



February 17, 2019  
“A Principled Life”  
Jeremiah 35  
Pastor Gary Hamrick

It’s possible to live a principled life in an unprincipled world, and the Recabites are a great biblical example. God commended them for the way they lived their lives with the courage of their convictions, despite how the rest of the world was living around them. God used the Recabites as an example of principled people who refused to compromise their standards. In this message, Pastor Gary teaches about the ways their story applies to our lives.

### Historical Background

1. The Recabites were descendants of Recab, who was of Kenite lineage.
  - a. **1 Chronicles 2:55** - *“... and the clans of scribes who lived at Jabez: the Tirathites, Shimeathites and Sucathites. These are the Kenites who came from Hammath, the father of the house of Recab.”*
  - b. Kenites were not Jews, but they were long-time friends of the Israelites, and they assimilated into Israelite clans.
    - i. **1 Samuel 15:6** - *“Then [King Saul] said to the Kenites, ‘Go away, leave the Amalekites so that I do not destroy you along with them; for you showed kindness to all the Israelites when they came up out of Egypt.’ So the Kenites moved away from the Amalekites.”*
    - ii. **Judges 1:16** - *“The descendants of Moses’ father-in-law, the Kenite, went up from the City of Palms [Jerusalem] with the men of Judah to live among the people of the Desert of Judah in the Negev near Arad.”*
      1. Moses married Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro (aka Reuel) the Kenite, who was a priest of Midian.<sup>1</sup>
  - c. Some Bible scholars believe the Kenites were servants at the Temple who did

---

<sup>1</sup> **Exodus 2:21** - *“Moses stayed with [Jethro/Reuel], who gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses in marriage.”*

menial tasks to help the Levites, as mentioned in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah,

i. The Gibeonites also helped the Levites in similar ways.

2. The Recabites were known for being metalsmiths, tent-dwellers, and a people who had a strict policy of abstaining from alcohol.
  - a. **Jeremiah 35:6** - *"But they replied, 'We do not drink wine, because our forefather Jonadab son of Recab gave us this command: "Neither you nor your descendants must ever drink wine." ' "*
  - b. Their vow of abstinence was similar to a Nazarite vow. <sup>2</sup>
3. The Recabites traveled to Jerusalem because King Nebuchadnezzar's army was on the move and they were in harm's way.
  - a. **Jeremiah 35:11** - *"But when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon invaded this land, we said, 'Come, we must go to Jerusalem to escape the Babylonian and Aramean armies,' So we have remained in Jerusalem."*
4. There weren't very many Recabites, and it's likely they only numbered about twelve or so.
  - a. **Jeremiah 35:3** - *"So I went to Jaazaniah son of Jeremiah, the son of Habazziniah, and his brothers and all his sons - the whole family of the Recabites. I brought them into the house of the LORD, into the room of the sons of Hanan son of Igdliah the man of God. It was next to the room of the officials, which was over that of Maaseiah son of Shallum the doorkeeper."*
5. Jeremiah did something unusual in that he set bowls of wine in front of people who didn't drink!
  - a. **Jeremiah 35:5-6** - *"Then I set bowls full of wine and some cups before the men of the Recabite family and said to them, 'Drink some wine.' But they replied, 'We do not drink wine, because our forefather Jonadab son of Recab gave us this command: "Neither you nor your descendants must ever drink wine." ' "*
  - b. Alcohol isn't the main point of this account, and God wasn't tempting the Recabites.
    - i. **James 1:13** - *"When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone..."*
6. Pastor Gary said: "God [was not] setting the Recabites up for failure; God [was] setting them up for success. And by that, I mean, God [knew] their character and their principles, and he [knew] that they [would] refuse the wine. And so, God [was] going to use the Recabites as an example of principled people who [lived] by their

---

<sup>2</sup> Numbers 6:1-21

convictions, [which would] be a sharp contrast to the people of that day who had no regard for God or [his] commandments. ... [God put them in a position, not to prove them, but] to show them faithful, to use them as [a good example] of people who [lived] by their principles in a very unprincipled world. ... God [commended] them... as people of principle who obeyed the commands of their forefather at a time when God's own people were not obeying the commands of their heavenly father. ... God intentionally used them as a good example."

- a. **Jeremiah 35:12-14** - *"Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying: 'This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Go and tell the men of Judah and the people of Jerusalem, "Will you not learn a lesson and obey my words?" declares the LORD. 'Jonadab the son of Recab ordered his sons not to drink wine and this command has been kept. To this day they do not drink wine, because they obey their forefather's command. But I have spoken to you again and again, yet you have not obeyed me.' "*

The Recabites Were Tent-dwelling Nomads  
Who Had No Real Attachment To This World

7. Pastor Gary said: "We're only passing through, friends. We are not to get too attached to this world or [be] seduced by it. This is not our home. We are only temporarily occupying it, [and] we only have temporary citizenship for a purpose [and] a reason. ... Because we are aliens and strangers in the world [and] because we're only passing through [and] because our ultimate citizenship is in heaven... we will, at times, feel strangely out of place in this world. ... There's a reason why we don't always feel like we fit in. ... Why is it such a struggle at times [and why is it that the] values that [we] stand for and the standards of God's Word are in such conflict with the world? It's because we're not meant to be here forever. ... However, there's a reason why we're here, and the whole life of a Christian can be summarized in three [words]: occupy, influence, and evangelize."

