

Introduction

You may recall “story sequencing” from elementary school. They were an exercise in logic. A child is presented with multiple pictures from a brief story and based on the pictures had to put them in the correct order. For example, imagine four pictures. One shows a girl building a bird house; one shows her painting the bird house; a third shows her hanging the bird house, and the fourth shows a bird in the bird house. That’s the correct order of events. In the assignment these pictures would mixed up and a student would have to use reason and logic to put them in the correct order.

I hated these as a kid. I always thought they were dumb so I would make up a much more elaborate story. For example, in this scenario there was a bird house but some kid yanked it out of the neighbor’s tree and smashed it. Her parents made her build a brand new one to replace the one she destroyed and she discovered a new passion for woodworking.

Sometimes a story is told out of order for a reason. The author has a point he or she is driving at and by telling the story in a creative way is able to better illustrate that point. The book of Judges is written this way. It is not in strict chronological order. Events near the end of the book happened very early in Israel’s time in the land. The author is pointing the reader—that’s us—to a profound truth that is only later revealed in full. We’re in Judges 12 and 13.

^{Jdgs 12:8} After him Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel. ⁹ He had thirty sons, and thirty daughters he gave in marriage outside his clan, and thirty daughters he brought in from outside for his sons. And he judged Israel seven years. ¹⁰ Then Ibzan died and was buried at Bethlehem.

¹¹ After him Elon the Zebulunite judged Israel, and he judged Israel ten years. ¹² Then Elon the Zebulunite died and was buried at Aijalon in the land of Zebulun.

¹³ After him Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite judged Israel. ¹⁴ He had forty sons and thirty grandsons, who rode on seventy donkeys, and he judged Israel eight years. ¹⁵ Then Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite died and was buried at Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the hill country of the Amalekites.

^{Jdgs 13:1} And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, so the LORD gave them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years.

² There was a certain man of Zorah, of the tribe of the Danites, whose name was Manoah. And his wife was barren and had no children. ³ And the angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, “Behold, you are barren and have not borne children, but you shall conceive and bear a son. ⁴ Therefore be careful and drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean, ⁵ for behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. No razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb, and he shall begin to save Israel

from the hand of the Philistines.”⁶ Then the woman came and told her husband, “A man of God came to me, and his appearance was like the appearance of the angel of God, very awesome. I did not ask him where he was from, and he did not tell me his name,⁷ but he said to me, ‘Behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. So then drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death.’”

⁸ Then Manoah prayed to the LORD and said, “O Lord, please let the man of God whom you sent come again to us and teach us what we are to do with the child who will be born.”⁹ And God listened to the voice of Manoah, and the angel of God came again to the woman as she sat in the field. But Manoah her husband was not with her.¹⁰ So the woman ran quickly and told her husband, “Behold, the man who came to me the other day has appeared to me.”¹¹ And Manoah arose and went after his wife and came to the man and said to him, “Are you the man who spoke to this woman?” And he said, “I am.”¹² And Manoah said, “Now when your words come true, what is to be the child’s manner of life, and what is his mission?”¹³ And the angel of the LORD said to Manoah, “Of all that I said to the woman let her be careful.¹⁴ She may not eat of anything that comes from the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, or eat any unclean thing. All that I commanded her let her observe.”¹⁵ Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, “Please let us detain you and prepare a young goat for you.”¹⁶ And the angel of the LORD said to Manoah, “If you detain me, I will not eat of your food. But if you prepare a burnt offering, then offer it to the LORD.” (For Manoah did not know that he was the angel of the LORD.)¹⁷ And Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, “What is your name, so that, when your words come true, we may honor you?”¹⁸ And the angel of the LORD said to him, “Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?”¹⁹ So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering, and offered it on the rock to the LORD, to the one who works wonders, and Manoah and his wife were watching.²⁰ And when the flame went up toward heaven from the altar, the angel of the LORD went up in the flame of the altar. Now Manoah and his wife were watching, and they fell on their faces to the ground.

