

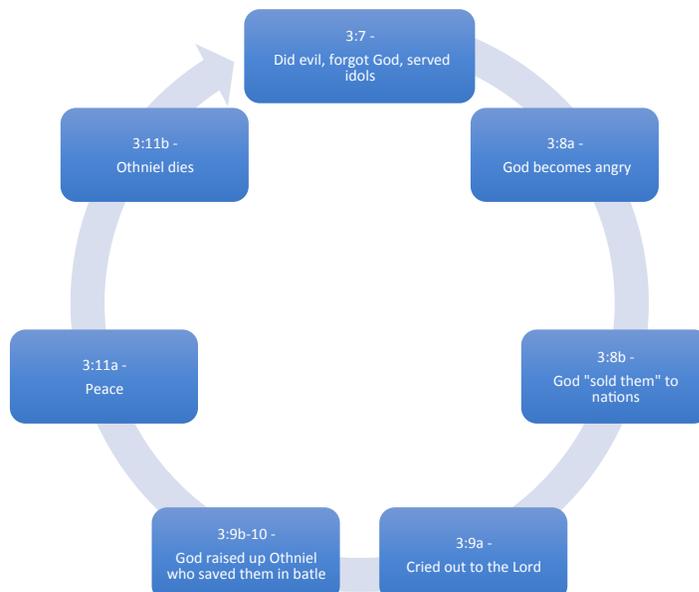
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Week of February 19, 2017
Bay Park Life Groups – Leader’s Guide

In the late 1970’s there was an actor by the name of Harrison Ford who was still trying to make ends meet by working as a carpenter. The story goes that while building a doorway in a studio one day, Ford was spotted by George Lucas who was casting for a new sci-fi film. He asked Ford to come and read with other potential actors and despite having other people in mind like Nick Nolte or Kurt Russell, George Lucas quickly realized that he had found what he was looking for. It’s not hard to guess what sci-fi film that was – Star Wars. This movie ended up setting Harrison Ford on a path to super-stardom that few actors ever get the chance to achieve. In hindsight, it’s probably easy to say that Harrison Ford taking the risk to do the reading was a no-brainer. He wanted to be an actor and roles were probably hard to come by so maybe he was desperate. On the flip side though, we might say that he could have talked himself out of it. He could have told himself that there’s no way he for him to stack up against some of the other people auditioning or he could have just given up on acting altogether and tried to stick it out with his current job.

The opportunity to take risks in our lives can present itself daily. That could mean broaching a difficult conversation with a co-worker or giving up our careers to pursue God’s calling for us. In today’s study we’re going to look at Othniel and Ehud, two judges who were called to take some big risks.

Read Judges 3:7-11

1. What stops people from taking risks? When is it a good time to take a risk?
2. Last week we filled out a diagram outlining the cycle that the Israelites would find themselves in throughout Judges. How do we see each stage of this cycle in Othniel’s story?



Read Judges 3:12-31

3. We learn in verse 15 that Ehud is left-handed. Since most people at the time were right-handed, and it was the hand you held your sword in, the right hand was a symbol of power and ability. It's mentioned that Ehud was specifically left-handed, so it's likely that he was paralyzed or disabled in his right hand in some way. God's choice of Ehud, then, would have been surprising to the first readers of Judges. How does his weakness enable him to defeat Israel's army?

First, he straps a sword to his right thigh, under his clothing (v.16). Right handers carried their swords on their left, so this is where guards would search for hidden weapons. Ehud's left-handedness means he can smuggle a weapon past Eglon's guards. Second, in v.19 Ehud approaches Eglon, who sends all his guards away. Because of his likely deformed appearance, he appears to present no security threat. Therefore, he is able to be alone with Eglon, with a sword, and can kill him (v.20-22). Ehud's weakness means he is uniquely suited for the task of deliverance God has chosen him for.

4. How is knowing that we are "left-handed" humbling? How is it freeing? How should this knowledge change our lives?

Humbling – we love to think there is something in us which contributes to our salvation, or to God choosing to work through us in some way. In truth, we are saved despite ourselves, and God works through us despite our weakness.

Freeing – We don't need to merit or earn salvation in any way, so we don't need to be anxious or lack assurance. And we don't need to be "good enough" in character or gifting for God to use us. Ehud shows us that God doesn't only work around our weaknesses, he uses the things we see as weaknesses to do his work. This is liberating.

Change – We will not boast about ourselves. We will praise God for saving us more and more, as we realize that we don't, and can't deserve salvation. We will not think God cannot save us, or that he cannot use us. In fact, we will look for ways in which God might be wanting to use our weaknesses, as well as our God-given strengths. We will become bolder in taking risks to serve him. We will not be surprised or discouraged if the world derides us, or our Savior.

5. If we try to ignore our spiritual weakness, we'll never appreciate our salvation, or enjoy relying on God's power in, and plan for, our lives. How regularly do you consider the ways in which you were, and are, spiritually weak? Are there ways in which you could enjoy living for God, but you're holding back because you're "not good enough"?