

Cycles Pt. 2

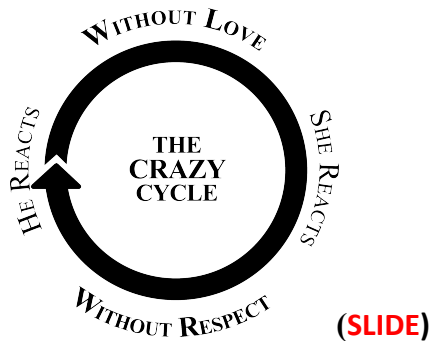
Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, October 10, 2021

SETTING THE STAGE

I want to pick up with the themes we introduced two-weeks ago (i.e., in the opening installment of a multi-segment series entitled “CYCLES”). For the sake of those who were not present, and for the benefit of those who were, allow me to note the following in the way of summary...

KEY 1 – Life is highly cyclical in nature...

Repeated and/or repeating patterns are embedded and apparent within life and living. Feel free to research acknowledged patterns across all fields of inquiry! You will find cycles in the realms of planetary movement and astronomical phenomena, climate and weather, agriculture, biology, mathematics, business, music and the arts, culture and society, warfare and military conquest, international relations, interpersonal connections, etc. Every expertise recognizes established patterns of cyclical relationship. For instance **(SLIDE)**...



KEY 2 – For more information on such matters and more, review Cycles Pt. 1 online at www.NewLifeBarre.org.

Q & A

Q. Why does this matter? Why should we pay attention to evident patterns and cycles?

A1. It is always beneficial to contemplate and/or reflect upon the nature of the world and how things operate. We do well to consider the unique relationships and inter-connections that exist in this Creation of the Lord. The “teacher” in the Book of Ecclesiastes evidenced a heart attuned to the movements and seasons of living (i.e., borne of careful consideration, introspection and inspiration)...

Ecclesiastes 3 (NIV)

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under the heavens: | 5 a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing, |
| 2 a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot, | 6 a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep and a time to throw away, |
| 3 a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build, | 7 a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak, |
| 4 a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance, | 8 a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace. |

A2. You can only contend with and break dysfunctional cycles once they are rightly assessed and understood. In the words of my father, “Solving a problem is easy—identifying the problem is the hard part.” For example, understanding the previously mentioned “Crazy Cycle” is the key to short-circuiting its operation! The solution is for each party to take responsibility and treat their partner with love or respect (unconditionally).

A3. I posit the study of cycles (i.e., particularly those related to human function and interaction) is critical because it affirms biblical teaching concerning the depravity of man and our need for a Savior. Consider that the cycles we explored in recent weeks (e.g., Crazy Cycle, 8 Stages of Democracy, Cycle of Abuse, etc.) demonstrate an ever-increasing downward spiral of human dysfunction and deterioration...

NOTE 1 – Health and function are not our default positions! Rather, it is brokenness due to sin...

Romans 3:10–18, 23

10 . . . “There is no one righteous, not even one;

11 there is no one who understands;
there is no one who seeks God.

12 All have turned away,
they have together become worthless;

there is no one who does good,
not even one.”

13 “Their throats are open graves;
their tongues practice deceit.”

“The poison of vipers is on their lips.”

14 “Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.”

15 “Their feet are swift to shed blood;

16 ruin and misery mark their ways,

17 and the way of peace they do not know.”

18 “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

NOTE 2 – It is only in Christ Jesus that we can find genuine release, renewal and transformation...

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV)

17 . . . If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

ULTIMATELY...

A4. I posit that the study of cycles matters because Scripture itself takes the time to identify and explore them. In the next two or so sessions, I would like to study a selection of cycles that are evident within the Old and New Testaments. Some are destructive, yet not all. Since the whole of Scripture is inspired and profitable for our development (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16–17), it will be my pleasure to lead you through several systematically!

KEY 1 – Perhaps the most famous scriptural cycle appears in the Book of Judges (cf. Judges 2)...

KEY 2 – Please allow me to set the table a bit as we turn to Judges chapter 2...

CONTEXT & TO THE WORD

NOTE 1 – After Joshua led the tribes of Israel into the Promised Land, he called them to be faithful to their covenant with God by obeying the Law given to-and/or-through his predecessor, Moses. Doing this would lead to divine blessing and spiritual utilization; failure would precipitate catastrophe (cf. Deut. 28; Josh. 24).

