"A Kingless Kingdom" Series **WEEK 8 – REPRESENTING GOD WELL**

--We are studying the entire book of JUDGES!

TODAY: WEEK 8 – REPRESENTING GOD WELL

We have been seeing God raise up JUDGES to position the people of God back in to the place God wants them to be..

LAST WEEK – Gideon led an army of 300 to defeat the Midianite army of almost 150,000 – with fire and horns – in EMBRACING WEAKNESS – they depended on God's strength in their weak place!

AFTER the army of 300 took the VICTORY… it says…

Judges 7:24-25 (NLT)
24 Gideon also sent messengers throughout the hill country of Ephraim, saying, "Come down to attack the Midianites. Cut them off at the shallow crossings of the Jordan River at Beth-barah." So all the men of Ephraim did as they were told. **25** They captured Oreb and Zeeb, the two Midianite commanders, killing Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeeb at the winepress of Zeeb. And they continued to chase the Midianites. Afterward the Israelites brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon, who was by the Jordan River.

MEN OF EPHRAIM killed the 2 commanders of the Midianites – OREB and ZEEB…

Judges 8:1-3 (NLT)
1 Then the people of Ephraim asked Gideon, "Why have you treated us this way? Why didn't you send for us when you first went out to fight the Midianites?" And they argued heatedly with Gideon. **2** But Gideon replied, "What have I accomplished compared to you? Aren't even the leftover grapes of Ephraim's harvest better than the entire crop of my little clan of Abiezer? **3** God gave you victory over Oreb and Zeeb, the commanders of the Midianite army. What have I accomplished compared to that?" When the men of Ephraim heard Gideon's answer, their anger subsided.

Gideon called on the people of Ephraim for help – and they joined in the fight!
BUT they were upset that Gideon did not call them BEFORE the battle began
HE fought with his 300, and then called tribes of Asher, Zubulun, Napthali FIRST

THE MEN of EPHRAIM had an issue with RECOGNITION
And instead of being jealous about not being called FIRST – they SHOULD have rejoices that God's people were rescued

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James 3:16 (NLT)
16 For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind.

AND WE GET so selfish and jealous when we don't get credit or feel dishonored
We feel forgotten and overlooked EVEN THOUGH you worship a God that sees your every move and will BLESS you in what you do for HIM

THE QUESTION is: WHO ARE YOU SERVING? SELF or God?
Cause if you are serving self – you will find DISORDER and EVIL exists somewhere

AND BECAUSE GIDEON was NOT driven by selfish ambition –
He didn't challenge their pride – he HONORED their craving ad out of that HONOR because all he cared about was REPRESENTING GOD WELL – the HONOR subsided their anger

Philippians 2:3 (NLT)
3 Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves.

Romans 12:10 (NLT)
10 Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other.

NOT JUST – outdo with honor for those who deserve it
COME SOMETIMES the humble outdoing will BREAK someone's wrong mindset
SOMETIMES the best way to handle pride is responding in HUMILITY

GIDEON says – I HAVENT ACCOMPLISHED ANYTHING compared to you!
You got the best grapes compared to "my little clan"
God gave YOU victory over the Midianite commanders, "I couldn't that!"

HE FED in to their need, and it CALMED THEM DOWN
But we see that as bowing down and not standing up for what I right

EVEN JESUS – when they threatened him all He said was 'Do as you must"
HE HUMBLED himself to a process that would LIFT HIM up, out of FAITH

If we REALLY believe God sees all things,
TRUST he has your back even though MAN may not & REPRESENT HIM WELL

Mark 10:45 (NLT)
45 For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many."

WHY do we have a complex of 'I deserve to get" when God said "I came to give, not to get"

Judges 8:4 (NLT)
4 Gideon then crossed the Jordan River with his 300 men, and though exhausted, they continued to chase the enemy.

I WANT you to imagine how tired they are – they have been faithful and fighting and were chasing after the enemy a long distance…

> NOW I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU – but if I have been up all night and shouting with fire and blowing horns and battling the enemy and chasing…at SOME POINT, im gonna get HUNGRY – ***AND THEY WERE…***

Judges 8:5-6 (NLT)
5 When they reached Succoth, Gideon asked the leaders of the town, "Please give my warriors some food. They are very tired. I am chasing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian." **6** But the officials of Succoth replied, "Catch Zebah and Zalmunna first, and then we will feed your army."

He didn't ask the people of Succoth to fight, or join the chase – he simply said "Can yall feed us so we can go on forth stronger" - - - -PLEASE SUPPORT US

THESE MEN WERE TIRED and needed sustenance

> And make no mistake, when you give yourself to the WHOLE work of God, although you may never get tried of it, you WILL get tired in it and you WILL need sustenance

BUT I WONDER – do we REP HIM WELL when we are seeking sustenance…

1 Corinthians 10:31-33 (NLT)
31 So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. **32** Don't give offense to Jews or Gentiles or the church of God. **33** I, too, try to please everyone in everything I do. I don't just do what is best for me; I do what is best for others so that many may be saved.

