



# The G.E.M.

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The Grace Electronic Magazine

July 2009

## REFLECT ON GOD'S PLAN

God always has the best plans for our lives, yet we so often overlook them and try to make our own. This month we look at the period of the Judges in the Old Testament as we look closer at how God's plans fit into our lives.

With the cold winter months on us, the time is here for us to curl up with a good book and maybe enjoy a good movie or two with a cup of hot chocolate. Why not pay us a visit and see what we have in store to warm your spirits this month.

We also have some great products to help you entertain your children during the school holidays. With a wide selection of books, music, DVDs and games available, there is something for everyone in store, no matter what age. They will also entertain the child within you.

Be on the lookout later this month for some stock clearance specials. We will be sending all our subscribers a list of titles at last year's prices and better. Spread the list around and maybe buy a few titles yourself to give away to family and friends.


Be sure to check out our website in the next couple of days as we add some great new events and products.

Until next month, keep warm and happy reading.

Grace and Peace,  
Glyn and Linda. †

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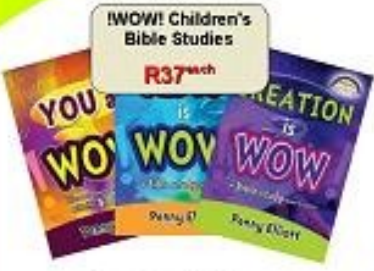
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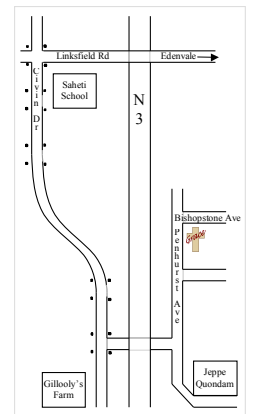


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## BIBLE BASICS

### Judges

#### *The Book of Deterioration*

After the death of Joshua and Israel has settled in the Promised Land, Israel begins to adapt to a new way of life. Unfortunately the motivation and commitment they had at the close of the book of Joshua are soon lost, and so the period of the Judges begins.

None of the judges show the same strength of character as Moses and Joshua, but all are strong military leaders that led in struggles against their oppressors and tried to encourage the people of Israel not to worship the false deities.

**Author:** It is not certain who wrote the book of Judges, but scholars believe the author to be Samuel.

**Date:** Fixing the date of writing of Judges to a particular time or year is difficult due to many overlapping events happening in different regions. However, an estimated date is somewhere between the death of Joshua (1390 BC) and the anointing of Saul as king (1050 BC).

**Content:** The book contains selected short stories out of the period between Israel conquering and taking possession of the land of Canaan, until the time the monarchy is established. The purpose of all of these stories is to show the state of moral, social, religious and political decay of the nation.

The nation of Israel was living among idolaters who had contaminated Israel's religious life. Throughout the 450 years history in this book, God occasionally intervened to interrupt their slide into total depravity.

The book of Judges clearly makes the case that the nation of Israel needed a firm leader to hold the nation together.

#### **Basic Outline:**

The book of Judges has three distinct sections. An introduction that describes the reason for the decline of the nation; an historical section that gives the bulk of the selected stories in chronological order; and an epilogue that shows the depths to which God's people had sunk:

The Times Explained (1-3:6)  
Stories of the Judges (3:7-16:31)  
Portraits of Decay (17-21)

**Key Phrase:** The key phrase of the book of Judges is "*the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord*" (2:11). When you finish the book, you realise the phrase is just as true and relevant today.

**Lesson:** The lesson for today that we can learn from the book of Judges is that people today are also doing evil in God's eyes, and it is only through the intervention and power of God that we can avoid going down the same route. †

## PRODUCT REVIEWS

### COME WHAT MAY



For you lovers of the films by Sherwood Pictures (*Fireproof* etc) you will certainly enjoy this movie that deals with the issue of when does life truly begin.

Made by forty volunteers of the the Advent Film Group, this film serves as a strong reminder of the importance of always doing what is right, no matter what the cost or how difficult it may be.

The story is of a college student, Caleb, who is given an opportunity by his parents to transfer to a different college to study law, on the condition that he has to win the National Moot Court Championship.

Teamed up with the winner of the previous year's championship, Rachel, Caleb has to argue from a pro-life position on the question of when does life truly begin. Faced with the dilemma of taking a softer stance in order to win the competition, or doing what he knows is right, Caleb is forced to make a decision that will affect his future, not only with his mother, but also the girl who has captured his heart.