NOTE 2 – Following the death of Joshua, the varying tribes of Israel came to be governed by “judges”—hence the name of the book! Now please do not think of a “courtroom” upon the mention of this title or term. Rather, these leaders were regional political and military figures who functioned more as tribal chieftains...

NOTE 3 – In total, the Book of Judges records the ministry of twelve leaders who were said to “judge” Israel: Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Gideon, Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, and Samson. Of the twelve, six are given particular emphasis: Othniel (3a), Ehud (3b), Deborah (4–5), Gideon (6–9), Jephthah (10–12), and Samson (13–16). The judges were all called to contend with a host of surrounding enemies (e.g., the Edomites, Moabites, Canaanites, Midianites, Ammonites, Philistines, etc.). Judges is a profound historical work, BUT...

NOTE 4 – It is also a highly disturbing and violent text! It chronicles the tragic tale of compromise and corruption in both the nation and those judges whom God used to save His people. Sadly, the nation and its leaders turned out to be no better than the pagans they were called to positively influence for God! Ultimately, Judges tells the story of Israel’s unceasing spiritual failure from the death of Joshua to the rise of the kings in 1 Samuel (i.e., a period of app. 350-years). In light of this historical backdrop...

KEY – The whole of this work is founded upon a cycle introduced in its opening chapters. Let us take the time to a) read a key selection from Judges; b) identify the cycle crucial to its content; c) explore said cycle with illustration and example; and d) consider contemporary application(s)...

Judges 2:6–8, 10–19 (NIV)

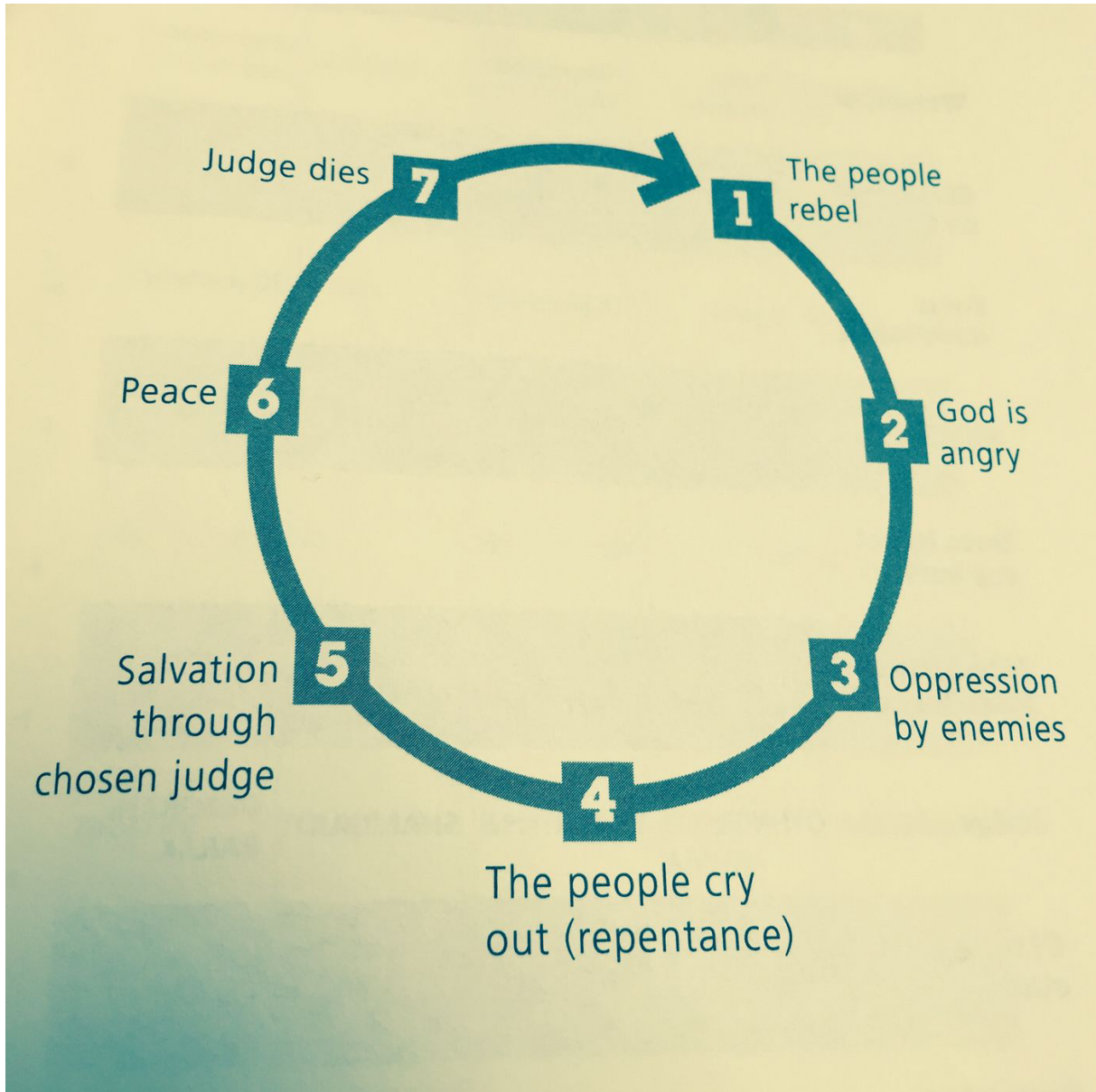
6 After Joshua had dismissed the Israelites, they went to take possession of the land, each to their own inheritance. 7 The people served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had seen all the great things the Lord had done for Israel. 8 Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at the age of a hundred and ten. . . .

