

## A STUDY OF JUDGES & RUTH

### NEXT MAN UP

In his first-ever preseason game, rookie, Julian Edelman scored on a 75-yard punt return. Belichick made his way over to the then punt-returner, Wes Welker, to ask him if he knew who Wally Pipp was. Pipp was the man who lost his starting job with the Yankee's to Lou Gehrig. In other words, "You just got replaced." Scan the QR code to watch the clip.



In Judges 3, we meet the first judge, Othniel. This dude is a super-star—no flaws or shortcomings to speak of. He's a faithful warrior and leader. For the 40 years he judged, things were fine. When he died, the people rebelled, and the cycle began.

This Week, we're going to study the story of the next man up, Ehud. Unlike Welker or Pipp who were replaced by superstars, the guy who followed Othniel wasn't esteemed like he was. Unlike the future judges, Ehud's flaw wasn't based on his character. It was physical. God used Ehud's physical limitations and the prejudice of his enemies to save his people.

JUDGES 3:15–23, 30

<sup>15</sup> Then the people of Israel cried out to the Lord, and the Lord raised up for them a deliverer, Ehud, the son of Gera, the Benjaminite, a left-handed man. The people of Israel sent tribute by him to Eglon the king of Moab. <sup>16</sup> And Ehud made for himself a sword with two edges, a cubit in length, and he bound it on his right thigh under his clothes. <sup>17</sup> And he presented the tribute to Eglon king of Moab. Now Eglon was a very fat man. <sup>18</sup> And when Ehud had finished presenting the tribute, he sent away the people who carried the tribute. <sup>19</sup> But he himself turned back at the idols near Gilgal and said, "I have a secret message for you, O king." And he commanded, "Silence." And all his attendants went out from his presence. <sup>20</sup> And Ehud came to him as he was sitting alone in his cool roof chamber. And Ehud said, "I have a message from God for you." And he arose from his seat. <sup>21</sup> And Ehud reached with his left hand, took the sword from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly. <sup>22</sup> And the hilt also went in after the blade, and the fat closed over the blade, for he did not pull the sword out of his belly; and the dung came out. <sup>23</sup> Then Ehud went out into the porch and closed the doors of the roof chamber behind him and locked them.

<sup>30</sup> So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest for eighty years.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

*"When I'm standing on the mountain, I didn't get there on my own! When I'm walking through the valley, I know I am not alone! No matter what I have, Your grace is enough! No matter where I am, I'm standing in Your love!"*

Judges sees God's people in bad situations—often as a result of their own sin. God never left them! Remember, it's not about you. It's about how God can use you as you surrender to him. He'll never leave us on our own.



### DISCUSSION

What qualities do you think are most important in leadership?

ICEBREAKER

1. How does the author describe Ehud and his preparation? (15-16)

OBSERVATION

2. How did Ehud manage to assassinate Eglon? (17-23)

3. What was the result of Ehud's courageous faith? (30)

4. How did Ehud's major "weakness" turn into his greatest asset?

INTERPRETATION

5. Where might God be asking you to exhibit courageous faith...

...putting him first?

...putting others before yourself?

APPLICATION

Sometimes it's hard to see our own strengths and weaknesses. Like Ehud, God can use us in unlikely ways. If you have questions or need help, talk to your Coach today!

## A STUDY OF JUDGES & RUTH

### STUDY NOTES

#### THAT'S DUMB

Not too many years ago, black men weren't considered smart enough to play the quarterback position or serve as the coach of a football team. Who knows how many potential superstar quarterbacks or legendary coaches were passed over because of prejudice. Can we all agree how dumb that was?

After Othniel, Israel once again rebelled. The Lord used the evil Moabite king, Eglon, to punish Israel and drive them to repentance. **Israel cried out** for help and **the Lord raised up for them a deliverer, Ehud**. Notice how the verse describes Ehud, **a left-handed man**. Like looking down on a person because of the color of their skin, Ehud was considered inferior because he was left-handed. That prejudice cost Eglon his life.

#### GODLY LEADERS MUST HAVE COURAGEOUS FAITH

Verse 15 describes Ehud as "left-handed," but it literally says that he was "unable to use his right hand." Ehud may have been just left-handed, but more likely he had a physical disability with his right hand. In either case, most people were right-handed and fought with a sword in their "strong" hand. People considered left-handedness a major weakness.

Ehud delivered the **tribute the people of Israel sent to Eglon the king of Moab**. On one such delivery, Ehud **turned back and said, "I have a secret message for you, O king."** Because of his left-handedness, his physical disability, and possibly some familiarity, Eglon commanded, **"Silence."** **And all his attendants went out from his presence.**

Ehud had made for himself a sword and he bound it on his right thigh under his clothes. It's possible he was searched for weapons before entering the king's presence. However, while a right-handed person would naturally draw a weapon from the left side, a left-handed person most naturally draws from the right. Ehud's biggest flaw became his greatest asset.

**Ehud said, "I have a message from God for you." Eglon arose from his seat. And Ehud reached with his left hand, took the sword from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly.** Although most translations describe Eglon as **"a very fat man,"** it's not the word used for "fat" elsewhere and often means "well-fed" or "healthy." So, Eglon may not have been "fat and immobile," he may have been "robust and strong." Again, it helps possibly explain why Ehud was allowed to get so close—Ehud may have been physically inferior and Eglon may

have been physically superior. In either case, **the hilt also went in after the blade, and the fat closed over the blade.** The 18-inch blade may not have gone in horizontally, but vertically.

What happened next was much less "heroic." From the context, we can understand the **cool roof chamber** had a restroom. Ehud escaped **out into the porch** leaving the doors of the **roof chamber behind him locked**. Ehud may have escaped using the only "way out" (aka, the toilet). The guards did not come to the aid of their king because they thought he was "relieving himself." His bowels released at his death and the stench likely prevented them from entering until the embarrassment was too much (25).

With the Moabite king dead, Ehud rallied the people of Israel to fight. **So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest for eighty years.**

#### COURAGEOUS FAITH IS GROUNDED IN GOD'S POWER

The very first judge, Othniel shined as a valiant warrior, winning the hand of his bride by his victory. Let's be real, most of us aren't the strongest, most beautiful, most athletic, smartest, or superior in any significant way. Neither was Ehud. However, God used him.

One of the major themes we witness in *Judges* is how God uses unlikely people to accomplish his purposes. In fact, when we get to Gideon, God actively stacks the deck against himself to overcome an impossible situation. From Ehud's left-handedness, to the 300 lappers (more on that later), victory or defeat rests in God's hand alone. Therefore, our courage must rest in God alone.

Here's the point, IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU! The biblical priority for relationships puts God first, others second, and myself third (Matthew 22:37-40). The world says to go live your dream—"Follow your heart, doing what makes you happy or what feels good." At its core, the message is to put yourself first above all others and cut out anyone or anything that disagrees.

There's many problems with living like that, but a big one is that you'll never accomplish anything of eternal value by putting yourself first. It doesn't take courage to serve yourself first—despite what others may say.

The only way to accomplish great and eternal things requires pursuing the Lord and investing in people. God can use you to do more than you can imagine, but who will carry the mission when you're done? The kind of life I'm describing is hard. It takes courage to stand for the Lord. However, the source of that courage isn't in our own merit—it's grounded in God's power.