

## Daily Devotional, July 23, 2021 Whose Plan do I Follow?

***After Joshua had dismissed the Israelites, they went to take possession of the land, each to their own inheritance. The people served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had seen all the great things the Lord had done for Israel. Joshua, son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at the age of a hundred and ten. And they buried him in the land of his inheritance, at Timnath Heres in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. After that whole generation had been gathered to their ancestors, another generation grew up who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel. Judges 2:6-10 (NIV)***

***In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit. Judges 21:25 (NIV)***

In post-World War II Europe, anxiety was the rule for the masses. The people had endured many hardships, and the rebuilding of a war-torn continent is never an easy thing. In those stressful times, the demand for sedatives was growing at a rapid pace. Fears from the side effects of barbiturate-based medicines steered a German drug company to release a wonder drug that was introduced under the tradename of *Contergan*. This miraculous, over the counter drug hit the market with claims that it could cure “anxiety, insomnia, gastritis and tension.” It was advertised as “completely safe” for everyone, including both mother and child, “even during pregnancy.” What is most telling is that the drug’s safety had been established because the manufacturers “could not find a dose high enough to kill a rat.”

By 1960, the drug had found its way to market in 46 countries and the sales that year rivaled that of common aspirin. Doctors even began to discover new side uses for the wonder drug. One obstetrician discovered that *Contergan* could alleviate morning sickness, but this unsanctioned solution proved to be perilous.

The active drug in *Contergan* is better known by its trade name, Thalidomide. Thalidomide went on to cause thousands of devastating birth defects in children throughout the world. The babies who were impacted by thalidomide in the womb were born with under formed limbs and only 40% of them survived.

In this world, we are assured that we will have problems. Jesus promised us as much. But our greatest danger is not our problems. The real danger comes when we stop seeking God’s solutions for us. The risks occur when we stop pursuing Him and refuse to follow His ways. Sometimes *our* solutions only make matters worse.

The people of Israel were well acquainted with this pattern. Even though they occupied the land God had promised to their forefathers, they didn’t feel any need to follow His will. Their memories were wiped clean of everything the Lord had done, and each person did what was right in their own eyes. Although they faced problems, they created even more when they followed their own perilous solutions.

In the above passages, the book of Judges recites a familiar refrain. The people of Israel chose to rebel against God, and they soon experienced His vengeance for their careless choices. When they could no longer bear their punishment, they would repent, and the Lord would send a hero, a judge, to rescue them. As we read their stories, we yearn for these people to break their ill-fated pattern, but not long after their rescuer had died, they always descended into the same destructive cycle.

As painful as their patterns are to perceive, they are not unfamiliar. We can reuse the same dangerous solutions over and over again in our own lives. Even though we know problems will come, and we will even generate a few along the way, we don’t have to make matters worse by trying our own solutions. Our Heavenly Father loves us and knows what is best for us. All we have to do is trust, obey and follow His plans, not ours.

***Prayer: O Lord, I pray for Your will to be done in my life and in this world, here on earth as it does in heaven. I’m not in control, Lord, You are, even though that’s often hard for me to admit and accept. I want to tread on whatever path You lay before me, even when it looks different from what I thought I wanted. For I know You have bigger plans for my life. I will trust and obey You with a joyful heart. Father, may Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.***