- a. **Philippians 3:20** - *"But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ..."*
- b. **1 Peter 1:17** - *"... live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear."*
- c. **1 Peter 2:11** - *"Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul."*

8. Occupy

- a. **Luke 19:13** - *"So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business till I come.' "*(NKJV) (Emphasis added)
- b. **Luke 19:13** - *"And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, 'Occupy till I come.' "*(KJV) (Emphasis added)
- c. Pastor Gary said: "We are to get jobs, raise families, enjoy life, and enjoy what God has given us, and be good stewards of what God has given us. ... [We're]

to live our lives to the fullest for the glory of God..."

## 9. Influence

- a. **Matthew 5:13-14** - *"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden."*
  - i. Salt has three primary functions: to add flavoring, to be used as a preservative, or to be used as an antiseptic.
  - ii. Light penetrates darkness.
- b. Pastor Gary said: "The idea behind salt and light is this: We are to be flavoring and illuminating our world for the glory of God."

## 10. Evangelize

- a. **Matthew 28:19-20** - *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

### The Recabites Remained True To Their Principles And Values Despite What Was Set Before Them

11. Pastor Gary said: "God sees the simple ways that we hold true to our convictions, even if they are not specific commands of the Bible. ... There's going to be different choices and decisions that you and I have to make that there may not be a specific chapter and verse in the Bible concerning. [There] will be many choices in the course of life that we will have to decide... based on the overall counsel of God's Word and how we personally feel convicted about certain things. [The] ultimate goal in our lives should be to give glory to God. ... We will be confronted by certain things that are set before us from time to time. ... It's in those moments that we have to rely on the Holy Spirit and the overall counsel of God's Word. God did not command the Recabites [to abstain from] alcohol. [That] was a self-imposed family thing that they voluntarily took on, and they complied with it because one of their ancestors [had told them to]. ... You will have plenty of personal convictions in your life about certain things that you should abstain from because you want to honor God. [There will be] certain things you do because you want to honor God. Don't let anyone dissuade you otherwise! You be true to those principles. It may not be principles that other people share, [but that's] okay if that's your principle. ... You know, that as far as it concerns you, [you'll honor] God in a way. So, you have to be careful to be people of principle..."
  - a. **1 Corinthians 6:12** - *"'Everything is permissible for me' - but not everything is beneficial. 'Everything is permissible for me,' - but I will not be mastered*

*by anything.”*

### The Recabites Were Set Up By God For Success

12. Pastor Gary said: “All of us will face temptations every day. [We will face] temptations of the flesh, [the world, and the devil]. All three of [these] are working in concert against you and me. ... Is it possible that sometimes what we perceive as temptation is not temptation at all, but [what] could very well be an opportunity that God has set before us to prove us; a situation] to prove to ourselves and to others who are watching, that we can be faithful and true to our principles and convictions? I think that’s what’s happening in this story. Again, God does not tempt anyone, so what he was doing for the Recabites, [I think he sometimes does for us, and that is] that he was setting them up for success. ... [He places things before us, because the way we respond will give us] the opportunity to see that [we] indeed are a [people] of principle, [and convictions]... We can be people of principle in an unprincipled world. There is nothing quite as strengthening to our faith in those moments when we resist the potential for compromise. When we stand strong and we don’t yield to compromise, man, that has an intrinsic, strengthening affect in our lives. ... [The] Recabites passed [the] test, and for that, God commended them, and he blessed them.
- a. “Opportunity may knock only one time, but temptation leans on the doorbell.” - Anonymous
  - b. **Jeremiah 35:18-19** - *“Then Jeremiah said to the family of the Recabites, ‘This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says’: ‘You have obeyed the command of your forefather Jonadab and have followed all his instructions and have done everything he ordered. Therefore, this is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says’: ‘Jonadab son of Recab will never fail to have a man to serve me.’ ”*
13. **Matthew 25:21** - *“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful... Come and share your master’s happiness!’ ”*

### Discussion Questions

1. Read **Jeremiah 35** to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Prepare a brief historical look at the Recabites. (See #1 through #4 above)
3. Read and discuss **Jeremiah 35:5-6**. (See #5 above)

4. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about times when they've been tempted to do or say something that goes against their personal convictions and principles.
5. Read and discuss [James 1:13](#).
6. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's comments about the way God was setting the Recabites up for success. (See #6 above)
7. How would you describe your understanding and the way you live that demonstrates that you are fully aware that as a Christian you know that your citizenship is in heaven, and that you are only temporarily living in this world. (See #7 above)
8. Read and discuss [Philippians 3:20](#), [1 Peter 1:17](#); [2:11](#).
9. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's three-point outline for Christians. (See #8 through #10 above)
10. What are some of the ways you are living your life for the glory of God? (See #8c above)
11. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's remarks about living a principled life with conviction. (See #11 above)
12. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments concerning situations that allow us to prove ourselves to be people of principle and convictions. (See #12 above)
13. Allow the people in your group to share examples of things in their lives that help them understand that they can look forward to hearing the Lord say, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (See #13 above)
14. Close your time in prayer and allow the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)