

APRIL 2026 | DAY 12

ONE STORY THAT LEADS TO JESUS

With Fellowship of the Rockies

SCRIPTURE

Judges 4
Judges 5
Psalms 71

Today's reading opens on a familiar scene. The chariots of an enemy army bear down on Israel, pinning them in a corner. Last time, Pharaoh oppressed the Israelites in Egypt. This time, King Jabin and his general Sisera oppress the Israelites in their own (promised) land. In order to rescue the people, God raises up a new Moses—the prophet Deborah. Deborah summons an Israelite leader named Barak and tells him to rally Israel's army for a showdown. The enemy vastly outnumbers Barak's force, and he has exactly zero chariots against the enemy's 900 chariots. This would be like taking on an entire battalion of tanks on foot, without even a pickup truck!

Still, Barak trusts Deborah's instructions and charges into battle. As in the exodus, Yahweh intervenes with a dramatic rescue using chaotic waters. Barak stands in stark contrast to Sisera in this story. One man respects a woman's judgment so highly that he's willing to rush into battle despite abysmal odds. The other abandons his troops and considers a woman no threat when he stumbles into her tent. Bad call. Jael lulls Sisera to sleep with a drink of milk, then ends his life. Yahweh brings victory in unexpected ways and through unexpected people!

APRIL 2026 | DAY 13

ONE STORY THAT LEADS TO JESUS

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SCRIPTURE

Judges 6
Judges 7
Judges 8
Psalms 72

Today's reading introduces Gideon, one of the top celebrities in Judges. Memorable details fill Gideon's story: the drenched fleece, the smashed pots, the 300-man army. On their own, these scenes appear to portray Gideon as a brave leader who trusts Yahweh for victory. But as you'll see in the video, the larger plotline of Judges casts Gideon in a much less flattering light.

Gideon shows glimmers of faith and courage, especially when he decides to enter battle armed with empty clay pots and a torch. After rising victorious, however, Gideon's leadership takes a downward turn. He murders his fellow Israelites in a fit of rage for not helping him in battle. Then he pulls an Achan-like move, seizing a pile of plunder from dead Midianite kings. To make matters worse, he uses the contraband to make an idol. All of Israel ends up worshipping it.

Gideon struggles to trust Yahweh. He fights for his own interests, motivated by greed and spite, at least as often as he fights for God's. As you might expect by now, God still partners with this weak and imperfect man to rescue his people. Israel's moral integrity may be unraveling, but God refuses to give up on them.

APRIL 2026 | DAY 14

ONE STORY THAT LEADS TO JESUS

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SCRIPTURE

Judges 9
Judges 10
Judges 11
Judges 12
Psalms 73

At this point, Israel careens toward self-destruction with shocking speed. One of Gideon's sons, Abimelech, colludes with his mother's relatives in Shechem to slaughter his 70 half-brothers and to make himself king. Using money from the city's idol temple, Abimelech hires a band of troublemakers and sets out on a murderous rampage.

Before long, the relationship between Shechem's leaders and their new king sours, then deteriorates into open warfare, with innocent civilians caught in the crossfire. God brings Abimelech's treachery back on his own head, literally. A woman crushes Abimelech's skull with a millstone, bringing his life to the same humiliating end as Sisera's.

Jephthah, the next major leader in Judges, bears an alarming resemblance to Abimelech: an illegitimate son, cut off from his half-brothers, assembles a militia in the hills. At times, Jephthah makes good choices and experiences God's blessing. However, Jephthah's story quickly spirals into chaos from there. He tries to bribe Yahweh with a rash vow, then sacrifices his daughter! Even though Jephthah gives a long speech about Yahweh's past actions, his behavior proves he has forgotten Yahweh's character.

God partners with Jephthah to rescue Israel from their oppressors, but this time, the land has no rest. The tide of violence and chaos keeps rising. How much longer can Israel stay afloat?

APRIL 2026 | DAY 15

ONE STORY THAT LEADS TO JESUS

With Fellowship of the Rockies

SCRIPTURE

Judges 13
Judges 14
Judges 15
Psalms 74

Israel's leadership hits a new low with Samson. God says that Samson will be a Nazarite from birth. His mother is set apart for God, and Samson must commit to observing a high level of ritual holiness. Instead, Samson breaks all the rules.

Nazarites must stay away from grapes, but Samson strolls through vineyards and hosts drinking parties. Nazarites should avoid any contact with corpses, but Samson touches a dead animal and eats honey out of it with his bare hands.

Samson's flagrant disregard for Yahweh's laws goes on and on. He takes a foreign wife, then uses an underhanded riddle to deceive her companions into a rigged bet. When they foil his plan and trick him in return, he murders them all in a fit of rage. Samson's story highlights an important point about the book of Judges: Just because God partners with someone does not mean he approves of that person's choices.

