



TRANSFORMED

DEVOTIONS CONNECTING TEENS TO CHRIST

After Ehud came Shamgar son of Anath, who struck down six hundred Philistines with an oxgoad. He too saved Israel.

Judges 3:31

Shamgar the judge

What can you do with a 10-foot pole? It's an odd question. Shamgar used one, called an oxgoad, as a weapon. An oxgoad was a long, pointed tool used by farmers to prod their cattle and make them move when they decided to stop and rest for a while. God called Shamgar to use his oxgoad for more than oxen. It was a strange weapon to use to kill 600 men, and the odds seemed impossible for Shamgar. How could Shamgar believe that a stick with a sharp iron point would be all he would need? Shamgar knew it wasn't the stick or his ability that accomplished the seemingly impossible. It was God's power that gave Shamgar the confidence to fight and God's grace that gave him victory.

The previous two chapters in Judges show that time and time again Israel decided to leave God, follow the world, worship false gods, and enjoy the sensual sins that accompanied the worship of those false gods—in essence forgetting the true God altogether.

It's rather sad. The God of grace was always before his children—saving them, providing amazing homes they took for granted, blessing them with parents who tried their best (flawed as they were) to put food on the table and clothes on their backs—only for another opportunity to save them when they decided to completely take him for granted and go their own way.... Suddenly, we are talking about more than the Israelites.

How similar we are to them! It's not just the Philistines that deserve to end up at the end of a prodding pole. Our sin has earned us even worse. God gave Israel Shamgar and used him to save Israel in an amazing act of power, justice, and love!

God gave us Jesus. Taking on flesh, leaving his throne of grace, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! He saved you, in an amazing act of power, justice, and love! Now God prods us with the stick of his Word, driving us beyond ourselves and our selfishness to see not the oxgoad that skewered 600, but the staff of the Good Shepherd that pulls us along, guides us in truth, and seeks to steer us away from danger and sin every day. Better yet, we see the big piece of wood that held our Savior—his cross!

Thank God for Shamgar and his oxgoad. Most importantly, thank God for sending a Savior—the living, faithful, powerful, grace-filled Jesus Christ! Through water and the Word in baptism, he saves us!

Prayer: My faithful God, you fail me never;

Your promise surely will endure.

Oh, cast me not away forever

If words and deeds become impure.

Have mercy when I come defiled;

Forgive, lift up, restore your child. Amen.

(Christian Worship 294:3)