



The book of Ruth gives us a good place to reflect on why God puts what He does in Scripture. There were probably many love stories and lots of marriages during this time. Why is this one in the Bible? It is a story about being empty and being made full, about sadness giving way to great joy when God's people do what is right. It is a story about people doing right when lots of folks were doing wrong (the time of the Judges). And it powerfully reminds us of God's providence. What else do you see in the story of Ruth?



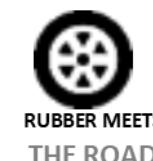
Samson's sad tale gives us a chance to talk about the problem of talent that isn't harnessed by self-control and a desire to serve God. In the end Samson accomplishes little when he could have done so much. No armies are led, no great battles are fought, and while there are a lot of dead Philistines laying around they continue to afflict Israel. Talk about how selfishness and selfish desires can derail our abilities and cause us to fizz in the service of God.

## Week 18 – April 26-May 2

**1 Samuel 1 □ 2 □ 3□ 4 □ 5-6 □**



Samuel is a book that majors in the weak being raised up by God while the proud are humbled. The link to the promises God has made to Abraham here is that God always planned for His people to be ruled by kings (note Gen 49:10; Deut 17:14-15). How could we appreciate Jesus Christ as King of Kings if we never knew what a king was? But God's people need the right kind of king. Samuel gives us a look at both a wretched king and the best of kings. 1 Samuel 1 tells the familiar tale of a childless woman praying for a baby. Her child, Samuel, becomes a major player in the Bible story. 1 Samuel 2 contains her song of praise and then tells us of Eli's wicked sons and God's rebuke of Eli. 1 Samuel 3 has the famous story of Samuel's call. Many people, however, don't know what God told Samuel once the young boy said "Speak for your servant hears" (verse 10). Samuel hears a terrible word of judgement on Eli (vv. 11-14)! 1 Samuel 4 brings that judgement to pass, in a battle where God's people try to use the ark as a lucky charm and end up losing it. In 1 Samuel 5-6 the Philistines decide they don't want the ark after all, as God is seen as superior to their idols. The ark comes home to Israel, though God's people don't seem to know how to treat it (vv. 19-21).



Think carefully about Hannah's song (2:1-10). Parts of this song are duplicated in Luke 1:51-53 by Mary. What does it mean that God "brings low and He exalts" (v. 7). Do we see ourselves as mighty and independent and in need of nothing? What happens to the arrogant who think like this?



Children need to be taught the contrast in our readings between godly Samuel and Eli's ungodly boys. They all lived together at the Tabernacle (how hard must it have been for Hannah to leave Samuel at a place where wickedness was practiced?). But Samuel was able to live right despite the evil influences around him. Talk about how he managed that and how we can do that today. Also help your children see that God holds parents responsible for correcting their children. Eli failed to do so, honoring his children above God by not disciplining them (2:29). Seeing the divine obligations of parenting is very important for your children.



All material written by **Mark Roberts**

As we journey further into Joshua this month, heading to Samuel via Judges and Ruth, it is important to be reminded this is a unique history. It is designed to give God's verdict on the events in the life of the Israelite nation. Why did what happened here happen? Because God caused it to happen in response to what His people did, either in faithful service to Him or rebellion to Him. Jehovah is the decisive character in Israel's history. In our readings we see God is at work to bring about His will and especially, bring the promises He made to Abraham to pass.

## Week 14 – March 29-April 4

**Joshua 4 □ 5 □ 6 □ 7 □ 8 □**



Joshua 4 continues the emphasis on Israel's entrance into Canaan that is prominent at the book's beginning. Joshua 5 has a new generation circumcised (the sign of participation in the covenant with God) and the first Passover in Canaan. Joshua 6 begins the theme of holy war: God versus the Canaanites and their wicked ways. Notice God alone fights here, while after Jericho He will be with the Israelites in battle. Joshua 7 finds Israel failing at Ai because one man failed at Jericho. Joshua 8 finishes the Ai story with success, and then notably closes with a renewal of the covenant. Israel is faithful to God again.



In Joshua 7 Achan's entire family is executed with him (7:24). Why? They must have been aware of his sin and thus have been partners in it. Who could hide something under a tent floor without the entire family knowing and seeing?



We don't think often of coveting but that is exactly what is behind Achan's sin (7:21). What is coveting? Does it mean we don't ever want nice things or something better than what we have? Our world is dominated by materialism and consumerism. How can we avoid Achan's sin?

# Your map to Bible Reading 2020

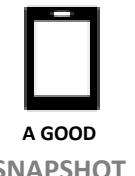
**Readings for April**



This week's reading is just begging for a good map. Use Joshua as an occasion to look at the maps in the back of your children's Bibles and teach them how to use them. Talk about the victory at Jericho and discuss how it would have felt to march in those daily processions. Make a point of how Rahab (a non-Israelite) is saved while Achan (an Israelite) is lost. Talk about what this means for us today.

