment.

American Psychological Association. Parenting and parenting styles.

The APA continues to recognize authoritative parenting as the style most consistently associated with positive child outcomes.

ⁱⁱ Michael L. Brown, [Jezebel's War With America: The Plot to Destroy Our Country and What We Can Do to Turn the Tide](#) (Lake Mary, FL: Frontline, 2019), 19–20.

Stephen J. Andrews and Robert D. Bergen, [Deuteronomy](#), Holman Old Testament Commentary (B&H Publishing Group, 2009), 62.

Winfried Corduan, ["Baal,"](#) in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016). [See [here](#).]

ⁱⁱⁱ R. K. Harrison, Numbers: An Exegetical Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic: A Division of Baker Publishing Group, 2019), 335–336.

^{iv} Lindsey, F. D. (1985). Judges. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 384). Victor Books.