
LOVING JESUS, LOVING PEOPLE, PLOWING A COUNTER-CULTURE

[Spring Season: April 12 – June 14 | Fall Season: September 27 – December 6]

LEADER DETAILS

- **MAIN TEXT:** Judges 3:12-25
- **MAIN IDEA:** We either feed what frees us in Christ or what enslaves us in sin.
- **GROWTH FOCUS:** Be comfortable with silence and give people time to process before jumping in.
- **ICEBREAKER:** What's a movie you've seen way too many times?

ANNOUNCEMENTS (Full details at: emergence.church/digital-bulletin)

- **Totowa - Sunday Service Time Change Next Sunday - 5/10**
 - With eKids moving over to their new space, and as we continue to grow, we need some more time between services! New times are **8:45am, 10:15am, and 11:45am.**
- **Baptism Weekend - June 4th and 7th - Ringwood and Totowa**
 - **The Why** - Baptism is the way Jesus calls His followers to proclaim their faith in Him. It symbolizes how through faith we die with Christ to our sin, and are raised with Christ to new and eternal life in Him. If you are a follower of Jesus and haven't had the opportunity to declare that through baptism, now is the time to sign up!
- **Paterson Partnership: Men's Formal Wear Collection - Due May 13th!**
 - **The Why** - Over the past several years, our church has had the privilege of partnering with Paterson School #2, walking alongside their students and families through our after-school program and other opportunities to serve in the name of Jesus. Another opportunity is here!
 - We are collecting new and gently used men's wear - full list on the digital bulletin!

GETTING STARTED:

- **Pray:** This helps everyone prepare their heads and hearts as you turn to the discussion.
- **Watch Community Extras Video** (length 2:57 – questions from video are included below)

LAST WEEK'S GROWTH STEP FOLLOW-UP:

[Leaders: These follow-ups are meant to offer some accountability while being low-pressure. Keep it casual, "If you were able to try this last week, how did it go?" Sharing is optional; it's always okay to pass.]

- **Outward Action:** Identify one area of compromise and take a tangible step to address it.
- **Inward Prayer:** Ask God "If someone followed my example of faith, where would it lead them?"

SERMON DISCUSSION

Prioritize meaningful conversation over getting through every question.

Feeding What Enslaves Us

Read Judges 3:12-17

Judges shows a repeated cycle: God's people drift, experience the consequences, cry out, and God rescues them. This story zooms in on one of those moments. As Israel brings tribute to King Eglon, we see a powerful picture: the people are literally feeding the one who is oppressing them. Pastor Ryan connected this to how often we spend time, energy, and attention feeding the very things that enslave us. Whatever we consistently "feed" is what grows stronger in our lives.

- What are some examples of things people "feed" today that end up controlling or enslaving them?
- Honestly, what is one thing in your life right now that you may be feeding that is actually hurting you?

The Turning Point of Obedience

Read Judges 3:18-21

Ehud turns back after seeing the idols at Gilgal, a place that was meant to remind Israel of God's power, now filled with idolatry. It seems like this moment clarifies things for him: what may have been hesitation becomes decisive obedience. Sometimes we know what God is asking us to do, but we delay until something wakes us up to act.

- Have you ever had a moment when it became clear, "I can't delay obedience anymore"? What happened?
- Is there anything you sense God asking you to do right now that you've been putting off?

Seeing Sin for What It Really Is

Read Judges 3:22-25

The scene takes a graphic turn. After the shock (and maybe a little humor), there's a deeper realization: this is what sin leads to. Pastor Ryan emphasized that sin often looks appealing at first, but if we could see its full outcome, we'd recognize how destructive it really is. We don't drift into ruin overnight, but we feed it over time.

- Why do you think it's so hard to see sin clearly in the moment?
- How in your life are you feeding the things of the Lord, not the things that oppress? What specific disciplines have been the most impactful in your spiritual growth and health?

On Mission & Feeding What Frees Us

Read Acts 17:16-23

Pastor Ryan contrasted Ehad with Paul in Acts 17. Both were provoked by idolatry, but Paul's response wasn't to attack. It was mission. He moved toward people with compassion, not pride. The invitation for us is to stop feeding what oppresses us, and instead feed what leads to life in Christ: His Word, His work, and His mission.

- When you see brokenness or sin in the world, what is your natural reaction? What would it look like to respond with compassion instead?
- What is one specific thing you need to stop feeding, and start feeding, this week?

GROWTH STEP THIS WEEK

- **Outward Action:** Take one step to remove or limit something that is feeding an unhealthy pattern in your life
- **Inward Prayer:** Ask God, "What am I feeding that needs to stop, and what do I need to start feeding instead?" And ask for the humility and courage to be obedient in that.

PRAYER PROMPTS:

- Thank God for His mercy when we drift
- Ask for clarity to see sin for what it really is
- Pray for strength to walk in obedience
- Ask God to grow your love for Him and your compassion for others

NEXT WEEK'S TEXT: Judges 4 and 5