## Week 15 – April 5-11

**Joshua 9 □ 10 □ 24 □ Judges 1 □ 2 □**



What a catastrophe in Joshua 9. The Israelites fail to consult God and are tricked. In Joshua 10 the mess from chapter 9 comes back to haunt them when they have to go to war for the Gibeonites. However, God uses this an occasion to give Israel a great victory. Note the repetitive phrase "the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel." That is clearly the point of this material. From here we skip over the details of the rest of Canaan's conquest and the dividing up of the land (Joshua 11-23). At least skim the parceling out of the land a little (beginning chapter 14). These chapters represent the direct fulfillment of the promise to Abraham that his children would receive the land of Ca-naan! Note 21:43-45 and 23:14 especially. God has promised and God keeps His word! Joshua

24 closes the book with a stirring call to be loyal to the covenant and the Lord. This speech sounds much like Moses' final speeches in Deuteronomy. We will then begin reading in Judges. The main theme of Judges, unfortunately, is 21:25's sad statement that "everyone did what was right in his own eyes." Judges is a book about failure, specifically the failure of God's people to do right and honor Him. Joshua 1 begins the book by linking to the end of Joshua and recording some encouraging victories. Shortly, however, we learn of failure (vv. 27-36). These ungodly peoples left in the land soon are drawing the Israelites into idolatry and sin (Joshua 2). Here we encounter the cycle of the Judges - sin (2:11), punishment (2:14-15), crying out in distress (2:15), so the Lord raises up a judge (a military leader) to deliver them (2:16-18). Then the people would start all over again (2:19ff).



In 1:19 we read that Judah couldn't drive out the inhabitants of the plain. This is further explained in 2:20-23. It doesn't reflect on God but on their faithlessness! See also 4:15.



Frequently the term "rest" occurs in Joshua (as in 11:23 and 23:1 and many other references). Rest for Israel meant freedom from the physical and spiritual oppression of the Canaanites. There is not much rest in Judges. Does God give "rest" for us today? What does that mean for us (note Hebrews 4:1)?



This week we need to emphasize what a big promise God made to Abraham when He promised Abraham's children the land of Canaan. Imagine God promising you all the land in the state of New Jersey! That is a big piece. How could you occupy all of that? Further, what about the people living there? How could you move all of them off? Joshua shows God fulfilling this big promise by giving the children of Israel the land of Canaan. The fulfillment of this promise sets the stage for God to move forward with the next phase of the story. We also want to teach the cycle of the Judges and how patient God was with His people. We want our children to grow up knowing that God always longs for His people to repent and return to Him.

## Week 16 – April 12-18



Judges 3 introduces the first three judges, all remarkable men. Judges 4 tells the story of the only woman judge, and a brave woman who kills the enemy general. We are skipping past Deborah's song of victory (Judges 5) but you might note her reprimanding some of the tribes for not coming to help in war (5:15-17). Israel is hardly a united country at this point. Judges 6-7 tells the incredible story of a very reluctant leader, Gideon. We will not read Judges 8-12 that finishes Gideon's story and tells of some rather unsavory men who led Israel. Judges 13 begins the Samson story with his remarkable birth.



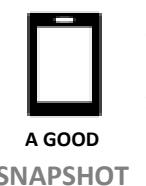
The emphasis in all the judge deliverance stories is God's hand and God giving the victory. This is made most clear in the Gideon story where God says his army is too large (7:2). How can an army be too big? That doesn't seem possible to us but God knows that such an army will keep Him from getting the honor for the victory to come. Think about your own life. Are there places where your army is too large?



We want to make sure our children aren't thinking of long, black robes and court rooms when we use the term "judges." In the Bible judges are military leaders. Kids will be interested in Gideon "fleecing." It is important to talk about prayer and having God answer prayer and how the Bible certainly does not encourage this kind of fleecing today. You can teach your children that such forces God into a "yes" or "no" answer when His answer might be "wait" or "do something entirely different.

## Week 17 – April 19-25

**Judges 14 □ 15 □ 16 □ Ruth 1 □ 2 □**



Samson shows himself for the kind of man he will be in Judges 14. He seems ungodly and to be largely lacking in self control, driven by his own carnal desires. Judges 15 shows more of the same. Samson's story ends badly in Judges 16, when a wicked woman brings him down. He is a true tragic hero. Judges closes with two appendices that illustrate how wild these times were (chs. 17-18, 19-21). Both stories are appalling. After the darkness of Judges reading Ruth is a joy. Ruth is a story of people trying to do right (watch how the main characters all respect God's law carefully), and God blessing them for it. Ruth becomes an example of the promise that Abraham would be a blessing "to all peoples" coming to pass. Ruth 1 sets the stage with much bitterness and grief, and Ruth's faithfulness shining in the darkness. Ruth 2 introduces us to the story's hero, Boaz. His character and nobility are impressive. In Ruth 3 Ruth moves to be married but there is a complication. Ruth 4 works that out, leading to the blessing of marriage and children, grand children and a great-grandchild named David.



The scene with the redeemer confuses some (4:1-5). Boaz asks him if he wants to buy Naomi's family land, which he is glad to do (4:4). Every farmer wants more land. Then Boaz tells him there is more to the bargain: he will have to marry Ruth, according to Levirate marriage law, and raise up children to Ruth's dead husband (4:5). Thus the land won't really be his and his children won't inherit it. So he says he doesn't want it (4:6). Boaz isn't interested in the land. He is interested in Ruth!