²¹ The angel of the LORD appeared no more to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of the LORD.²² And Manoah said to his wife, “We shall surely die, for we have seen God.”²³ But his wife said to him, “If the LORD had meant to kill us, he would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering at our hands, or shown us all these things, or now announced to us such things as these.”²⁴ And the woman bore a son and called his name Samson. And the young man grew, and the LORD blessed him.²⁵ And the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him in Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.

Judges 12:8–13:25

Blessing and Prosperity

After Jephthah died and was largely forgotten we come across three judges whose times of service were short. Othniel served for 40 years and during his time as judge, “the land had

rest forty years”. Ehud served and then “the land had rest for eighty years”. After Barak defeated the king of Hazor “the land had rest for forty years”. Gideon gave the land “rest for forty years”. Notice these are round numbers, representing generations. The land having rest for forty years means the land was peaceful for roughly a generation. With the three judges in our text we see shorter periods of peace and tranquility as the author shows an increasing level of Israel’s unfaithfulness.

We must remember God’s promises to Israel. He promised them material prosperity, safety, and great fertility. In a world in which infant mortality was quite high, the promise of many children was a substantial promise. In a covenant in which blessings flowed through the promise of land, having children to inherit that land was essential. In Leviticus 26 God promised Israel they would receive plenty of rain for their crops to grow. Their harvests throughout each growing season would last beyond the next harvest. In fact, he says harvests would be so plentiful they would need to throw out some of the previous harvest in order to make room for the new harvest.

They would live in peace. Enemies would flee before them, with five men chasing a hundred and a hundred Israelite soldiers chasing 10,000! Further, God would cause them to multiply in the land, giving them incredible fertility. Through these blessings Israel would prosper.

This is what we see with these three judges. They experience blessing and prosperity and peace. The author begins with Ibzan. Ibzan judges Israel just seven years then he died and was buried at Bethlehem. Notice where he was buried: *at Bethlehem*. Whereas Jephthah was buried in *one of* his cities, Israel knew where Ibzan was buried. Also notice he had thirty sons and thirty daughters. He wisely found husbands for his daughters outside his clan, thus establishing ever tighter connections with those other clans.

There was Elon, who was from the tribe of Zebulun. He judged Israel ten years and was buried at Aijalon. There is no indication of war, no indication of violence, no indication of suffering, no indication of apostasy. He ruled over Israel and ensured justice among the people. Life was peaceful and prosperous for those ten years, as God promised.

Then came Abdon. Abdon had forty sons and thirty grandsons! Like Jair and his thirty sons who rode on 30 donkeys, Abdon’s *forty* sons and thirty *grandsons* each rode on a donkey. Remember, the donkeys are an indication of prosperity. These aren’t pack animals but expensive transportation. Abdon is illustrating the sort of prosperity and fertility God promised Israel.

He judged Israel for eight years and during those eight years all Israel would have experienced similar prosperity. Abdon and Elon and Ibzan are representative of Israel during their time as judges. All Israel would have experienced similar blessing from God. This was always God’s intent. God’s desire from the beginning was to bless his people, to shower them with his goodness. The only thing that could interrupt this blessing was sin.

Jdgs 13:1 And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, so the LORD gave them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years.
Judges 13:1

God’s default mode, so to speak, was to bless Israel. Israel must respond to God’s grace and mercy and his kindness to them by trusting him and faithfully doing everything he

commanded them to do. This faithful obedience was to be the response to God's blessing, not the means to attain that blessing. If they rejected the faithful response, their sin would interrupt God's blessing. An entire generation of Israelites suffered under the hand of the Philistines because of Israel's sin.

A Son

The pattern of the book of Judges is that in response to Israel's suffering, God raises up a deliverer. This is what we're seeing in chapter 13. Israel sins. This is the reason for the suffering because sin interrupts God's desire to bless. Or rather than *interrupt* God's desire to bless, God's desire to bless results in him disciplining his people and the discipline itself is an act of blessing, for it's supposed to cause them to turn back to him. He is the true blessing.