10 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. 11 Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord and served the Baals. 12 They forsook the Lord, the God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed and worshiped various gods of the peoples around them. They aroused the Lord’s anger 13 because they forsook him and served Baal and the Ashtoreths. 14 In his anger against Israel the Lord gave them into the hands of raiders who plundered them. He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, whom they were no longer able to resist. 15 Whenever Israel went out to fight, the hand of the Lord was against them to defeat them, just as he had sworn to them. They were in great distress.

16 Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them out of the hands of these raiders. 17 Yet they would not listen to their judges but prostituted themselves to other gods and worshiped them. They quickly turned from the ways of their ancestors, who had been obedient to the Lord’s commands. 18 Whenever the Lord raised up a judge for them, he was with the judge and saved them out of the hands of their enemies as long as the judge lived; for the Lord relented because of their groaning under those who oppressed and afflicted them. 19 But when the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their ancestors, following other gods and serving and worshiping them. They refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways.

THE “CYCLE OF JUDGES”

FYI 1 – If you take the time to draw-out the cycle presented herein, it looks something like this (**SLIDE**)...



FYI 2 – The remainder of the Book of Judges (i.e., entirety) presents the unceasing operation of this cycle...

KEY – Let us take some time to explore two iterations of this cycle—one smaller and one larger iteration...

THE CYCLE EXEMPLIFIED PT. 1 (SMALLER)

FYI – Let us begin with an illustration that is short in length (i.e., the first judge, Othniel)

Judges 3:7–11 (Othniel, Emphasis Mine)

7 The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord; they forgot the Lord their God and served the Baals and the Asherahs [1]. 8 The anger of the Lord burned against Israel [2] so that he sold them into the hands of Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram Naharaim, to whom the Israelites were subject for eight years [3]. 9 But when they cried out to the Lord [4], he raised up for them a deliverer, Othniel son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother, who saved them [5]. 10 The Spirit of the Lord came on him, so that he became Israel’s judge and went to war. The Lord gave Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram into the hands of Othniel, who overpowered him. 11 So the land had peace for forty years [6], until Othniel son of Kenaz died [7].

KEY – We see in this account the varying elements of the “Cycle” of the Book of Judges. Let us continue...

THE CYCLE EXEMPLIFIED PT. 2 (LARGER)

FYI – Let us now consider a lengthier account starting in Judges 6—an account featuring Gideon...