To add to the dilemma, Caleb assists his mother at her law firm with some other cases while at the same time she has to prepare a pro-choice argument for a high-profile abortion case before the Supreme Court.

Though this movie has been done by amateurs, the production is of high quality, and the tale is one full of drama, romance and some humour. It is a movie suitable for the whole family, though some of its content will not be understood by the young.

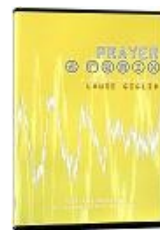
**Our Price: R 170**

*"For you created my inmost being;  
you knit me together in my mother's  
womb."*

Psalm 139:13

### PRAYER: A REMIX

by Louie Giglio



When it comes to prayer, we so often use phrases and make requests that are all about us. With phrases like "Bless me", "Be with me", "Watch over and protect me", and "Forgive me".

In this 3-part DVD, Louie Giglio, addresses these familiar sayings and portrays them in light of Scripture.

Though these phrases in and of themselves are not necessarily incorrect, they are, however, incomplete. Louie sheds light on the fact that these four phrases so often dominate our prayers that we more often than not come across with a me-centered faith, as opposed to a God-centered one.

Louie moves through the four phrases and challenges each one, one-by-one, with Biblical principles, transforming them into phrases like, "Let me bless you", "Live through me", and "No matter what, use me".

After watching this DVD you will look at your prayer life in a whole new perspective. You will begin to challenge yourself and others in the words used during prayer times. They will give new meaning to your prayers and will shift your focus from self to God.

This is a great series to use within your small group or church as a study.

**Our Price: R 220**

#### Other great titles on prayer:

##### Books

*E.M. Bounds on Prayer* - R100  
*Andrew Murray on Prayer* - R110  
*Praying Successfully* (Spurgeon, CH) - R80  
*The Power in Prayer* (Spurgeon, CH) - R80  
*Power of Praying 3-in-1* (Omartian, S) - R140

##### Study Guides

*Cover to Cover: The Lord's Prayer* - R80  
*Cover to Cover: Great Prayers o/t Bible* - R80  
*Discovery: Jesus' Blueprint for Prayer* - R27  
*Living 4 God: Great Prayers o/t Bible* - R50  
*Living 4 God* study guides are available in electronic format only through Grace Media.

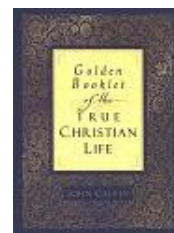
## Top 25 Must Reads

### Golden Booklet of the True Christian Life by John Calvin

This classic devotional will guide you on how to apply Biblical principles to everyday life. Originally part of *John Calvin's Institutes*, the devotional covers themes such as obedience, self-denial, the significance of the cross, and how believers should live their lives today.

Rather than focussing on contemplative other-worldliness, this book stresses the importance of devotedly active Christian life. In style and spirit, it is much like Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, however its intense practicality sets it apart, making it easily accessible for anyone seeking to carry out Christian values in everyday life.

A true gem on any believer's bookshelf, and one that has inspired readers around the world for more than four-hundred years.



**R 100**

## GOD ALWAYS HAS THE BEST PLAN

*“Now listen, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.’ Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, ‘If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.’ As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins.” - (James 4:13-17)*

In these verses, James councils us against the foolishness of making plans without considering the will of God in the matter. He is saying that you and I can make any plans we wish to make, but God always has the final say in the matter.

But, we humans like to make our own plans, don't we? We want things to go the way we want them to go. But, have you ever thought that God might have a better plan?

There are many examples in the Bible where we learn about God having a better plan. One such example is Judges 7. The story of Gideon and the battle with the Midianites who had camped in the valley.

When Gideon and his army decided to go into battle, they must have had a plan, but before they joined the battle, they found out that God had a different plan.

### REALITIES OF GOD'S PLAN

God's Plan is Different (vv2-7) – Gideon planned to march into battle with 32,000 soldiers, but God had different ideas. He reduced the number of men to only 300. That is less than one percent of the original army. A number that to our mind seems ridiculously small. But it was enough to defeat the enemy.

God's Plan is Declared (vv9-14)

– Here is Gideon, he has seen his 32,000 man army reduced to just 300 men. He is getting ready to attack a force that is many times larger than his own (v12). But, God is not asking for a leap in the dark, he is asking for a clear step of faith.

