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# Book Judges

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## Historical Perspective

The book of Judges tells what happened to Israel after receiving its inheritances in the Promised Land prior to being ruled by a king. Judges derives its name from 14 “judges” or “deliverers” God raised up to free tribes from the oppressive rule of local dictators.

**Judges 2** is a key chapter. It explains why Israel needed deliverance. Originally, Israel disobeyed by not driving out the inhabitants. Therefore, God left enemies to test Israel. When Israel sinned, their enemies would reign. When Israel turned back to Him, God raised a judge to deliver them (foreshadowing Christ).

## Key Phrase

The key phrase in the book is “everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (**Judg 17:6**), **Judg 21:25**). This was the path of moral

relativism which Solomon wrote about in Proverbs: “There is a way that seems right to a man, But it’s end is the way of death.” (**Pro 14:12**)

The book of Judges is filled with stories of people who abandoned God’s wisdom for subjective human intellect. For instance, in **Judges 11**, note how Jephthah foolishly vowed to take the first thing that emerged from his front door and sacrifice it to the Lord.

First, what did Jephthah expect to emerge from his front door? Second, Jephthah did have the ability to annul his foolish vow by paying a 20 shekel penalty (perhaps 20 months of salary) according to **Leviticus 27:1-8**. He did not. He did what was right in his own eyes. The end of that path was death.

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## Personal Reflection and Application

God left enemies in the land He had given Israel to “test” them and “know whether they would obey” (**Judg 3:1-4**). You may think life would be easier if God removed all your temptations and obstacles. He won’t do that. He wants to know how well you will listen to Him when things are challenging.

- ▶ What are some temptations you have faced in the last year?
- ▶ What trials and bad times have you experienced over the past year?
- ▶ Do you find it more difficult to listen to God during temptations or during trials?

### The Shirkers

Deborah said the angel of the Lord put a curse on Meroz (a city within the tribe of Naphtali, **Judg 5:23**). The reason for the curse was that the people in the city did NOTHING to help. They were not willing to do their part.

*“Meroz stands for the shirker.”  
-Philips Brooks*

- ▶ What are some of the things God expects from you?
- ▶ What happens when you don’t do the things God expects from you?

## Ending Well

Samson began life with every advantage. An angel announced his birth (**Jdg 13:3**). His loving parents gave him a godly upbringing (**Jdg 13:12**). God gave him special abilities to fulfill a plan for his life (**Jdg 13:24**). In spite of this, Samson's choices made for a poor ending.

- ▶ Do you agree that the ending is more important than the beginning (**Ecc 7:8**)? Why or why not?
- ▶ What part do your daily choices play in how well your life ends?

## Small Group Conversation Guide

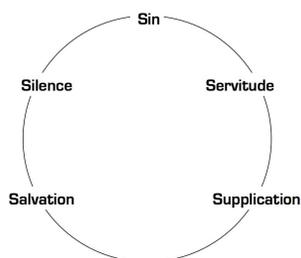
The children of Israel gave in to temptation (**Jdg 3:5-9**). God became angry and let them suffer the consequences of their sin. They cried out to God for relief.

- ▶ When you go against God's Word (sin), how does that affect you, your feelings, your relationship with God, and your relationship with family and friends (**Isa 57:20-21**, **2Tim 2:16**)?
- ▶ How quickly do you seek God's forgiveness and ask His help in getting back on the right path?

### The Cycle of Sin

After their deliverer died, Israel did evil again (**Jdg 3:11-12**). This was the beginning of another cycle of sin.

- ▶ In the diagram, notice what follows sin. In what ways does sin change your day to day life?
- ▶ According to the diagram, what does it take to break out of servitude?
- ▶ If you repent and cry out to God (supplication), what will be the source of your salvation?
- ▶ During the period of silence, what can you do to prolong the peace and joy of a godly walk and resist starting the cycle



of sin another time? Consider the following.

your companions	<b>1Cor 15:33</b>
examples you follow	<b>1Cor 11:1</b> , <b>3John 11</b>
your truth tellers	<b>Jas 5:19-20</b>
consequences of sin	<b>Gal 6:7-8</b>
the power of prayer	<b>Mat 6:13</b>
listening to the Spirit	<b>Rom 12:2</b>

### Unexpected Victory

It appeared that Sisera would have an easy victory. God intervened in an unexpected way, with rain (**Jdg 5:4**). A raindrop is a fragile thing; however, if God puts enough of them together, they can defeat an army.

- ▶ Have you ever played in thick mud? When you try to run in mud, what happens? What do you think happened to the horses and chariots when the rain came?
- ▶ In your experience with God so far, have you found that He always does things in the way you expect? If you have an example of God doing things in an unexpected way in your life, share it with your group.