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DO EVERYTHIGN for His glory, REPPING HIM well in how you respond to the needs of others – ***SO THAT the way you respond will be the testimony of who you belong to and what leads you***

IN ALL YOU DO, IN ALL YOU NEED

That passage starts about by talking about "WHAT KIND OF FOOD TO EAT"

THERE are many forms of things that sustain us –

BUT HOW DO YOU GO ABOUT seeking sustenance?

>>>and if YOU DON'T GET WHAT YOU WANT or are only able to grab that which isn't your first choice, will you RECEIVE AND DO for the glory of God

SO – Gideon is looking for the thing to SUSTAIN the people..

"CAN WE HAVE SOME FOOD" but the people said "when you finish the job, we will provide" - "Catch Zebah and Zalmunna first, and then we will feed your army."

THEY didn't want to help until the battel was won

They wanted to support the outcome, not the fight for the outcome

AND MANY of us are in battles and when we look for support from the people we think would say yes, sometimes we get discouraged with the "NOs" or the "WELL IF I SEE THIS, THEN I WILL GIVE YOU THAT"

HOW DO YOU REPRESENT GOD when you walk in to RESISTANCE?

Cause it WILL come, it is NOT a might

Matthew 10:21-23 (NLT)

21 "A brother will betray his brother to death, a father will betray his own child, and children will rebel against their parents and cause them to be killed. **22** And all nations will hate you because you are my followers. But everyone who endures to the end will be saved. **23** When you are persecuted in one town, flee to the next. I tell you the truth, the Son of Man will return before you have reached all the towns of Israel.

WHY are you surprised when you get resistance from the CLOSEST people to you when it has been prophesied that it will happen….

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PROBLEM is some people stay in the town of rejection in stead of moving on in the assignment and you end up in a place called STUCK where you were supposed to fell from and to the next place…

PART of representing God well – I WONT STAY HERE TO PERSUADE – I will do what God calls me to do AS I WALK FORWARD and they will receive or not…

Judges 8:7-9 (NLT)
7 So Gideon said, "After the Lord gives me victory over Zebah and Zalmunna, I will return and tear your flesh with the thorns and briers from the wilderness." **8** From there Gideon went up to Peniel and again asked for food, but he got the same answer. **9** So he said to the people of Peniel, "After I return in victory, I will tear down this tower."

AFTER THE LORD GIVES ME VICTORY –
Gideon knew "whether or not we get food, we still win even when we weak"

WE NEED to be that kind of people instead of thinking God's victory hinges on ANYTHING ELSE but our YES to whatever He would have us do…

GIDEON SAYS "SHOULD I MAKE MY WAY BACK HERE AFTER RECEIVING THE VICTORY THE LORD HAS PROMISED….I will tear down the altars that kept you from meeting the needs for the assignment God placed on us"

ALTARS- your flesh and your towers – the things you so protected that it wouldn't allow you to serve a need other than yourselves…

Romans 8:6 (TPT)
6 For the mind-set of the flesh is death, but the mind-set controlled by the Spirit finds life and peace.

THEIR MINDS were on the needs of their flesh, which wouldn't allow them to meet a need that would LEAD TO THEIR DESTRUCTION..

REPPING GOD WELL – SET YOUR MIND ON THE SPIRIT – not the needs of self/flesh

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Judges 8:10-12 (NLT)
10 By this time Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor with about 15,000 warriors—all that remained of the allied armies of the east, for 120,000 had already been killed. **11** Gideon circled around by the caravan route east of Nobah and Jogbehah, taking the Midianite army by surprise. **12** Zebah and Zalmunna, the two Midianite kings, fled, but Gideon chased them down and captured all their warriors.

EVEN THOUGH their needs were not met – THEY STILL went forward and CAPTURED the 15,000 warriors with 300 men!!!!!!

BECAUSE when you let the SPIRIT lead you instead of the natural
GOD WILL NOT LET YOU DOWN – even if the needs of your flesh are not met at all

Romans 8:13 (TPT)
13 For when you live controlled by the flesh, you are about to die. But if the life of the Spirit puts to death the corrupt ways of the flesh, we then taste his abundant life.

CORRUPT WAYS of the flesh –
It is not the thing your flesh seeks that I necessarily bad
BUT HOW YOU GET IT…is marked as godly or not

THEIR WAS NOTHING WRONG WITH FOOD, but if they put God on pause to get it….we have a problem – ***WHAT LEADS YOU???***

Gideon didn't let the NEED FOR FOOD to meet their hunger needs stop them, he said "WE MOVING FORWARD cause GOD wants us to keep going"

Galatians 6:9 (NLT)
9 So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up.