The author mentions a certain Danite—a man of the tribe of Dan. It's clear the tribe of Dan is still in its original allotment of land. In chapter 18 the tribe will move out of the land God gave them and take up residence at the northern end of the land, in between Naphtali and East Manasseh. That move happened very early in the time of the judges. In fact, we will see this move happened during the lifetime of the grandson of Moses. As I've mentioned before, Judges is not written in strict chronological order. Because the tribe of Dan is still in its allotted territory just north of Judah and south of Ephraim, the events in chapter 13 are very early in Israel's history in the land—within a generation or so of Joshua.

This certain man was from Zorah, a city in the territory of Dan. His name is given, somewhat reluctantly, it seems. Manoah was married to the more important character in the story, though his wife is not named. Notice the author piles up words for us. His wife was barren and had no children. Well, yes...those two things tend to go together. Because children and especially sons were critical to receive covenant blessings as covenant blessing were tied directly to inheritance, God seeks to bless her.

In verse 3 the angel of the Lord appears to her. The angel of the Lord is clearly the Son of God. He appears to people throughout the Old Testament. This is no mere angel, but the messenger of the Lord who is the Lord himself. This is the Son of God before he became human.

Notice what he says to her: “Hey, you are barren, and you don't have any kids.” Can you imagine her reaction? “Oh! I don't have children? I'm barren? Is this why the toilet seat is down? Is this why I never step on a Lego? Is this why there's so little laundry to do?”

The angel of the Lord isn't trying to be Captain Obvious. He's highlighting the miracle he's about to perform. He tells her she will conceive and have a son. He immediately warns her she must not consume any wine or other alcohol. She cannot eat anything that is ritually unclean. She shall never cut her son's hair, for he will be set apart as a Nazirite from the moment he is born. This is because her son will begin to save Israel from the Philistines.

At this she runs off to find her husband. Try to imagine the scene with me. She runs up to her husband and blurts out, “This guy just stopped by. I don't know who he is. Might have been an angel. Anyway, he comes up to me and tells me we're gonna have a baby and our son will be under a Nazirite vow his entire life.”

Manoah reacts the way I think any man would react: he seems a bit skeptical. For one thing, no angel appeared to *him*. Surely if *his* son were going to be great the angel would tell *him*, right? Manoah seeks to gain some control over the situation. He immediately prays to the Lord and asks the Lord to send this mystery man again. Notice what he says in verse 8. Let the same guy come again, this time to *us* and let him teach *us* what *we* are to do with *our* child.

I love Scripture. I love the subtleties of God's sense of humor. Manoah tries to gain control of this situation and asks the Lord to appear *to him* and his wife. Verse 9 simply says God heard Manoah's prayer "and the angel of God came again to the woman...but Manoah her husband was not with her". This time she doesn't interact with the angel of the Lord but immediately runs to get her husband.

Manoah approaches the angel of the Lord, completely unaware of who he is. He says to him, essentially, "Oh, so *you're the guy* talking to my wife." He then asks him to repeat what he told his wife. When this child is born, what will his manner of life be? What will his purpose be, given he will be under a Nazirite vow his entire life?

A Nazirite vow is described in Numbers 6. An Israelite, whether a man or a woman, could take a Nazirite vow. During the time of this vow a person would be holy to the Lord—set apart to the Lord in a special way. Such a consecrated person could not cut his or her hair, could not consume anything made from grapes, could not consume any alcoholic beverages, and could not touch any dead body—even that of a close family member. Most who took Nazirite vows did so for a period of time and there was a specific ritual for being released from the vow.

In Acts 18, for example, Luke tells us Paul cuts his hair at Cenchreae "for he was under a vow". This would have been a Nazirite vow. There were all sorts of reasons for entering into a Nazirite vow. One could express devotion to God or spend time in prayer seeking the Lord for any number of things. One could simply be expressing gratitude to God. It was similar to fasting. We fast for all sorts of reasons, whether spiritual discipline, seeking the Lord in prayer, offering to God a greater declaration of our dependence on him, etc. Both involve voluntary dedication, self-denial, and a spiritual focus.

Most Nazirite vows were for a limited time. Her son was to be under a Nazirite vow his entire life—from the womb to the tomb. Even more, his mother had to refrain from wine and anything unclean, so as to not contaminate her son. During her pregnancy and the time she would nurse him, she, too, would be under a Nazirite vow.