God's Plan is Distinct (vv15-23) – Gideon's men were to surround the enemy, 300 hundred against thousands. They were to sound their trumpets, shout and break a little clay pitcher containing a candle. God said that this would give them the victory, and it did. What a distinct plan! Not even the greatest military strategist would have come up with a plan like that.

### REQUIREMENTS OF GOD'S PLAN

To walk in God's plan, three steps are necessary:

**Surrender** – Think about this: Gideon was a man with 32,000 followers. But, by following God's plan, he saw his army reduced, his rank lowered and his pride crushed. He was reduced from general Gideon to Gideon the barley cake (see v13). He went from being considered a great leader of men to being called a biscuit. That

will certainly put a dent in your ego. What Gideon learned was that this fight was not about him, his army, or even the enemy. This battle was about the Lord. Gideon had to come to the place where he was willing to lay his plans, his goals, his dreams, his will aside so that he might surrender to the will of God.

**Submission** – For God's plan to succeed, Gideon and his army had to submit to God's plan. Gideon had to watch when first 22,000 men and then 9,700 men turned and went home, taking their weapons and their potential with them. Gideon and the 300 who remained had to walk in obedience to God's plan for the battle or none of them had a chance of survival.

**Steadfastness** – If Gideon and his army were to experience the victory, they would have to humble themselves under God's hand, surrender to His plan, obey His will and proceed in faith. It took great faith for 300 to go out against thousands, not to forget to take no weapons either. It took great faith for them to blow their trumpets, break those pitchers and shine those lights, but God answered their faith by giving them a resounding victory.

### RESULTS OF GOD'S PLAN

When God's people submit to His plan and carry it out for His glory, there are certain results that can be expected.

God's Enemies are Defeated (vv21-22) – The Midianites and the Amalekites turned on one another in fear and fled the scene. Israel saw their enemies defeated because Israel followed God's plan.

God's People are Victorious (v23)

– Israel enjoyed a great victory because they chose the best plan. By the way, they already had the victory before the battle was ever engaged (see vv7-8).

God's Name is Feared (vv15-23)

– Because the victory was won without a great army and without a fierce battle, God received all the glory for the victory. Neither Gideon nor his army could go home and brag about what they did on the battlefield.

### GOD'S PLAN FOR US

In our lives we are faced with many decisions, battles and plans. How we handle those occasions will say a lot about our faith. It is so easy to attempt to make plans of our own and not consult God in prayer about it, but it is clear that is not the way to go.

But how do we know what God's plans are? The truth is that God actually uses many ways to speak to us. He speaks through His Word (Romans 10:17), through the Spirit (Acts 13:2; 16:6-8), and through other believers (Acts 9:17-18). He even speaks through the circumstances of life (Genesis 24:12-16).

The bottom line is this, as we see in the story of Gideon, God's plan will not leave you in doubt. It is different from what we would expect, declared to us in many ways, and distinct in that there is no possible

alternative way to go about things.

But if we are going to see God's best plan for our lives, it is going to require faith. God expects us to surrender and submit to His will, and then to stand firm. In other words, it requires an act of faith. Those steps may be difficult, and at times scary, but through faith in Christ, knowing that He has the best plans in mind for us, those steps will be somewhat easier to take. God honours faith because faith honours Him (see Hebrews 11:6).

Then, in the same way that Gideon and his men experienced victory over their enemies, we too will experience victory in our own lives. Battles will be easier, decisions will seem simpler, enemies will fall and plans will succeed.

## God has a plan for our lives

### THE ENEMY'S PLANS

In the same way that God has a plan for our lives, so too does His enemy, Satan. He wants us to be defeated, unhappy and feeling far from God. When we

attempt to stick to God's plan only, then Satan's attacks become more intense and personal.

However, like Gideon, the battle is already won. God is on our side, we just need to stand firm in our faith, confident that through Christ we will have the victory.

### CONCLUSION

Does it feel as if God is messing around with your plans? The best thing you could ever do is submit to His plan, because His plan is the best plan!

1. He has the best plan for living - His will, when followed, always produces victory in the life of the believer!
2. He has the best plan for leaving - His plan is for you to receive Jesus as your personal Saviour. If you do, then you need never fear the fires of Hell (see John 14:6; Acts 4:12).

Consider that thought for a moment: God has the best plan. As you do, bear in mind that God's plan may not be the easiest; it may not be the most popular; it may not even seem like the smartest; but God always has the best plan!