Samson's story also acts as a miniature picture of Israel's overall spiritual condition. Yahweh gave Israel a special calling to live as his holy people from birth. But in Judges, the Israelites abandon Yahweh to chase whatever looks smarter or more popular, often giving themselves to idols. Instead of reflecting God's character to the world, they are drawn into it and begin dying with it.

Yet even as the people violate their covenant agreement, Yahweh works with them to show his patience, love, and ultimate superiority over foreign gods.

APRIL 2026 | DAY 16

ONE STORY THAT LEADS TO JESUS

With Fellowship of the Rockies

SCRIPTURE

Judges 16
Judges 17
Judges 18
Psalms 75

What's the difference between trusting your own heart and trusting God with all your heart? As you'll see in the video, God created human beings to love creation, love one another, and love God wholeheartedly. However, today's reading reveals the tragic consequences that unfold when human hearts stray.

Samson trusts his own way of thinking and feeling, which leads him into sexual harm and foolish pride. Reckless with lust for Delilah, he reveals his secret: His incomparable strength will evaporate should anyone cut his hair. (Remember that Samson is supposed to be a Nazarite; God prohibited the Nazarites from cutting their hair.)

Samson assumes all is well. With such might and power, what could there be to fear? After all, he's broken his Nazarite vows plenty of times before with no real impact on his supernatural strength. But this time, Yahweh's power leaves him. Samson dies in exile, remaining violent and vindictive to his final breath.

The final two stories in Judges reveal that it's not just Israel's leaders who have turned away, it's the whole nation. An ominous yet familiar refrain echoes through the final chapters of the book: "In those days Israel had no king, and everyone did what was right in their own eyes."

If everyone keeps following their own hearts instead of Yahweh, where is this nation headed?

APRIL 2026 | DAY 17

ONE STORY THAT LEADS TO JESUS

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SCRIPTURE

Judges 19
Judges 20
Judges 21
Psalms 76

By the end of Judges, the nation that crossed the Jordan with Joshua became unrecognizable. Israel's promise to stay faithful has collapsed. God joined with Israel to lead the people into a new way of life, one intended to bless everyone (see Genesis 12:1-3). They were supposed to be different, but the Israelites we find in the final chapters of Judges look no different from the chaos and corruption all around them.

Today's reading begins with one of the most disturbing stories in the Bible. A Levite sets out to retrieve a woman he took as a concubine from her father's house. On their way back to Ephraim's hill country, the Levite insists on spending the night in an Israelite town instead of a Canaanite one. The Benjamite city turns out to be a new Sodom and Gomorrah. A vicious mob starts pounding at their door. The Levite shoves his concubine outside, where she is sexually assaulted and murdered. The woman's brutalized corpse sparks an outcry against the Benjamites. The Israelites' degraded moral compass means their botched and disturbing attempt at justice makes the situation worse. The ensuing civil war nearly destroys the whole tribe of Benjamin. Israel's leaders use mass rape in an attempt to save the very group they were trying to punish for raping one woman. Total chaos.

Careening toward self-destruction, swept up in their own surging tide of idolatry and violence, the people must be wondering if there is any way out of this darkness. The book's final sentence offers a faint glimmer of hope: Maybe a king can help.

APRIL 2026 | DAY 18

ONE STORY THAT LEADS TO JESUS

With Fellowship of the Rockies

SCRIPTURE

Ruth 1
Ruth 2
Ruth 3
Ruth 4
Psalms 77

The book of Ruth opens with a timestamp: “During the time of the judges ...” Yikes. Ruth’s story unfolds during the maelstrom of Israel’s national catastrophe. In the background, violent power mongers are making headlines. Everyone is turning toward self-centeredness. Then we meet Ruth, a poor Moabite widow who returns to Israel with her mother-in-law, Naomi.

Rather than complying with the status quo by doing whatever was right in her own eyes, Ruth embraces the way of Yahweh. She commits to bless Naomi and remain faithful to her, even in death. As a Moabite, she’s one of Israel’s ancient enemies, but her consistent acts of loyal love change everything.

Alone and extremely vulnerable, Ruth works hard to provide for Naomi. Her faithful courage catches the eye of Boaz, an Israelite landowner. He upholds the Torah’s instructions about leaving leftover grain for the poor (Lev. 19:9-10; Deut. 24:19) and family marriage (Deut. 25:5-10). Boaz chooses covenant faithfulness and loyalty to Ruth and Naomi, despite the social and economic costs to himself. He is called a go’el, which is Hebrew for “kinsman redeemer.”

APRIL 2026 | DAY 18 - CONTINUED

ONE STORY THAT LEADS TO JESUS

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SCRIPTURE

Ruth 1

Ruth 2

Ruth 3

Ruth 4

Psalms 77

Ruth's willingness to do good and Boaz's unwavering integrity create a beacon of hope in the midst of Israel's darkest hour. God is working to restore, even when few seem to care. Ruth's willingness to partner with Yahweh leads to the birth of her son, Obed, the grandfather of King David.

Watch the video to learn more about how God works through an ordinary family's extraordinary loyalty to provide a king for Israel and a Savior for the world.