1) The People Rebel

Judges 6:1a

1 The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord, . . .

2–3) God is Angry & Allows Oppression by Enemies

Judges 6:1b–5

. . . and for seven years he gave them into the hands of the Midianites. 2 Because the power of Midian was so oppressive, the Israelites prepared shelters for themselves in mountain clefts, caves and strongholds. 3 Whenever the Israelites planted their crops, the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples invaded the country. 4 They camped on the land and ruined the crops all the way to Gaza and did not spare a living thing for Israel, neither sheep nor cattle nor donkeys. 5 They came up with their livestock and their tents like swarms of locusts. It was impossible to count them or their camels; they invaded the land to ravage it.

4) The People Cry Out (Repentance)

Judges 6:6

6 Midian so impoverished the Israelites that they cried out to the Lord for help.

5) Salvation through Chosen Judge Pt. 1

Judges 6:11–16

11 The angel of the Lord came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. 12 When the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, he said, “The Lord is with you, mighty warrior.”

13 “Pardon me, my lord,” Gideon replied, “but if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our ancestors told us about when they said, ‘Did not the Lord bring us up out of Egypt?’ But now the Lord has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian.”

14 The Lord turned to him and said, “Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian’s hand. Am I not sending you?”

15 “Pardon me, my lord,” Gideon replied, “but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.”

16 The Lord answered, “I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive.”

5) Salvation through Chosen Judge Pt. 2

Judges 7

1 Early in the morning, Jerub-Baal (that is, Gideon) and all his men camped at the spring of Harod. The camp of Midian was north of them in the valley near the hill of Moreh. 2 The Lord said to Gideon, “You have too many men. I cannot deliver Midian into their hands, or Israel would boast against me, ‘My own strength has saved me.’ 3 Now announce to the army, ‘Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.’” So twenty-two thousand men left, while ten thousand remained.

4 But the Lord said to Gideon, “There are still too many men. Take them down to the water, and I will thin them out for you there. If I say, ‘This one shall go with you,’ he shall go; but if I say, ‘This one shall not go with you,’ he shall not go.”

5 So Gideon took the men down to the water. There the Lord told him, “Separate those who lap the water with their tongues as a dog laps from those who kneel down to drink.” 6 Three hundred of them drank from cupped hands, lapping like dogs. All the rest got down on their knees to drink.

7 The Lord said to Gideon, “With the three hundred men that lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands. Let all the others go home.” 8 So Gideon sent the rest of the Israelites home but kept the three hundred, who took over the provisions and trumpets of the others.

Now the camp of Midian lay below him in the valley. 9 During that night the Lord said to Gideon, “Get up, go down against the camp, because I am going to give it into your hands. 10 If you are afraid to attack, go down to the camp with your servant Purah 11 and listen to what they are saying. Afterward, you will be encouraged to attack the camp.” So he and Purah his servant went down to the outposts of the camp. 12 The Midianites, the Amalekites and all the other eastern peoples had settled in the valley, thick as locusts. Their camels could no more be counted than the sand on the seashore.

13 Gideon arrived just as a man was telling a friend his dream. "I had a dream," he was saying. "A round loaf of barley bread came tumbling into the Midianite camp. It struck the tent with such force that the tent overturned and collapsed." 14 His friend responded, "This can be nothing other than the sword of Gideon son of Joash, the Israelite. God has given the Midianites and the whole camp into his hands."

15 When Gideon heard the dream and its interpretation, he bowed down and worshiped. He returned to the camp of Israel and called out, "Get up! The Lord has given the Midianite camp into your hands." 16 Dividing the three hundred men into three companies, he placed trumpets and empty jars in the hands of all of them, with torches inside. 17 "Watch me," he told them. "Follow my lead. When I get to the edge of the camp, do exactly as I do. 18 When I and all who are with me blow our trumpets, then from all around the camp blow yours and shout, 'For the Lord and for Gideon.'"

19 Gideon and the hundred men with him reached the edge of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just after they had changed the guard. They blew their trumpets and broke the jars that were in their hands. 20 The three companies blew the trumpets and smashed the jars. Grasping the torches in their left hands and holding in their right hands the trumpets they were to blow, they shouted, "A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!" 21 While each man held his position around the camp, all the Midianites ran, crying out as they fled.