## Sources of Failure

- Samson was **impulsive**. When he saw something he wanted, he gave in to his desires without thinking or listening to the advice of others [**Jdg 14:1-3**]. When you see something you want (whether good or bad), what do you usually do?
  - Immediately go after it
  - Think about how it could affect you and others
  - Seek advice from trusted friends, leaders
  - Pray about it and consider what God's Word says about it
- Samson liked to show off (**pride**) by tricking people with riddles. He based the riddle in **Judges 14:12-14** on actions he had taken that broke his Nazarite vows. He walked through vineyards and he touched a carcass, even eating honey from the carcass.
  - ▶ Do you like to show off to your friends? How can showing off get you into trouble [**Pro 16:18**]?
  - ▶ How do those around you react when they discover you have broken a promise?
  - ▶ How does your relationship with God suffer when you let pride control your actions?
- When Samson's companions were able to answer his riddle, he became angry. He knew they had cheated by forcing his wife to get the answer from him [**Jdg 14:18**]. Samson refused to see that he was to blame for giving them the riddle. He let his anger control him [**Jdg 14:19**].
  - ▶ When things don't go your way, are you quick to become angry?
  - ▶ When you let anger control you, how can it harm you and others [**Pro 25:28**, **Pro 29:22**, **Mat 5:22**]?

# Leadership Principles from Judges

## Who's in Charge

Imagine that a leader told you to gather an army for a battle. Facing 900 chariots as Barak did would be equivalent to your soldiers today facing 900 armored tanks (**Jdg 4:3**). How enthusiastic would you be to go on foot with a rifle to face an armored tank? What are the odds that you would overcome the tank?

When Deborah told Barak that God wanted him to fight the Canaanites, why do you think Barak said he would go only if Deborah went with him (**Jdg 4:6-10**)? Consider the following.

Deborah's role.	<b>Jdg 4:4-5</b>
Deborah's relationship with God.	<b>Jdg 4:6-7</b>

As Israel faced the Canaanites, who was in charge? When you face a challenge, who is in charge? Which of the following verses best answers the question for you?

- ▶ **1Chr 29:11-12**
- ▶ **Psa 47:7-8**
- ▶ **Psa 96:10**

## Giving Credit

When Deborah sang her song, she didn't focus only on her accomplishments. She was careful to give credit to those who deserved it. Who does she credit in the following verses?

	<b>Jdg 5:14-15</b>
	<b>Jdg 5:18</b>
	<b>Jdg 5:24-27</b>
	<b>Jdg 5:20-21</b>

- ▶ Do you sometimes fool yourself into thinking that you can accomplish things on your own?
- ▶ Are you careful to give credit to others for the part they play in successes you have?
- ▶ Who have you given credit recently?
- ▶ During the coming week, ask God to show you the top three things He expects from you. Pray that He gives you the strength to do them and the humility to see the role others play.

## Using Your Gifts

God gave Samson the gift of great physical strength. Instead of using it to rally his people and overcome the enemy, Samson used it for his own pleasure. During Samson's 20 years as judge, Israel had no rest from Philistine rule (**Jdg 15:20**).

What is the believer's source of strength?	<b>Eph 3:16</b>
How should we use our God-given strengths?	<b>Mat 26:42</b> <b>1Pet 4:11</b>
Why does God give us gifts?	<b>1Cor 14:12</b> <b>Eph 4:16</b> <b>1Pet 4:10</b>
When we do something well, who should we credit?	<b>1Cor 1:31</b>

## Application Challenge

During the coming week, pick one source of failure (impulsiveness, pride, anger, improper use of your gifts) that is a challenge for you. Pray every day that God show you how to overcome that source of failure. Show Him that you are serious about doing what He desires so that you can end well.

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## Something to Find in Each Chapter

As you read through the book, it may help to have something to find in each chapter.  
Try these:

01. What Israel's tribes failed to do in the Promised Land	02. How Israel was faithful to God while the deliverer lived
03. What Israel learned to do because their enemies lived	04. What Barak said he had to have to go to war
05. Why the angel cursed Meroz [location unknown today]	06. Why Gideon tore down the altar of Baal at night
07. Why God limited Gideon's forces to just 300 men	08. How Gideon responded when asked to be king
09. How Jotham's curse of the evil partners was fulfilled	10. What God told Israel regarding their cry for help
11. Why Jephthah did not return land to the Ammonites	12. How a Gileadite could tell if a man was from Ephraim
13. Why Manoah's wife was forbidden to drink wine	14. How the men learned the answer to Samson's riddle
15. What Samson did when his wife was given away	16. Why Samson told Delilah the secret of his strength
17. How Micah adopted his mother's faulty value system	18. What the tribe of Dan took by force from Micah
19. How these events were similar to Sodom in Genesis 19	20. How Israel defeated the Benjamites on the third day
21. How the last verse of Judges summarized the book	