The angel of the Lord told her that her son would be a Nazirite and he told her his mission would be to save the people of Israel from the Philistines. Manoah, trying to gain control of the situation, asks for the child's manner of life and his mission. His mother knows his manner of life and his mother has been told his mission. The angel of the Lord simply says, "I've told *her* everything *she* needs to know." The angel of the Lord refuses to let Manoah grasp control of the situation.

Clueless

In verse 15 Manoah offers to make him supper. The angel of the Lord is clear: if you make me supper, I won't eat it. He offers an alternative, which Manoah doesn't register as identifying the identity of the person standing before him. The angel tells him instead of

making a meal, he should offer a sacrifice to the Lord. He's saying that a sacrifice would be a more appropriate response to the person standing before him. Showing he still doesn't get it, Manoah asks him his name. We hear this and we may not think much of it. Manoah is still trying to gain the upper hand. K. Lawson Younger explains.

“In the ancient Near Eastern context, knowing the name of a heavenly being provided power over that being. So Manoah is still seeking manipulative power through special knowledge.”

K. Lawson Younger, cited by Mark Boda and Mary Conway, ZECOT

The angel of the Lord is content dealing primarily with Manoah's wife, but Manoah keeps trying to assert control. The Lord knows what he's doing so he asks Manoah a direct question: “Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?” If Manoah truly knew the Lord, this is the point when he should have understood what the angel of the Lord was claiming. Remember this is just a couple generations or so after the exodus from Egypt. The song of Moses was still being sung by the Israelites:

Ex 15:11 Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?

Exodus 15:11

The word “wonders” is the same root as “wonderful”. God's name is wonderful for God does *wonders*. We tend to think of “wonderful” as delightful or even exciting. What wonderful weather. What a wonderful game last night. What a wonderful birthday present. The Hebrew word means “full of wonders”—miracles. When the angel of the Lord declares his name is “wonderful” he means his name is miraculous. God does that which is miraculous. The angel of the Lord is telling him who he is. Manoah still doesn't get it, however.

He takes the young goat and offers it as a sacrifice, along with a grain offering. He placed it on his makeshift altar and a flame went up from it toward heaven, and the angel of the Lord ascended up to heaven in the flame. At this point Manoah and his wife fall on their faces on the ground. They realize they have seen God himself.

The author says Manoah finally recognized the Lord. His response, however, was not reverent fear, the fear that describes true worship. His fear is abject terror. He tells his wife they're going to die for they have seen God. It's interesting that Manoah never refers to the Lord by his name YHWH. It's as if he doesn't really know him at all. Even here he says simply he has “seen *God*”. When he prayed in verse 8 he said, “O Lord”—not, “O, LORD” with Lord in all caps. When we see this in English translations it means the underlying text is the name YHWH. The reader is left wondering whether Manoah knows YHWH.

His wife has to teach him about the Lord. She tells him if YHWH had meant to kill them, he wouldn't have accepted their burnt offering and grain offering. If YHWH had meant to kill them, he wouldn't have appeared to them and announced the upcoming birth of their son and would not have instructed them to consecrate their son from birth.

Verse 24 says she later gave birth to a son and named him Samson. The name Samson is a diminutive of the Hebrew word for sun, as in our local star. His name means something like “sunny boy” or “little sun”. As Little Sun grew up, the Lord blessed him and the Spirit

of the Lord began to stir him. God appeared to his mother to promise her a son who would begin to deliver his people from the clutches of the Philistines whose land was right next to theirs. God initiated all this because God himself was preparing to rescue his people.

The Twelfth Judge

Samson is recorded as the twelfth judge. There was Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar. Then came Barak and Gideon, followed by Tola and Jair. We spent a few weeks looking at Jephthah. After Jephthah came Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon. Finally we come to Samson. We're not counting Abimelech as he was an oppressor who seized power and did not deliver Israel. He is generally not included in the list of judges.