DON'T LET a fleshly thing called TIRED dictate your response to God's command in ***WHERE*** He wants you to go and ***WHAT*** He wants you to do…

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Judges 8:13-17 (NLT)

13 After this, Gideon returned from the battle by way of Heres Pass. **14** There he captured a young man from Succoth and demanded that he write down the names of all the seventy-seven officials and elders in the town. **15** Gideon then returned to Succoth and said to the leaders, "Here are Zebah and Zalmunna. When we were here before, you taunted me, saying, 'Catch Zebah and Zalmunna first, and then we will feed your exhausted army.'" **16** Then Gideon took the elders of the town and taught them a lesson, punishing them with thorns and briers from the wilderness.**17** He also tore down the tower of Peniel and killed all the men in the town.

PUNISHED the men of SUCCOTH & KILLED the men in Peniel

The txt isn't clear as to why he decided to kill the men in Peniel – some believe that the people of Peniel were significant supports of the midianites

BUT WHAT I WANT TO FOCUS ON - - -

THEY WOULD HAVE BEEN REDEEMED had they just MET THE NEED for food

ALL THEY NEEDED TO DO – was do a GOOD thing for the 300 man army

1 Timothy 5:24-25 (NLT)

24 Remember, the sins of some people are obvious, leading them to certain judgment. But there are others whose sins will not be revealed until later. **25** In the same way, the good deeds of some people are obvious. And the good deeds done in secret will someday come to light.

YOU ever find yourself doing good ONLY when it's seen?

Sometimes you have to meet a need that brings NO profit to you

THE PEOPLE didn't want to give food to an army of 300 – until one thing –

WE WANT TO SEE IF YOU KILL THE MIDIANTIES

WE WANT TO SEE IF IT IS WORTH OUR TIME TO GIVE

WE WANT TO SEE IF WE WILL GET FRUIT FROM OUR SOWING

Representing God well is "I'll give to meet needs so to glorify a God that meets our every need"

Philippians 4:19 (NLT)

19 And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.

WE HAVE TO LOOK LIKE THAT….

So Gideon had captured 2 kings – Zebah and Zalmuna….

Judges 8:18-21 (NLT)
18 Then Gideon asked Zebah and Zalmunna, "The men you killed at Tabor—what were they like?" "Like you," they replied. "They all had the look of a king's son." **19** "They were my brothers, the sons of my own mother!" Gideon exclaimed. "As surely as the Lord lives, I wouldn't kill you if you hadn't killed them." **20** Turning to Jether, his oldest son, he said, "Kill them!" But Jether did not draw his sword, for he was only a boy and was afraid. **21** Then Zebah and Zalmunna said to Gideon, "Be a man! Kill us yourself!" So Gideon killed them both and took the royal ornaments from the necks of their camels.

His son was afraid to follow through with a command….

> You ever see VICTORY AFTER VICTORY but find yourself still afraid?

Representing God well – is not letting FEAR prevent you from the FOLLOW THROUGH to what God has asked you to do..

> Not EVERYTHIGN is mean for the LEADER to carry out – the leader LEADS you to a place where YOU walk in your calling and not letting FEAR stop you

I WONDER what things in your life God has called to draw your sword to and kill – bringing the sword of the spirit, the WORD, and ***kill the things that are destroying WHO YOU ARE and YOUR INFLUENCE***…

Judges 8:22-23 (NLT)
22 Then the Israelites said to Gideon, "Be our ruler! You and your son and your grandson will be our rulers, for you have rescued us from Midian." **23** But Gideon replied, "I will not rule over you, nor will my son. The Lord will rule over you!

IN A MOMENT – Israel could have had a KING – but GIDEON understood, it is not my place to rule, it is my place to bring us in to a state where WE ARE ALL ruled by GOD – the one true KING….

> AND NOT every assignment from God has to do with you being in control or rising above others….

SOMETIMES it is to let OTHERS rise in to their OWN place of being ruled by God as sons and daughters who can walk without you taking their hand….

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Representing God well in LEADERSHIP is understandin – NO MATTER HOW MUCH SUCCES YOU HAVE – you NEVER supercede the DIVINE ruling of GOD almighty

IT IS ALWAYS to lead people to HIM, not you
IT IS ALWAYS to lead people to HIS RULERSHIP, not yours

AND WHAT IS FUNNY – Gideon never took the position of a KINGS yet he RULED LIKE ONE and we can see that by his influence in the last few chapters and today

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A KING – to rule like one
YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE THE LEADER – to lead

IT IS HOW YOU REPRESENT GOD – cause when you REP HIM – people will follow your lead and your influence because you will always be walking in to a place God intended….