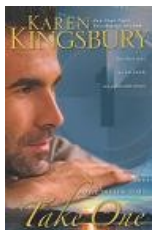
Come before Him today and talk to Him about His plans for you? †

God's plan will not leave you in doubt

## New Release

### Take One by Karen Kingsbury

Two unknown film producers struggle to make a name for themselves. They have done the impossible; raised the money to independently produce a feature film with a message they hope will change the world. With millions of dollars on the line, everything starts to fall apart and they realise they may be in over their heads. Is it possible to keep things above the line, to beat the odds and make a movie unlike anything ever done before? Or, will they lose everything in the process?



R 150

# THE BACK PAGE

## THAT'S IN THE BIBLE?

### How well do you know the Good Book?

All answers are found in the book of Judges.

Match one of the following 13 judges to each of the statements below:

Othniel	Ehud	Shamgar	Deborah
Barak	Gideon	Tola	Jair
Jephthah	Ibzan	Elon	Abdon
Samson			

- I was a Zebulunite and led Israel for ten years...
- Israel experienced 80 years of peace under me...
- I was an illegitimate son who was driven from my home by my legitimate brothers...
- I was set apart by my mother from birth for my divinely appointed mission...
- I pursued Sisera to the tent of Jael...
- I saved Israel from the hands of Cushan-Rishathaim, the king of Aram Naharaim...
- I helped Barak to defeat the Canaanites...
- I struck down six hundred Philistines with an oxgoad...
- I had forty sons and thirty grandsons, who rode on seventy donkeys...
- I lived in Shamir, in the hill country of Ephraim...
- I came from, and was later buried in, Bethlehem...
- I, along with my 30 sons, controlled thirty towns in Gilead...

Answers in the Next Edition

Last Month's Answers: 1. One (Jos. 11:19) 2. Eleazar (Jos. 17:4) 3. Reuben (Jos. 13:8) 4. King of Ai (Jos. 8:29) 5. Caleb's Daughter (Jos. 1:12-14) 6. Hailstorm (Jos. 10:5-11) 7. Shiloh (Jos. 18:1) 8. Zelophad's (Jos. 17:3)

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V Z U A K A D N F V P X X O L F P M I C M F H E H L U N  
G E H B M E R Q T M Z V A E I X Y K M P W Y C S I K O O  
H I L M B T T A E A E B H O H C E L E M I B A O L N D H  
C Q D O D S L D K V I T C J J R I N W L W R I P I O N S  
Z A R E A E H U D T E Y K L K K U W A N X A W O S L P I  
H A N R O E S P E B N Z X W D I A R O Z V J G T T E J K  
H A I A W N N S P E X O Q I Y L K S R S B Y D A I S Z G  
A A Z C A M I D I A N I T E S G M N L P M I T M N H J P  
J X E O Y N K E N B H F Z U O A H H D K Q P X I E E E B  
Y W Y B R L I Q T D R V N E S S H A M G A R Q A S C P I  
P K Y V G V H T N O K S E T I N O M M A B U M N D H Z D  
H A H T H P E J E N A B J I R T O L A P C F J S Z E L G  
P J K I T W L I G S J S Q Z S J A W C B X P L X Y M H I

Find the following words in the above grid.

Abdon	Abimelech	Ammonites	Barak	Bethel	Canaanites
Deborah	Ehud	Elon	Gideon	Hazor	Ibzan
Jair	Jephthah	Kishon	Mesopotamians	Midianites	Moabites
Othniel	Philistines	Samson	Shamgar	Shechem	Tola

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another:

Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty;  
the whole earth is full of his glory.

Isaiah 6:1-3

## DIARY OF EVENTS

### Willow Creek Conspire Promiseland Conference

25 July & 1 August 2009.  
Durban, Cape Town and Johannesburg.

### Missions Weekend with George Verwer

21-23 August 2009.  
Rosebank Union Church, Johannesburg.

### Parenting & Business Seminars with Rob Parsons

2-10 September 2009.  
Port Elizabeth, Durban, Johannesburg, Pretoria & Zambia.

### National Teacher's Convention

24-27 September 2009.  
Bloemfontein.

Visit our website for more info on these and other exciting Christian events.

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*"So may all your enemies perish, O LORD!  
But may they who love you be like the sun when  
it rises in its strength."*

Judges 5:31