There were almost certainly more judges than the twelve recorded in the book of Judges. The author recorded these twelve in the order he did because he was making a theological point. Mark approached his Gospel in the same way. The early church historian Eusebius tells us Mark was far more concerned to get the details correct than he was the order of events. The author of Judges approaches his work in the same way. He has a point to make, guided by the Spirit of God, and we should recognize this.

Samson was one of the first judges, though he is listed last. We see the author's perspective in the judges who were listed before him. There was Jair, who had 30 sons, each of whom rode on his own donkey. In this we see the prosperity and blessing of children God promised Israel. Then came Jephthah, who sacrificed his only daughter—his only *child*—on the altar of ambition. After Jephthah came Abdon who has 40 sons and 30 grandsons, each of whom rode on a donkey. In this structure the author is highlighting how sin interrupts God's blessing.

Why would the author place Samson last in the order, if he is one of the earliest judges? Samson is, in many ways, representative of all Israel. Samson is the ideal judge and is everything Israel is supposed to be. Remember Othniel, the first judge. He was a Canaanite! He was a foreigner! He was the last person who should have been a judge, yet he was perhaps Israel's most faithful judge. He was counted among the people of God because of his faith in the God of Israel—regardless of his origins.

Gideon was the youngest son, and therefore saw himself as the least important. Abimelech's mother was a concubine, a woman his father Gideon refused to commit to. Jephthah's mother was a prostitute. Contrast that to Samson. His parents are both Israelites. Further, his birth was miraculous in that his mother had been barren. While he was conceived in the ordinary way, God inserted himself into the matter to ensure she would conceive.

Similarly, all Israel descended from Sarah, who also had been barren. God enabled her to have the child he promised, long after she ceased to be able to have children. This is Samson! Sarah's son received a promise, for the covenant God made with Abraham to bless all the nations of the world would come through her son. The promises were transferred to Isaac, and then from Isaac to his son Jacob, who was also called Israel. Then it was given to Israel's twelve sons.

God promises this woman her son would begin to save his people from the Philistines. For this reason he was to be set apart—consecrated. He was to live in a way that was uniquely devoted to the Lord. His life was to be different from those around him. There was nothing inherently evil about wine yet to show his people he was consecrated to the

Lord he would live differently, with certain rules governing his life. This was Israel! There was no special reason the law of Moses prohibited the consumption of pork, other than it showed the nations around them the people of Israel were consecrated to the Lord. Israel was *consecrated* to the Lord, and for a purpose. This consecration began with Abraham and God's promise that passed to his offspring.

Gen 18:17 The LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do,
18 seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all
the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? 19 For I have chosen him, that
he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of
the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring to
Abraham what he has promised him."

Genesis 18:17–19

God consecrated Abraham and his offspring, that he and the nation that would come from him would show all other nations what the Lord is like, and through their obedience—their righteousness—all the nations of the earth would be blessed. This is Samson! Samson is set apart from birth—from the womb to the tomb—as a Nazirite so that he would point his fellow Israelites to the Lord. Thus Samson is what Israel was supposed to be: a light to the whole world.

Shadow of the King

Remember: Samson was one of the earliest judges. He's listed last, as the twelfth judge. In Scripture the number twelve is often associated with *completeness*. The twelve tribes represent all of God's people. The twelve apostles represent the entirety of the church. In Revelation John sees the symbolic representation of all of God's people throughout history as multiples of twelve: 12,000 from each tribe—12,000 times 12,000. Around God's throne are the twenty-four elders, representing the twelve tribes and the twelve apostles. So the twelve judges listed are representative of all the judges God raised up to deliver his people.

The twelfth judge listed is meant to point the reader to a truth that would only later be revealed fully: Israel needed a Deliverer who was greater than a mere man. Israel needed a Deliverer who was born to the right parents and whose birth was from God. Israel needed a Deliverer who would be consecrated to God from the womb and throughout his entire life. Israel needed a Deliverer who would point his people to the righteousness of God. The announcement of Samson served as a shadow of the one who was still to come.

In time a young woman was visited by another angel. This time, however, the angel was not the angel of YHWH, for the angel had a message concerning YHWH.

Lk 1:35 And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and
the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born
will be called holy—the Son of God."

Luke 1:35

Thus her Son would be holy—consecrated to the Lord. This young woman was a virgin, one who descended from king David. She was engaged to be married and while Joseph would

not have any part in Jesus being conceived, he, too, was descended from king David, giving their child the legitimate claim to his throne. When the baby Jesus was presented at the temple as required by the law of Moses, a man named Simeon prophesied concerning the young child.

Lk 2:28 he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, ²⁹ “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; ³⁰ for my eyes have seen your salvation ³¹ that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.”

Luke 2:28–32

Here we see the promise to Abraham is coming true. Unlike Samson, this child would remain consecrated to God from birth. When he was twelve, and no doubt going through puberty, he illustrated his consecration by teaching in the temple. When confronted about not traveling with his parents back home to Nazareth he replied,

Lk 2:49 And he said to them, “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”

Luke 2:49

Luke went on to point out that Jesus, despite being a precocious and pubescent boy, was submissive to Mary and Joseph, and thus honored his father and his mother. Even in the littlest things he kept the law of Moses. When he was 30 he was led by the Spirit into the desert—like Israel. There he was tempted by the devil—like Israel. However, he resisted the temptation and remained consecrated to his Father—unlike Israel. He had come to do for his people what they would not and could not do. He would be faithful for them, that his righteousness might be given to them.

Application

When we look at the structure of the book of Judges we can begin to see the point the author is making. God is working out his plan in unexpected ways. This begins with his choice of Othniel. He truly didn’t “belong”, for he was a Canaanite, yet God raised him up and presented him as a true Israelite, for faith is the only currency God accepts. God inspired the author of Judges to begin with him to show Israel what they needed most of all in a deliverer: he must be faithful.

At the other end of the spectrum is Samson. While Othniel may have been a true Israelite because of his faith, Samson was the *ideal* Israelite. Born to the right parents, set apart by God from birth, empowered by God’s Spirit from a young age. Samson should have been the perfect judge, yet as we will see, this story that has such a hopeful beginning will end disastrously. The one who has all the ingredients for a faithful and prosperous life is perhaps the least faithful judge.

Rather than lead Israel in fulfilling their mission to represent the Lord to the nations around them and thus fulfill God’s promise to Abraham to bless all the nations of the earth,

he leads Israel down a dark path of idolatry and rebellion against God. Not even the ideal Israelite can save them.

By structuring the story this way the author is pointing Israel—and us—to the one who can save. Whether the author fully understood this or not, as Peter put it, holy men of old “spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit”. We know that the author was pointing to the True Israel, the Promised Seed of Abraham, the one in whom all the promises of God find their Yes. The author leads us down a path that can only lead us to Jesus.

What are we to do with this, then? In Christ we are consecrated to God. In the words of the apostle, we have been chosen in Christ from before the foundation of the world—why?—“that we should be holy and blameless before him.” In that same letter Paul explains God’s eternal purpose in Christ is revealed *through his church*. You and I have been called by God to live consecrated lives—lives dedicated to the Lord, lived for his glory. This is why he tells us in Romans to present ourselves as living sacrifices—our lives are given to the Lord.

I find it providential that we are in this text at this time. The season of Lent begins in a week and a half. For longer than they’ve celebrated Christmas, Christians have fasted during the season of Lent, voluntarily giving up something good for a period of time. Fasting is similar to a Nazirite vow. It is an act of worship, of devotion to God. We must remember, however, that fasting and serving the Lord and praying and seeking to honor him is always a response to the Lord and his goodness to us. Following the Lord is never transactional.

The Son of God became one of us that he might live the life we were supposed to live and then die the death we were supposed to die. He did this for us, that we might be reconciled to God. Through faith in him we have boldness to enter into the very presence of God, for we are covered in his righteousness. In response to this, we choose to live a righteous life that reflects his glory. We don’t do this in order *to receive* something from God. We do this because we *have received* everything from him.

The gospel is simple: God gives and we receive by faith. God gives and we receive. We don’t receive and then God gives. God is not responding to us. We respond to him. He gives and all those who respond to him in faith receive. Church, let’s receive all that God offers us in Christ, and let’s do this together in faith.