SO GIDEON SAYS - I wont rule, the LORD will

Judges 8:24-28 (NLT)
24 However, I do have one request—that each of you give me an earring from the plunder you collected from your fallen enemies." (The enemies, being Ishmaelites, all wore gold earrings.) **25** "Gladly!" they replied. They spread out a cloak, and each one threw in a gold earring he had gathered from the plunder. **26** The weight of the gold earrings was forty-three pounds, not including the royal ornaments and pendants, the purple clothing worn by the kings of Midian, or the chains around the necks of their camels. **27** Gideon made a sacred ephod from the gold and put it in Ophrah, his hometown. But soon all the Israelites prostituted themselves by worshiping it, and it became a trap for Gideon and his family. **28** That is the story of how the people of Israel defeated Midian, which never recovered. Throughout the rest of Gideon's lifetime—about forty years—there was peace in the land.

Although Gideon didn't take the official role as KING - Gideon thought to himself – Well, let me keep a remembrance of this crazy God-centered victory….

And in a seemingly OK memorial, the people began to WORSHIP THE MEMORIAL instead of giving all glory to GOD

The CURRENT tabernacle was in SHILOH and Gideon set up this EPHOD in OPHRAH – EPHOD (garment worn by priests) – and this was NEVER what God wanted….

SEE sometime after MANY VICTORIES – you start to look at YOUR OWN DESIRES as God's because you get too confident in your hearing and discernment

ALWAYS put it before God and let him JUDGE it…..

And the PEOPLE start going to this FALSE TEMPLE Gideon set up, and started WORHIPPING THE EPHOD

THEY WERE WORSHIPPING THE MEMORY OF THEIR VICTORY

And I think sometime we get TOO CAUGHT UP in the worship of PAST victories instead of remembering THERE IS SO MUCH MORE TO DO

"you don't know what I have been through"

"so I am going to enjoy this moment"

BUT THERE IS SO MUCH MORE…..

And GIDEON did ONE SMALL THING of a memorial Ephod – and it caused the people to worship a false God….

It was EASY to follow God in the EXTREME moments, but the day to day obedience got him….challenged of daily living – putting ALL THINGS under the worship of God!

THERE WAS PEACE in the land that DID last 40 yrs…but they were setting themselves up for failure under a FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY…

Kind of like a country that worships freedom and national rights over God…

Judges 8:29-30 (NLT)
29 Then Gideon son of Joash returned home. **30** He had seventy sons born to him, for he had many wives.

ONLY AN EXTREMELY wealthy man could have MANY wives and MANY kids

He was PROUD of a WEALTH in what he received from the people after he was leading them in to victory

DO NOT let a victory GOD gave you turn in to something you can prostitute for your self – ALWAYS give the glory to THE KING of kings

Judges 8:31 (NLT)
31 He also had a concubine in Shechem, who gave birth to a son, whom he named Abimelech.

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The name ABIMELECH means "My father, a king"

Gideon intended THIS SON to bear such a name that would mean Gideon wanted THIS SON to become the next leader of Israel

Romans 8:14 (NLT)
14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

GOD wants you to LEAD – but you can only lead as a CHILD OF GOD – the royalty of the Kingdom – when you are led by SPIRIT, not by anything else

Judges 8:32-35 (NLT)
32 Gideon died when he was very old, and he was buried in the grave of his father, Joash, at Ophrah in the land of the clan of Abiezer. **33** As soon as Gideon died, the Israelites prostituted themselves by worshiping the images of Baal, making Baal-berith their god. **34** They forgot the Lord their God, who had rescued them from all their enemies surrounding them. **35** Nor did they show any loyalty to the family of Jerub-baal (that is, Gideon), despite all the good he had done for Israel.

They got so caught up in money and success – they fell in to another worship fo the FALSE GOD – BAAL

BAAL-BERITH means GOD OF THE COVENANT

They regarded BAAL as their covenant - not YAHWEH

THEY were overcome with EVIL and began worshipping a FALSE GOD

And it all stemmed from ONE SMALL thing

SELF-GLORY (the ephod memorial)

IF WE ARE GOING TO REP HIM WELL

- WE CAN NEVER get caught up in any form of worship of self….

1 John 5:20-21 (NLT)
20 And we know that the Son of God has come, and he has given us understanding so that we can know the true God. And now we live in fellowship with the true God because we live in fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ. He is the only true God, and he is eternal life. **21** Dear children, keep away from anything that might take God's place in your hearts.

Let's represent God well – STAYING TRUE to ONLY HIM **AMEN**