22 When the three hundred trumpets sounded, the Lord caused the men throughout the camp to turn on each other with their swords. The army fled to Beth Shittah toward Zererah as far as the border of Abel Meholah near Tabbath. 23 Israelites from Naphtali, Asher and all Manasseh were called out, and they pursued the Midianites. 24 Gideon sent messengers throughout the hill country of Ephraim, saying, "Come down against the Midianites and seize the waters of the Jordan ahead of them as far as Beth Barah." So all the men of Ephraim were called out and they seized the waters of the Jordan as far as Beth Barah. 25 They also captured two of the Midianite leaders, Oreb and Zeeb. They killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeeb at the winepress of Zeeb. They pursued the Midianites and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon, who was by the Jordan.

6-7) Peace & the Judge Dies (REPEAT)

Judges 8:28-35

28 Thus Midian was subdued before the Israelites and did not raise its head again. During Gideon's lifetime, the land had peace forty years. 29 Jerub-Baal son of Joash went back home to live. 30 He had seventy sons of his own, for he had many wives. 31 His concubine, who lived in Shechem, also bore him a son, whom he named Abimelek. 32 Gideon son of Joash died at a good old age and was buried in the tomb of his father Joash in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

33 No sooner had Gideon died than the Israelites again prostituted themselves to the Baals. They set up Baal-Berith as their god 34 and did not remember the Lord their God, who had rescued them from the hands of all their enemies on every side. 35 They also failed to show any loyalty to the family of Jerub-Baal (that is, Gideon) in spite of all the good things he had done for them.

KEY 1 – We see in this lengthy selection the key elements of the "Cycle" of the Book of Judges.

KEY 2 – If you survey the entire work, you will see this "Cycle" again, and again, and again...

CONTEMPORARY APPLICATION(S)

Q. Why does this matter? Why pay attention to this patterns or cycle?

A1. It is always beneficial to contemplate and/or reflect upon the nature of the world and how things operate. We see in this cycle and its iteration(s) the movements and seasons of nations and people groups before God. We must consider that left to our own devices and ignorant of the knowledge He imparts, this is how we will operate and what we shall face (i.e., needlessly suffering and doomed to repeat history)! Remember...

Romans 15:4a

4 . . . everything that was written in the past was written to teach us . . .

FYI – This COJ was recorded for our benefit; that we would not following in their spiritual footsteps! Similarly...

A2. You can only contend with and break dysfunctional cycles once they are rightly assessed and understood. Solving a problem is easy once the problem is properly understood! Thus said, what step(s) could the nation of Israel have taken to “short-circuit” this cycle? How might we learn from this?

A3. I posit the study of this cycle is critical because it affirms scriptural teaching concerning the depravity of man and our need for a Savior. It is apparent that the “Cycle of Judges” demonstrates the ever-increasing downward spiral of human dysfunction and deterioration...

NOTE 1 – Health and function are not our default positions! Rather, it is brokenness due to sin...

Romans 3:10–18, 23

10 . . . “There is no one righteous, not even one;

11 there is no one who understands;
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their tongues practice deceit.”

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23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

NOTE 2 – It is only in Christ Jesus that we can find genuine release, renewal and transformation...

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV)

17 . . . If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

CONCLUSIONS

NOTE 1 – Those who wish to give online may do so at www.NewLifeBarre.org. Those who wish to give in person can utilize the offering boxes located throughout the church facility. Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the work of the Lord!

NOTE 2 – Regular Ministry Schedule...

Sunday Prayer – Sundays at 8:45am

Sunday School – Sundays at 9:15am

Bible Study – Thursday at 6:30–7:30pm

Women’s Ministry – 2nd Tuesday at 6:30pm

Men’s Breakfast – 2nd Saturday at 9am

Potluck – Final Sunday of the Month

NOTE 3 – Special Ministry Events...

OCC is nearly upon us! National Collection week is taking place November 15–22. We will host a special OCC Sunday Service on Sunday, November 21. Shoeboxes are available downstairs in the Community Room, along with information on how to pack your shoeboxes, etc. Please see me if you have any questions.

NOTE 4 – Those who wish to linger in this sanctuary may feel free to do so. This is to be a house of prayer, so those who feel the need to pray may do so as they please. Moreover, I would be more than happy to pray with those who have need(s). Thus said...

Numbers 6:24–26

24 The Lord bless you
and keep you;

25 the Lord make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;

26 the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace.