

Judges
Leader Guide
(NASB and ESV)

DRIVING OUT
YOUR ENEMIES

Judges Leader Guide (NASB and ESV)

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USING LEADER GUIDES

Leader Guides are intended for you, the leader, to guide your Precept Upon Precept® and In & Out® discussions. They are designed to help you reason through the content of the lessons and to ensure you have understood what your group should have learned from their study. The guides offer effective plans for leading discussions.

The Holy Spirit is your guide as you prepare. He is the one who knows what your group needs to apply to their lives. Pray for them as they study and for yourself as you prepare to lead the discussion.

These guides can be used for either the NASB or the ESV edition of the courses. ESV words follow the NASB after a slash / or are set off with parentheses.

Leader Guides include the following:

- Lesson emphasis
- A logical order for the discussion
- Discussion questions
- Suggested visual aid(s)

Practical tips for using the Leader Guide:

- **Don't simply "do" the lesson.**
Stay with the lesson until you have a good understanding of it. This will give you a better grasp of how the Leader Guide takes you through the lesson.
- **You don't have to ask every question in the guide.**
Often one question will be covered while discussing another question so there is no reason to ask it. Your goal is not to ask every question, but to ask enough questions to make sure your group understood the lesson and to help them apply the truths to their lives.

Using the Leader Guide with In & Out

When your entire group uses In & Out

Compare an In & Out lesson with the Leader Guide. Use what relates to the In & Out lesson as a guide for the discussion. Don't teach what's not in In & Out lessons. Remember your goal in the discussion is for your group to discuss what they've learned, not for you to lecture on what you learned.

For groups studying both Precept Upon Precept and In & Out

Use the Leader Guides as designed for PUP, knowing that the In & Out assignments will be covered in the discussion. Make a note in the Leader Guide of what is not in the In & Out.

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JUDGES
LEADER GUIDE
Lesson 1

Lesson emphasis:

- Judges 1–2
- Judges 17–21

NOTE: If your group has been studying Genesis through Joshua, you can ask for a brief review of the main points in each book. This will help with identifying the historical setting for Judges.

HISTORICAL SETTING FOR JUDGES

What is the historical setting for Judges?

After Joshua died, and all the elders of his generation

When Israel became strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labor but didn't completely drive them out of their land.

Israel didn't know the Lord or the things He had done for them.

They served other gods and provoked the Lord to anger.

He gave them to their enemies.

When they were distressed, they cried to the Lord.

He raised up a judge to deliver / save them from their enemies.

When the judge died, they acted more corruptly than before.

This is the cycle or downward spiral of Judges.

There was no king in Israel, and every man did what was right in his own eyes.

Ask what they learned from the cross-references on Day Two.

Exodus 23:31-33 and Deuteronomy 7:1-2, 16, 22

The Lord promised to deliver the land's inhabitants into Israel's hands. But He also warned about making a covenant with the people of the land and serving their gods. It would be a snare to Israel. They were to destroy the other nations.

This snare is clearly seen in Judges.

Joshua 23:1-13

The Lord fulfilled His promise to fight for Israel and defeat the nations in Canaan, Israel's promised land. Joshua also gave the warning to Israel about allowing what was left of the nations to remain in their land.

If they didn't do their part in continuing to drive out the inhabitants, the Lord would stop driving them out.

The warnings were about associating / mixing with the nations, their gods, intermarriage with them. The result would be a snare and a trap, a whip on the sides and thorns in their eyes until Israel perished off the good land.

JUDGES 1

Tell your group to look at the map in the workbook Appendix as a visual aid for this discussion. Also, tell them to look at their At a Glance chart. Ask what they noted as the theme of this chapter on their At a Glance chart.

Probably something like:

When Israel was strong, they didn't drive out the Canaanites

How does this chapter begin? What are verses 1-7 about?

Israel inquired of the Lord as to which of the tribes should be the first to fight the remaining Canaanites in the land.

NOTE: The main cities or nations had been defeated by Joshua, but each tribe then needed to destroy those left within the area of their inheritance so that they would possess the land promised to them by the Lord.

The Lord said Judah was to be the first tribe to fight.

Judah asked the tribe of Simeon to come with them.

Then Judah was to help Simeon in their conquest.

They were successful because the Lord gave the Canaanites and Perizzites to them.

Adoni-bezek was repaid by God for what he had done to other kings he'd conquered.

Tell your group to also look at the chart in the lesson on Day One as a visual aid.

Verses 8-11

What are these verses about?

Judah went to fight at Jerusalem. They captured it and set it on fire.

After that they fought in the hill country, the Negev, and the lowland.

They took Hebron and then Debir.

Verses 12-20

Who and what are these verses about?

Caleb was one of the 12 spies in Numbers.

He and Joshua were the only two who, believing the Lord would give the land of promise to Israel, gave a good report. After Joshua died, he was the only one left alive of the first generation of Israel to come out of Egypt.

Caleb was of the tribe of Judah.

This tells of his participation in taking the land, Hebron being part of it, given to him and his descendants. He even gave his daughter land in the Negev and springs.

To become his son-in-law, Othniel took Debir, formerly Kiriath-sepher.

Who are verses 16-19 about? What happened?

The Kenites were in Judah's inheritance in the south of Arad. They lived with the people there. This seems to be a fulfillment of Numbers 10:29.

Judah went with Simeon to take Hormah, formerly Zephath.

Judah took Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron. The Lord was with Judah.

Judah couldn't drive out the inhabitants of the valley because of their iron chariots. With God's help they could have. Pharaoh's chariots were in the bottom of the Red Sea.

Verse 21

Which tribe is this about?

Benjamin

This tribe didn't drive out the Jebusites from Jerusalem, even after Judah had destroyed the city, according to verse 8. Therefore, these Jebusites lived with Israel.

This is a direct violation of what the Lord had told Israel. They were to utterly destroy the inhabitants of the land. Again, with God's help they could have.

The Jebusites, as well as others of the land, were idolaters who would lead Israel astray from the Lord their God.

Verses 22-29

Who are these verses about and where?

The house of Joseph; this would include both the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim

The Lord was with the house of Joseph as they went up against Bethel, formerly Luz. Bethel is in the area given to Ephraim to possess.

A man of the city made a deal with Ephraim to let him live if he helped them. After they conquered the city and renamed it, he moved to a different place, built a city, and named it Luz.

According to verse 26, the inhabitants of this part of the land were the Hittites.

Manasseh did not take possession of Beth-shean, Taanach, Dor, Ibleam, Megiddo, although they could have done so if they had been obedient to the Lord. He would have fought for them as He had done.

The Canaanites of these cities became forced labor for Israel.

If Manasseh was strong enough to make them forced labor, then they were strong enough to have utterly destroyed them.

Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites in Gezer.

Verses 30-36

Ask your group what these verses say about the tribes mentioned.

Zebulun, verse 30

The repeated statement “did not drive out” becomes more frequent in going through this list of the tribes.

Zebulun left the inhabitants of Kitron or Nahalol and made forced labor of them. The Canaanites lived among Manasseh, Ephraim, and Zebulun.

Asher, verses 31-32

Did not drive out inhabitants of Acco, Sidon, Ahlab, Achzib, Helbah, Aphik, and Rehob

Naphtali, verse 33

Did not drive out inhabitants of Beth-shemesh and Beth-anath—forced labor
Asher and Naphtali lived among the Canaanites.

Dan, verse 34

The Amorites forced / pressed Dan into the hill country of their inheritance.
Dan was forced to live in a very small area.

NOTE: This explains why Danites looked for another place as their inheritance in Judges 17.

Someone might notice the progression from the Canaanites living with Israel, then Canaanites living among Israel, then Israel living among the Canaanites, to Israel being forced / pressed out by the Canaanites.

Verses 35-36

The Amorites also persisted in Mount Heres, Aijalon, and Shaalbim until the house of Joseph, probably a reference to the tribe of Ephraim, grew strong to make them forced labor.

NOTE: The Amorite border described in verse 36 might have been closer to the Dead Sea.

The tribes did not obey the Lord’s command to utterly destroy the nations of the land.

JUDGES 2

Ask what your group noted on their At a Glance chart as the theme of this chapter.

Maybe something like:

Israel did evil; God’s anger—did not drive out

You might also ask what they observed about the chronology of Judges.

Joshua was alive in chapter 2, but had died in chapter 1.

These first two chapters are not in chronological order.

Verses 1-5

Where did these verses take place? What happened?

The angel of the Lord spoke to Israel when He came up from Gilgal to Bochim. Gilgal was the place where Joshua had set up camp when taking the land of Canaan.

At Bochim, Israel was confronted by the angel of the Lord because they had not obeyed the Lord. He had commanded that they make no covenant with the people of the land and that they tear down their altars.

Because of their disobedience, the Lord said He would not drive out the inhabitants and that they would become thorns in Israel’s sides and their gods would be a snare.

The place was named Bochim, “weepers,”¹ because Israel wept when the Lord told them He would no longer drive out their enemies.

NOTE: No one is sure where Bochim was.

Verses 6-10

What are these verses about?

These verses go back in time from the events of Judges. This gives some history up to the time of Judges, and how Israel got into the mess they were in.

¹*New American Standard Bible: 1995 update*, marginal note (Judges 2:5) (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

As long as Joshua was alive, Israel followed him in serving the Lord. They even followed the elders who were alive after Joshua. But when they died, no one was alive who remembered what the Lord had done for Israel.

After Joshua died, at 110 years old, and all that generation, another generation rose up who did not know the Lord or what He had done.

Give time for your group to discuss any relevant application up to this point.

Verses 11-23

What are these verses about?

Verses 11-19 tell the downward spiral which describes the whole time of Judges.

Israel did evil, forsook the Lord, followed other gods.

All of this provoked the Lord to anger.

Twice the text says that the Lord's anger burned against His people, verses 14 and 20.

Because of their disobedience and turning away from Him, the Lord gave Israel into the hands of enemies who plundered them. His mighty hand, which had been for them, turned against them. His people, who were to be holy before Him, were severely / terribly distressed because of worshiping other gods.

All of that happened because of what Judges 1 repeats, they did not drive out all of the inhabitants of the land. They did not listen to His voice, verse 20. They transgressed His covenant.

The tribes of Israel might not have thought of the serious consequences when they made forced laborers of the Canaanites instead of utterly destroying them, but their disobedience was very serious in the eyes of God because it led them to turn away from Him.

Verses 21-23 say the Lord left some nations to test Israel because of their disobedience.

JUDGES 17–21

Ask your group what they learned from these chapters. Tell them to look at the list they completed on Day Five as a visual aid for this part of their discussion.

Judges 17:6; 18:1; 19:1 and 21:25 repeat some part of, “In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes.”

NOTE: The events in this part of Judges took place at the beginning of the time of the judges. Dan named one place Mahaneh-dan in Judges 18:12. That name is in Judges 13:25. The high priest Phinehas, Judges 20:27-28, was the son of Eleazar and grandson of Aaron. Phinehas was born before Israel left Egypt, Exodus 6:25. But if no one in your group brings this up, they'll study it later and you can leave discussion of this until later.

Judges 17–18 detail the events of the tribe of Dan looking for an inheritance.

They had already been given one, Judges 1:34, but did not succeed in possessing it. Therefore, they migrated north.

The priest of these chapters did what was right in his own eyes, as did the tribe of Dan.

Judges 19–21 are some of the most distressing chapters in the Bible.

Israel almost eradicated the tribe of Benjamin in a civil war; then they came up with a solution that was right in their own eyes.

The sins in these chapters are idolatry, sexual sins, murder, and deception.

NOTE: Some in your group might mention Phinehas, Judges 20:28, the priest at that time. This puts the time of these chapters closer to the beginning of the 340-360 years Judges period. Phinehas was Eleazar's son and Aaron's grandson. He was the priest at the end of Joshua; Joshua 22:30-34.

If no one mentions this, it will be studied in a later lesson and can be discussed then.

Ask your group if they think Judges relates to modern times.

Encourage them to continue their study of this course to learn more about how the Lord deals with people who turn away from Him.

JUDGES
LEADER GUIDE
Lesson 2

Lesson emphasis:

- Judges 3
- Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar

REVIEW

To begin this discussion, tell your group to look at their At a Glance chart and the map in the Appendix. Ask what they remember from Judges 1–2.

The events of Judges were after Joshua and Israel conquered the land of Canaan.

According to Judges 1, the tribes of Israel did not continue to drive out the enemies from their land. The different tribes allowed some of the Canaanites to live in the land, and therefore, Israel disobeyed the Lord.

Judges 2 told how Israel forsook the Lord after Joshua and the elders died. They turned to the gods of the Canaanites, whom they had left in the land. That was a generation who did not listen to the Lord, as were the generations who followed.

When Israel grew strong, they did not drive out the enemies of the land but put them to forced labor.

The Lord knew the Canaanites would lead Israel astray to other gods, which is one of the reasons He commanded Israel to completely destroy all of the Canaanites. He also intended to use Israel as His arm to judge the wicked nations of Canaan and the Amorites.

It also says the Lord left nations in Canaan to test Israel.

During that time, every man did what was right in his own eyes.
It was before the time when kings ruled Israel.

Ask about the cycle in Judges. Tell them to look at their diagram or list on Day Two. There is a diagram at the end of this lesson which you can also use as a visual aid.

Israel did evil, forsook the Lord, served other gods.

The Lord's anger burned against them, and He gave Israel to their enemies.

When distressed by their enemies, Israel cried to the Lord.
He raised up a judge to deliver them.

After the judge died, Israel again did evil and the cycle started again.

That was the way Israel lived for over 300 years.

JUDGES 3

Ask what your class noted on their At a Glance charts as a possible theme for this chapter.

3 judges—Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar

Verses 1-6

How does this chapter begin? How does it connect with the end of chapter 2?

Judges 2:21–3:4 states a reason the Lord left some of the nations after Joshua; it was to test the next generations of Israel to see if they would obey Him.

A second reason the Lord left those nations was to teach war to those generations of Israel coming after the conquest of the land under Joshua's leadership.

The nations left were
the five lords of the Philistines
the Canaanites
the Sidonians
and the Hivites

You might ask your group if they think the Lord tests believers now, and if so how.

What were the results of those nations in the land, as stated in verses 4-6?

Israel lived among the Canaanites.

Israel took the Canaanites' daughters as wives for their sons.

Israel gave their daughters to the sons of the nations.

Israel served the gods of the Canaanites.

Verses 7-11, Othniel

Ask your group what they learned about the first enemy and judge. Discuss the cross-references in Judges 1 and Joshua 15, also. Tell them to look at the chart on the judges as well as the map.

Cushan-rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia, made Israel serve him for 8 years.

Israel cried to the Lord, and He raised up a deliverer for them.
Othniel was Caleb's nephew and became his son-in-law.

Caleb was one of only two men who had come out of Egypt, lived in the wilderness 40 years, and entered the land of promise. He fully followed the Lord and was zealous to take the land.

In order to marry Achsah, Caleb's daughter, Othniel had to conquer Kiriath-sepher which was in Judah's inheritance.

Caleb then gave his daughter to Othniel.

Verse 10 says the Spirit of the Lord came upon (ESV—was upon) Othniel.

He was a warrior who delivered Israel from the king of Mesopotamia.

As a result of this first judge, the land of Israel had rest 40 years.

Othniel was alive for those 40 years, then died. Compare this with Judges 2:18, the Lord was with the judge and delivered Israel all the days of the judge.

So for 8 years Israel suffered because of their evil ways; then the Lord sent a deliverer and the land had rest for 40 years.

How do the events of these verses compare with the cycle in Judges 2?

This follows the cycle.

Verses 12-30, Ehud

Ask about the second enemy and judge.

Israel again did evil.

The Lord strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel.

Ammon and Amalek also took part in defeating Israel.

The Lord used the ungodly nations around Israel to correct them.

Moab was not part of the land of Canaan. It was outside the borders of Israel's inheritance, not part of the nations Israel had been instructed to destroy. But it was an ungodly, idol-worshiping nation.

Israel served Eglon of Moab for 18 years, ten years longer than they had served Mesopotamia.

Israel cried to the Lord.

The Lord raised up a deliverer, Ehud of the tribe of Benjamin, who was left-handed.

Ehud made a two-edged sword and hid it by binding it on his right thigh under his cloak / clothes. When he took the tribute from Israel to the king of Moab, he could cleverly reach his sword with his left hand without suspicion. Most likely he presented the tribute with his right hand, as would be expected by Eglon.

He assured that the two of them would be alone by saying that he had a secret message for him. His cleverness can also be seen in how he escaped after killing the king.

After returning from his mission, he led Israel in the defeat of Moab, 10,000 valiant and robust Moabite men.

What does verse 30 say about the land? Does this relate to Ehud? Compare this with Judges 2:18.

The land was undisturbed for 80 years. Ehud probably lived for the whole 80 years.

How do these events compare with the cycle of sin?

The same cycle

Verse 31, Shamgar

Who came after Ehud?

Shamgar

The enemy was the Philistines, the people who lived with Israel in Canaan. They should have been completely destroyed by Israel, but were not.

Not much information is given about Shamgar, but he killed 600 Philistines with only an oxgoad for a weapon.

Some do not think Shamgar was a judge, but what does the text say?

The text says he “saved” Israel.

Note: The Hebrew word for “saved” is the same word translated as “delivered.” The judges delivered Israel.

The only other mention of him is in Judges 5:6 which seems to indicate that he might have been a contemporary of Deborah. He could have been busy with the Philistines on the western part of the land as she was judging at another location.

Did these three judges seem to be regular people who were raised up and used by the Lord? If so, how does that relate to most believers now? Compare this with 1 Corinthians 1:26–2:5.

To end this discussion, ask what your group learned about believers living in a cycle of sin. Is it possible or not?

Matthew 1:21 and John 8:34-36

The Son, Jesus Christ, sets free from slavery to sin those who believe in Him as Lord and Savior. He saves from sin, not only from its penalty of death.

Romans 6

Believers who have died to sin cannot still live in it. Believers are raised to walk in newness of life. When believers sin, it is a choice. It's not a result of slavery, bondage, or not being able to prevent it.

Sin is not master over Christians. Before salvation believers were slaves to sin, but at salvation they became obedient, slaves of righteousness.

It is not possible for believers to continue to live in sin.

1 John 5:2-5

Faith, belief in Jesus Christ overcomes the world. The faith believers have is the victory which has overcome the world. Keeping the Lord's commandments is not burdensome; it shows love for Him.

That was not true for Israel in the Old Testament because they were under the old covenant of the Law, not part of the new covenant of grace, salvation.

Hebrews 12:1-4

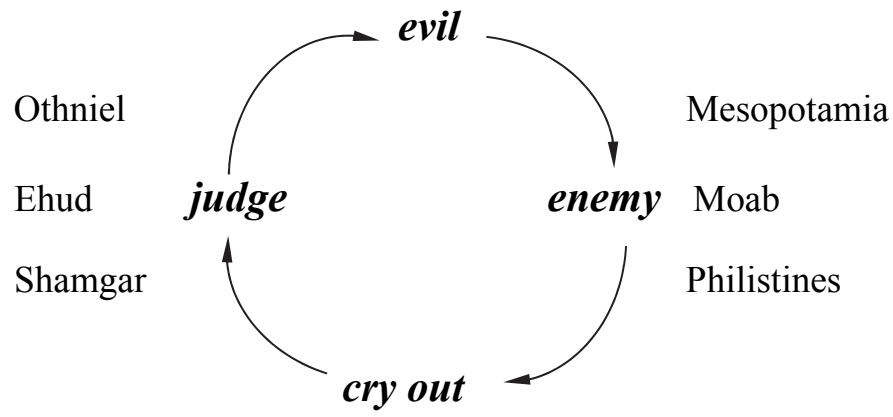
Believers are to run with endurance the race set before them. Don't become entangled in sin. (ESV says, "sin which clings so closely.")

Exodus 34:11-16

If Israel had obeyed the Lord, not making covenants with the people of the land, they would not have become so entangled with the sins around them, sins which clung to them.

Their enemies became snares in their midst.

Give time for your group to discuss application.



JUDGES
LEADER GUIDE
Lesson 3

Lesson emphasis:

- Judges 4–5

REVIEW

To begin this discussion, tell your group to look at their At a Glance chart and ask what they remember about Judges 1–3.

Judges 1	Israel did not drive out the Canaanites
Judges 2	Israel did evil; God’s anger—did not drive out
Judges 3	Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar

JUDGES 4

Ask what they put on their At a Glance chart as a possible theme for this chapter.

Maybe something like:

Deborah and Barak defeated Jabin, Canaanites; Jael killed Sisera

Verses 1-3

How does this chapter begin?

Judges 4 was after Ehud died.

According to Judges 3:30 the land was undisturbed for 80 years.

But when Ehud died, Israel again did evil. God raised up an enemy who oppressed Israel for 20 years. Relate this to Judges 2:11-13; 3:7 and 12.

The enemy in this chapter was one within the land, the Canaanites. They would not have oppressed Israel for 20 years if Israel had obeyed the Lord and destroyed them.

Jabin, king of Canaan, reigned in Hazor and severely / cruelly oppressed Israel for 20 years.

Sisera, commander of his army, lived in Harosheth-hagoyim.

His army had 900 iron chariots; compare this with Judges 1:19.

Tell your group to look at their map in the lesson, “The Main Characters of Judges 4–5” chart, and “The Judges of Israel” chart as visual aids for this discussion.

Verse 3 says Israel cried to the Lord, part of the cycle studied in the last lesson.

Review the cycle and relate it to Judges 4:

Israel did evil
The Lord sold Israel to an enemy
Israel cried to the Lord
The Lord raised up a judge

In Judges 4 the judge happened to be a woman, which was very unusual.
There had not been a woman who led Israel up to this point in their history.

Verses 4-10

Who and what are these verses about?

Deborah was a prophetess who judged Israel at that time.
She lived between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim.

Deborah spoke from the Lord, and the people of Israel would go to her for judgment.

She called Barak from Kedesh-naphtali and told him what the Lord said for him to do.
He was to take 10,000 men and go to Mount Tabor; the Lord would draw out Sisera and give him into Barak's hand.

The 10,000 men were to be from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun.
They were to go to the river Kishon.

Barak said he would not go without Deborah, so she told him the honor which could have been his would go to a woman.

They gathered the men at Kedesh-naphtali, and then went to Mount Tabor.

Who is verse 11 about? Why is this information at this point in this text?

Heber the Kenite had separated from the other Kenites and lived at Zaanannim near Kedesh.

This was near where the battle was. Verses 17-22 tell what happened there.

Verses 12-16

What happened in the battle?

Sisera, with men and chariots, came from Harosheth-hagoyim and met Barak in battle at the river Kishon.

All of the Canaanites fell to Israel, as the Lord said they would.
Not even one / a man was left.

Verses 17-22

Who are these verses about?

Sisera fled from the battle on foot to Heber's tent.
There was peace between Heber the Kenite, verse 11, and Jabin.

Jael, Heber's wife, went out to meet Sisera, and suggested that he hide in her tent.
She then killed him by driving the tent peg through his temple.
She is the woman who got the honor for killing Israel's enemy.

Verses 23-24

What happened to Jabin the king of Canaan?

God subdued him that day.
Israel pressed him heavier and heavier (ESV—harder and harder) until he was destroyed.

JUDGES 5

Ask what your group noted as the theme of this chapter on their At a Glance chart.

Deborah's and Barak's song

How does Judges 5 relate to Judges 4?

There are details of the times and the battle in the song of Judges 5, which are not in Judges 4.

Verses 1-5

What are the details in these verses?

Deborah and Barak sang a song of praise after the battle which the Lord had led and fought to deliver Israel from the Canaanites. They blessed Him.

The leaders led and the people volunteered / offered themselves willingly.

Barak was reluctant in Judges 4:8.

Compare this with Hebrews 11:32-34.
By faith he conquered Israel's enemy...from weakness he was made strong.

The people volunteered / offered themselves willingly.

According to verses 3-5 the Lord, the God of Israel was given credit for the victory.
He was remembered for His appearance at Sinai and for His miraculous ways.
He is the one who brings earthquakes, clouds, and rain.

Verses 6-22

What were the times like in Israel just before the battle against the Canaanites?

Verse 6 says the days of Shamgar were the same as the days of Jael.

There was so much fear of highway travel that people had to find roundabout ways to get from one place to another.

There was no village life, peasantry, left because of no protection out in the open country.

New gods had been chosen by Israel, and then there was war and oppression.

No weapon was found even among 40,000 in Israel.

Fear and their enemy enslaved them.

But from verses 9-11 there is rejoicing because the commanders volunteered / offered themselves willingly among Israel. Both rich and poor were called to sing the victor's song.

Verse 12 is about the leaders, Deborah and Barak.

Then 14-18 tell of those tribes who went to war and those who did not.

Judges 4 says Zebulun and Naphtali participated in the battle.

In Judges 5 others are listed as following Barak into battle.

Ephraim

Benjamin

Machir

NOTE: Machir was the oldest son of Manasseh and the father of Gilead. This probably is a reference to Manasseh on the west of the Jordan.

Issachar

Those who did not come to help were:

Reuben

Although there was great searching of heart, perhaps considering whether to fight in the battle or not.

“Gilead remained across [ESV—stayed beyond] the Jordan” is probably a reference to the other 1½ tribes on the east of the Jordan, Gad and ½ of Manasseh.

NOTE: Although Gilead was the son of Manasseh, the tribe of Gad inherited most of the land called Gilead on the east of the Jordan River.

Dan

Asher

NOTE: Meroz most likely is a reference to a city about 7 miles south of Kedesh who, though in the middle of the battle area, did not fight.

This city was cursed for not helping the Lord against His enemy.

Verses 19-23

What are the details of the battle?

The place of fighting included Taanach near Megiddo. The waters of Megiddo are mentioned. Relate this reference to the Canaanites's 900 iron chariots. Iron chariots don't do well in water or mud.

The stars fought from heaven against Sisera, and the torrent of the Kishon River swept away the enemy.

It appears that the Lord sent a downpour from heaven, which overflowed the Kishon River and washed away the Canaanites. Their iron chariots were a hindrance rather than the advantage they normally were.

The battle was fought by the Lord Himself.
The Lord used the heavens and earth to help fight the battle.

Verses 24-27

Who are these verses about?

A woman living in a tent killed the commander of the Canaanite army.

Jael was married to Heber the Kenite who had separated from the Kenites who lived among Israel. There was peace between Jabin and Heber. Compare this with Judges 4:11.

Evidently Sisera knew of the peace between Heber and King Jabin, which might have caused him to trust in refuge from Heber's wife.

The Lord used Jael in a mighty way to deliver His people.

She knew what to do, and she did it.

She knew who the enemy was and destroyed him completely.

Fear did not control her, even when she was face-to-face with the commander of an army of 900 iron chariots and a multitude of men.

Give your group time to discuss relevant application.

Verses 28-31

What are these verses about?

Sisera's mother was wondering why it was taking so long for him to return. She repeated her questions about his delay. She seemed to be pondering the spoils of his victory.

Verse 31 closes the song with a request for all the Lord's enemies to perish like Sisera. They are contrasted with those who love the Lord, like Deborah.

The land was undisturbed for 40 years.
This might refer to how long Deborah judged Israel.

Ask what they learned about women in the Scriptures they studied.

Exodus 15:20-21

Miriam, Aaron and Moses' sister, was another prophetess. She sang and danced before the Lord and led the women in worship for His deliverance of them from the army of Egypt. He had just drowned the Egyptian army, which had chariots, in the Red Sea, a similar event to what took place in Judges 4–5.

2 Kings 22:8-20 and 2 Chronicles 34:22-28

Huldah was a prophetess consulted by the king of Judah, Josiah.
It seems that she was the one who spoke for the Lord in Jerusalem at that time.

Isaiah 8:3

Isaiah was married to a prophetess.

Luke 2:36-38

Anna was a prophetess who served in the temple at the time of Jesus' birth. She served night and day with fastings and prayers. When Jesus was brought into the temple she began to give thanks to God and told of Jesus to all who were looking for the redemption of Israel. In other words, she knew that He was the Messiah.

Acts 21:8-9

Philip the evangelist had four daughters who were prophetesses.

To end your discussion, ask your group what they learned about the Lord or what they learned from either Deborah's or Barak's example.

JUDGES
LEADER GUIDE
Lesson 4

Lesson emphasis:

- Judges 6–8
- Gideon

REVIEW

Tell your group to look at their At a Glance charts, and ask what Judges 1–5 is about.

Judges 1

The tribes of Israel did not obey the Lord in completely driving out the enemies in Canaan.

Judges 2

Israel was in a cycle of evil, enemies, crying to the Lord, His raising up a judge.

Judges 3

Mesopotamia oppressed Israel 8 years until Othniel delivered Israel.

The land had rest for 40 years, presumably as long as Othniel was the judge, 2:18-19.

Israel served Eglon, the king of Moab, for 18 years until Ehud delivered them.

The land was then undisturbed for 80 years.

After Ehud came Shamgar, who delivered Israel from the Philistines.

Judges 4

Israel was severely oppressed by Jabin king of Canaan for 20 years. The Lord raised up Deborah and Barak to deliver Israel.

Judges 5

Deborah and Barak sang praise to the Lord because of the battle. The land was undisturbed for 40 years.

JUDGES 6

Ask what they noted on their At a Glance chart as the theme of this chapter.

Midianites prevailed / overpowered Israel; Lord appeared to Gideon, valiant warrior, fleece

Verses 1-10

How does this chapter begin?

God gave Israel to Midian for 7 years.

Tell your group to look at the map in the lesson as a visual aid.

Verses 2-6 tell of the devastation in Israel because of Midian. The Amalekites and the sons of the east were with the Midianites. They were numerous like locusts, destroying Israel's produce and their animals.

The people of Israel hid; they were brought very low.

Verses 7-10 say that Israel cried to the Lord at that time, and He sent a prophet. That was not unusual; Deborah was a prophetess who spoke for the Lord during the time of the judges.

The prophet reminded Israel they were not to fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land they lived. He reminded them that there was no other god who could protect a people.

He reminded Israel that they had not obeyed the Lord.

Ask what your group learned from the cross-references about idolatry.

Exodus 20:1-6

This is part of The Ten Commandments, what God Himself spoke to the people of Israel at Mount Sinai. God was specific about other gods, images, etc. and not serving them.

Leviticus 26:1-18

Verse 1 is very specific about idolatry. God told Israel what He would do for them if they obeyed His commands. He also told them what would happen if they didn't obey.

During the time of Judges, they weren't obeying what He had said.

Israel could have had plenty in produce and security and peace in their land if they had obeyed the Lord their God.

Exodus 34:12-17

This is another warning to Israel about the inhabitants of the land becoming a snare to them. The Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God. He repeated His commands about no other gods.

Isaiah 44:6-20

Idols are described and those who make them.

They are futile and of no profit.

The ones who make idols are men, not gods.

The complete futility of idol worship can be seen in this passage.

In verses 6-8 the Lord reminded Israel of who He is.

King of Israel

Redeemer

Lord of hosts

The first and the last

He established / appointed the ancient nation / people—Israel.

He tells what will take place in the future.

The Rock

Tell your group to look at the chart in the lesson about Romans 1:18-32.

Ask what they learned and how it all relates to their lives.

What does Colossians 3:5 say about idolatry?

Greed is idolatry.

Give time for your group to discuss application of this fact.

Lead your discussion back to Judges 6:11-24. Ask what these verses are about.

Gideon was the son of Joash from the tribe of Manasseh, and he was in Ophrah. He was hiding in a winepress to save the wheat he was beating from the Midianites. The Lord called him to be His valiant warrior.

Gideon was the youngest of the least family in Manasseh. God chose a man who appeared to be the least likely valiant warrior. He told Gideon that he was to deliver Israel from the hand of Midian. The Lord assured Gideon that He would be with him to defeat Midian.

Gideon asked for a sign that it was the Lord who spoke with him. After the Lord consumed the sacrifice and vanished, Gideon knew that he had seen the angel of the Lord face to face and was fearful of dying.

The Lord spoke to him peaceful words in verse 23, and Gideon named the altar he built “The Lord is Peace.” Today that name of the Lord, Jehovah-shalom, is used in songs and teachings. The context in which it is found is reassuring: a man hiding because of fear, having just been commissioned by the Lord to defeat an enemy, and then fearful of dying because he had just seen the angel of the Lord face to face.

Give your group time to discuss application at any point during this discussion.

Verses 25-32

What did the Lord tell Gideon to do?

The Lord told Gideon to tear down his father’s altar and Asherah and build an altar to God. Although he did so at night, still showing some fear, he obeyed the Lord.

Gideon was part of a family of Israel, and his family was involved in idol worship. Gideon's father showed some wisdom in how he reasoned with the men of the city who were upset with what Gideon did. If Baal is a god, let him contend for himself.

Gideon was then given the name "Jerubbaal," which means, "Let Baal contend against him."

Verses 33-40

What happened next?

The Midianites, Amalekites, and the sons of the east assembled in the valley of Jezreel. It is also sometimes called the valley of Megiddo. It's where Barak fought Sisera.

The Spirit of the Lord came upon / clothed Gideon. He called together the Abiezrites and sent messengers to Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali to meet for battle.

Then in verses 36-40, Gideon asked the Lord for more reassurance that he was called to deliver Israel from the Midianites. "Gideon's fleece" was the test by which the Lord reassured Gideon that he was the one to deliver Israel.

This is an event which happened in history, and it shows the long-suffering and compassion of the Lord to one to whom He had already appeared and spoken very clearly.

This event is not to be taken further. "Putting out a fleece" is not the way for New Testament believers to know the will of the Lord for their lives. The way to know His will is to know the Lord and His Word and to follow the leading of His indwelling Spirit.

JUDGES 7

What is a possible theme for this chapter?

Gideon defeated the Midianites with 300 men, trumpets, and pitchers

Verses 1-8

How do the events continue from chapter 6?

The Lord wanted Israel to know for certain that their deliverance from Midian was not of their own doing. So He told Gideon to decrease the number of men from 32,000 to only 300. They were at the spring of Harod, south of the Midianites.

First those who were afraid and trembling returned home. Fear can be infectious.

Then those who lapped water instead of kneeling to drink were chosen to fight.

Verses 9-23

What are these verses about?

Again Gideon needed reassurance from the Lord before the battle. He got it from an unlikely source. Gideon had the faith and strength to go to the Midianite camp, and he heard a man interpret his friend's dream, saying that the Lord had given Midian into Gideon's hand.

Israel didn't even have to fight in the battle.

Relate this to the ways the other judges had delivered Israel up to this point in the book.

Othniel was a warrior.

Ehud was clever and single-handedly killed Eglon.

Shamgar used an oxgoad to kill 600 Philistines.

The heavens and earth fought Sisera, who was killed by a woman.

The Lord indeed was the one who delivered His people, but He did it by raising up judges as the deliverers.

The army fled to Beth-shittah as far as Abel-meholah, and Israel pursued.

Verses 24-25

How does this chapter end?

The leaders / princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb, were killed by the men of Ephraim whom Gideon summoned to help when Midian fled.

JUDGES 8

Ask what your group noted as the theme of this chapter on their At a Glance chart.

Gideon, Zebah and Zalmunna; the ephod

Verses 1-3

How does this chapter begin?

Ephraim questioned why they weren't called for battle and accused Gideon. But he was diplomatic in his answer to them. They had taken the leaders of Midian.

Give time for your group to discuss application of this situation.

Verses 4-21

What happened?

The men of Succoth and Peniel refused to help Gideon as he pursued the two kings.

After capturing Zebah and Zalmunna, Gideon returned to Succoth and Penuel and disciplined the men for not helping.

Gideon then killed the kings of Midian.

Verses 22-35

What did Gideon say and believe about the Lord?

When asked if he would rule over Israel, Gideon's reply was that neither he nor his son would rule Israel, the Lord would rule.

Because that was Gideon's response and belief, then it seems unlikely that he deliberately led Israel into idolatry by making the ephod.

Gideon took from the spoils and made an ephod.

After Gideon died, the people turned to idolatry with the Baals, but they played the harlot with the ephod even before his death, and it became a snare to him and his household / family. He had many wives and 70 sons, as well as Abimelech, the son of a concubine.

Verse 28 states that the land was undisturbed for 40 years during Gideon's days.

What does Hebrews 11:32-34 say about Gideon?

Gideon pleased God by his faith. From weakness was made strong and put foreign armies to flight.

End this discussion by asking how all of this relates to the lives of the people in your group.

JUDGES
LEADER GUIDE
Lesson 5

Lesson emphasis:

- Judges 9–12
- Abimelech, Jotham, and Jephthah

REVIEW

Tell your group to look at their At a Glance chart, the map in the lesson and the chart about the judges as visual aids for this discussion. Ask what they remember about Judges 1–8.

During the times of the judges, every man did what was right in his own eyes.

From Judges 3 through 8 there were 5 enemies raised up by the Lord to punish His people Israel, and there were 5 judges raised up by Him to deliver His people.

Othniel delivered Israel from Mesopotamia.

Ehud delivered from Moab.

Shamgar delivered from the Philistines.

Deborah delivered Israel from the Canaanites.

Gideon, Jerubbaal, delivered Israel from the Midianites.

Relate this to Judges 2:11–3:6, the cycle of this time.

Israel had not driven their enemies out of their land, and those enemies had become snares to Israel by enticing them to follow their gods, which were really not gods at all.

JUDGES 9

Ask what your group noted as the theme of this chapter on their At a Glance chart.

Gideon's son Abimelech—king in Shechem 3 years

Verses 1-6

How does this chapter relate to Judges 8? Who and what are these verses about?

Abimelech was Gideon's son by a concubine who lived in Shechem, 8:31.

Gideon also had 70 sons by his wives, and Jotham was the youngest of those sons.

According to Judges 8:35 not only did Israel not remember the Lord who had delivered them from their enemies, they also did not show kindness / steadfast love to Gideon's family.

Abimelech wanted to rule over the leaders of Shechem. He appealed to the fact that he was a relative to them, and it was better to have one ruling rather than seventy.

Gideon had made a statement that neither he nor his son should rule over Israel, but the Lord should rule, Judges 8:23.

The Lord Himself was to be the king of Israel. Israel was to be a theocracy.

Seventy pieces of silver were given to Abimelech by the men of Shechem from the house of Baal-berith, Judges 8:33, and he used them to hire worthless fellows to follow him.

Abimelech murdered all 70 of his brothers in Ophrah, except Jotham the youngest escaped. Abimelech's only reason for doing this was that he wanted to be the ruler.

He was made the king in Shechem, but it was not the Lord's doing, and Abimelech was not a judge raised up by the Lord. He seized the leadership and became king.

At any point in this discussion, give your group time to discuss relevant application.

Ask what they learned from the cross-references and word studies.

judge—"to judge, govern...to act as law-giver"¹

king—"to be or become king or queen, reign"²

1 Samuel 8:4-22 and 10:17-19

Later when Israel asked Samuel, the last judge raised up by the Lord, to appoint a king for them, God said they had rejected Him from being king. They wanted a king in order to be like all the nations around them.

Lead the discussion back to Judges 9:7-22. Tell your group to look at the chart in the lesson on Day Two. Who and what are these verses about?

Jotham stood on the top of Mount Gerizim, the mountain of the blessings when Israel entered the promised land.

Jotham presented a sort of parable for the men of Shechem to judge their motives. Tell your group to look at their chart in the lesson.

The olive tree, the fig tree, and the vine all had something better to do than wave / sway over the trees. They all had a good purpose which they were fulfilling. The bramble, which was good for nothing, accepted the rule over the trees.

¹James Strong, *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2001), H8199.

²James Strong, *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2001). H4427.

It was about Abimelech. Jotham also gave a curse of what would happen to Abimelech and the men of Shechem.

Jotham wanted the men of Shechem to consider if they had dealt in truth / good faith and integrity in making Abimelech king.

Jotham fled to Beer and remained there for probably the whole 3 years when Abimelech ruled over Israel, not just Shechem.

Verses 22-55

How does the rest of the chapter relate to Jotham's curse?

Verses 23-24 state that what happened in the rest of the chapter was to lay the blood of Jotham's brothers on Abimelech and the men of Shechem.

The Lord sent evil dealings of treachery between Abimelech and the men of Shechem. Mistrust came between them so that the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech.

Abimelech was told of how they ambushed and robbed those who were on the road. They also found someone else to put their trust in, Gaal the son of Ebed, verses 26-41.

At a festival of their god, they cursed Abimelech. Gaal encouraged them to stop serving Abimelech and let him rule over them.

It was reported to Abimelech, and he set an ambush for Gaal and the men of Shechem. He captured the city and killed the people, razed the city and sowed it with salt so that the ground would be unfit for anything in the future.

Abimelech also killed those who had gathered in the tower of Shechem, about a thousand men and women. But Abimelech's skull was crushed in Thebez by a woman throwing a millstone on his head; then his armor bearer finished killing him with his sword.

Verses 56-57 state that the wickedness he had done was repaid to him. The curse of Jotham happened to Abimelech and the men of Shechem for what they had done to his brothers.

There was no king in Israel, and every man did what was right in his own eyes.

JUDGES 10

What is a possible theme for this chapter?

Judges—Tola and Jair; Philistines 18 years, Israel cried to Lord

Who are verses 1-5 about?

The next two judges

After Abimelech died, Tola of Issachar arose to save Israel. He judged Israel 23 years.

After Tola, Jair the Gileadite judged Israel for 22 years.

Verses 6-9

What happened after he died?

Israel again did evil. They forsook the Lord and served the Baals, the Ashtaroath, and the gods of Aram, Sidon, Moab, the sons of Ammon, and the Philistines.

Again the Lord's anger burned against Israel and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and the sons of Ammon. For 18 years Ammon greatly distressed Israel, not just Gilead on the east side of the Jordan.

Verses 10-16

How are these verses different from other times when Israel cried to the Lord?

The Lord reminded Israel of the enemies from whom He had delivered them in years past. Even though Israel admitted their sin, the Lord told them to seek deliverance from the other gods they had chosen. He pointed out the cycle in which Israel had lived for about 300 years at that time.

He had delivered Israel from the Egyptians, the Amorites, the Ammonites, the Philistines, Sidonians, Amalekites, and Maonites, which might refer to Midian.

When Israel told the Lord to do whatever seemed good to Him, and when they put away the foreign gods and served the Lord, then He could bear their misery no longer. His long-suffering, mercy, and compassion are great.

Verses 17-18

How does this chapter end?

Ammon gathered in Gilead, and Israel gathered in Mizpah.

Judges 11:29 says Mizpah of Gilead.

But Israel had a problem in that they had no leader for the fight against Ammon.

JUDGES 11

Ask what your group put on their At a Glance chart as a theme for this chapter.

Jephthah defeated Ammon

Verses 1-3

What is the flow of thought from chapter 10? What are these verses about?

This chapter begins by introducing the valiant warrior for whom the men of Gilead were looking to lead them into battle against Ammon.

Compare this with how the description of Gideon began. The Lord called him a valiant warrior, but it wasn't until later that he actually became that.

Jephthah was the son of a harlot / prostitute and his brothers, sons of Gilead's wife, drove him away, and denied any inheritance to him.

Compare this with Abimelech who was a concubine's son.

Worthless men gathered about both Abimelech and Jephthah.

Verses 4-11

What happened in these verses?

When Jephthah consented to fight Ammon, he made an agreement with the men of Gilead. If the Lord gave Ammon into his hand, then he would be the head of Gilead.

They made him their head in the fight against Ammon as well as afterward.

Verses 12-28

What did Jephthah say?

He sent messengers to the king of the Ammonites asking why he came against them.

The answer was that Israel had taken his land when they left Egypt.

Jephthah replied with the history of Israel from Egypt to the present situation. Israel had not taken any of the land of the Ammonites. The Lord had told Israel not to provoke Edom, Moab, or Ammon to war when He led them into Canaan. The land of Sihon, an Amorite king of Heshbon, was taken because he had come against Israel.

Ask what your group learned from Jephthah's statements about the Lord in verses 21-27.

He gave Sihon and his land to Israel.

He drove out the Amorites.

He is the God of Israel; therefore, His people should possess whatever He drove out.

The Lord is the Judge, the Deliverer of His people.

He is the only completely righteous Judge.

Jephthah reasoned with the king of Ammon that in 300 years of possessing the land of the Amorites, no one had tried to take it from Israel. The wrong was not done by Jephthah and Israel, but by Ammon in trying to take land which the Lord God of Israel had given long ago to His people.

The taking of Sihon and Og occurred just before Israel crossed the Jordan at the beginning of Joshua. Therefore, from the taking of the land and the time of the judges up to chapter 11 had been about 300 years.

Verses 29-40

Ask your group what they learned from these verses and the cross-references about vows.

Even though the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah to deliver Israel from Ammon, as with some other judges, he still made a foolish vow to the Lord.

Leviticus 1:3-9

A burnt offering meant that whatever was to be offered was killed and consumed by fire.

NOTE: Some teach that Jephthah knew he was promising the sacrifice of a person, since animals were not kept inside a house in those times. Human sacrifice was practiced by some of the idolatrous nations surrounding Israel. And those in Israel were doing what was right in their own eyes.

Many Bible scholars and teachers think Jephthah made his daughter a living sacrifice, to serve the Lord by never marrying or having children. That would have been a great sacrifice to Jephthah and his daughter since she was his only child. His name, descendants, would have ended with his death.

There is much debate as to whether or not he actually offered her as a sacrifice or put her away never to marry.

The text says that he did to her according to his vow.

Leviticus 27

When a man made a difficult vow, then that one could be redeemed or exchanged for a price. But verses 28-29 state that one devoted, “set apart,” to the Lord could not be redeemed.

1 Samuel 14

This is the account of another foolish vow made by a leader of Israel, King Saul. When his own son Jonathan came under the curse of the oath Saul had taken, he was ready and willing to put him to death. Had the people not rescued Jonathan, his own father would have put him to death.

Making a vow to the Lord is very serious. New Testament believers are cautioned against making vows or swearing oaths at all.

JUDGES 12

Ask about a possible theme for this chapter.

Judges—Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon and Abdon

Continue to discuss the events of Jephthah's life from verses 1-7.

The men of Ephraim complained to Jephthah, because he had not called them to fight against Ammon. Verse 2 states that when he called them to deliver, they didn't help.

Then verses 4-6 say that two tribes of Israel fought against each other, and 42,000 men of Ephraim were killed.

That had happened before, Israel against Benjamin in Judges 19–21.

Verse 7 is the first time it says that Jephthah was a judge, and he judged Israel for only 6 years. The Lord devoted much of this book of Judges to one who was a judge for a short time. Therefore, He wants people who read this book to learn from Jephthah's life.

Ask your group what lessons they learned.

Verses 8-15

Who are these verses about?

The next three judges of Israel

Ibzan of Bethlehem judged after Jephthah for 7 years.

The only thing known about him is that he gave his sons and daughters to marry outside his family.

NOTE: This might mean that they were still of Israel, maybe even of the tribe of Judah, but not of the same family within the tribe. Or it might refer to people from other nations.

Elon of the tribe of Zebulun judged Israel for 10 years after Ibzan.

Then after him Abdon from the tribe of Ephraim judged Israel for 8 years.

Israel's enemies during the times of these judges are not named.

Ask what your group learned for their lives from this study.

JUDGES
LEADER GUIDE
Lesson 6

Lesson emphasis:

- Judges 13–16
- Samson

REVIEW

Tell your group to look at their At a Glance chart and ask about the segment divisions in Judges.

Judges 1–2

Israel did not drive out their enemies.

The cycle of the entire book is also included in chapter 2.

Judges 3–16

These chapters are about the judges.

Within the segment of Judges 3–16 there are segments of the different judges.

3 Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar

4–5 Deborah and Barak

6–8 Gideon

9 Gideon's son Abimelech as king

10 Tola, Jair

11–12 Jephthah; 12 also mentions Ibzan, Elon, Abdon

13–16 Samson

Judges 17–21

The repeated statement in these chapters says there was no king in Israel.

Every man did what was right in his own eyes.

These chapters probably took place close to the beginning of the judges' times.

JUDGES 13

What is a possible theme for this chapter?

Angel of Lord appeared; Samson was born, a Nazirite

Verse 1

How does this relate to the rest of Judges?

The cycle of sin continued.
The enemy this time was the Philistines for forty years.

Ask what your group learned about the Philistines.
Tell them to look at the map in the lesson as a visual aid.

Genesis 21:32-34; 26:1

They had been around as early as Abraham.
Isaac also went into the land of the Philistines when there was a famine.

Exodus 13:17-18

When the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, He did not bring them up the coast into the land of the Philistines because of war with them.

Exodus 23:31 and Joshua 13:1-3

The Philistines lived in the land given by the Lord to Israel.
They were some of the inhabitants whom Israel was to drive out of their land.

Judges 3:1-4, 31; 10:6-11

The land of the Philistines was part of the land remaining to be possessed after Joshua had led Israel in the conquering of the major cities, nations, of the land. This was to test Israel to see if they would obey the Lord, and so that the future generations would be taught war.

Five lords and cities (Joshua 13:3) are mentioned as being of the Philistines:
Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron, Gath.

Shamgar was the first judge who delivered Israel from the oppression of the Philistines.

Then the Philistines were the oppressors along with the Ammonites when Jephthah was raised up as the judge. Israel even served the gods of the Philistines. In Judges 10:11 reference is made to the previous deliverance from the Philistines, perhaps during the time of Shamgar.

Verses 2-7

What happened in these verses? Direct your group to their chart “A Summary of the Life of Samson” as a visual aid for this discussion.

The angel of the Lord appeared to Samson’s mother, who was barren, and told her she would have a son. He also said her son was to be a Nazirite from her womb.

She was not to drink wine or strong drink or eat anything unclean.
No razor was to come on his head—don’t cut his hair.

This son would begin to deliver / save Israel from the Philistines.

Ask what your group learned from the cross-references about a Nazirite.

Numbers 6

The vow of a Nazirite was a special vow one made when he wanted to dedicate himself to the Lord. He then became separated and holy to the Lord for the length of his time of separation.

He was not to eat or drink anything produced by the grape vine.

A razor was not to pass over / touch his head. He was to let his hair grow long until his vowed time of separation to the Lord had ended.

He was not to go near a dead person.

If one died in his presence, he would go through a process of cleansing for his dedicated / consecrated head. Verses 9-12 detail the process of that cleansing.

Verses 13-21 tell what happened when the days of his separation were fulfilled, the end of the days he had vowed to be separated to the Lord as a Nazirite.

Amos 2:11-12

This was another dark time in Israel's history. The Nazirite vow was not valued.

Lead your discussion back to Judges 13:6-7. What did the woman do?

She told her husband Manoah about the man of God who appeared to her.
His appearance was described as very awesome, like the appearance of the angel of God.
She also told him about the promise of a son who would be a Nazirite to his death.

Verses 8-23

What did Manoah do? What happened in these verses?

He asked God to send the man of God to them again for explanation.
God listened to him.

The angel of the Lord appeared again to his wife, and she went to get Manoah.
He spoke to the man of God, and asked him to eat with them.

But the angel of the Lord said to prepare a sacrifice instead.
It wasn't until the angel of the Lord brought fire from heaven and ascended that Manoah realized he wasn't a man of God, but the angel of the Lord Himself.

He said His name is wonderful, and He did wonders.
Manoah said they had seen God.

Ask what your group learned from the other appearances of the angel of the Lord in Judges.

Judges 2:1-5

The angel of the Lord referred to Himself as the one who
brought Israel from Egypt
led them into the land
swore to their fathers
made covenant with them
was to be obeyed
drove out their enemies

Judges 5:23

He cursed Meroz.

Judges 6:11-24

He sat under the oak in Ophrah.
He appeared to Gideon.
As with Manoah and his wife, Gideon did not recognize Him immediately.
He is called the Lord in verses 14, 16, 22, and 23.
He gave a sign to Gideon that He was the One Who spoke to him.
Gideon built an altar and named it “The Lord is Peace.”

Verses 24-25

Ask your group what they learned from the last two verses of Judges 13.
Tell them to look at the chart “The Judges of Israel” as another visual aid for this discussion.

Samson was blessed by the Lord.
The Spirit of the Lord began to stir him in Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.

At any point in this discussion, give your group time to discuss relevant application.

JUDGES 14

Ask what your group noted on their At a Glance chart as the theme for this chapter.

Possibly something like—Samson’s wife; killed lion and 30 men in Ashkelon

Verses 1-4

Who are these verses about? What happened?

Samson went to Timnah and saw a Philistine woman who “looks good to me / is right in my eyes,” verses 3 and 7.

NOTE: The NASB marginal note says “looks good to me” is literally, “is right in my eyes.”¹

¹New American Standard Bible: 1995 update, marginal note (Judges 14:3) (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

That term is also used in 17:6 and 21:25 to describe what every man did then.

He told his parents to get her for him as a wife.

Verse 4 says it was of / from the Lord because He was seeking an occasion / opportunity against the Philistines. God used this situation to bring about His purpose.

Verses 5-9

What are these verses about?

The Spirit of the Lord came on Samson mightily (ESV—rushed upon him) when a lion ran against him, and he tore it in pieces. The Lord’s Spirit came on him at other times, but did not stay with Samson always.

After a few days Samson was again going to see the Philistine woman and saw that bees made honey in the lion’s carcass. This was the basis for his riddle.

Verses 10-14

What happened next?

There was a seven-day marriage feast.

He married the Philistine woman even though God had told the sons of Israel not to intermarry with the people of the land.

Thirty companions were brought to be with Samson.

He presented his riddle to them.

But after three days it was unsolved.

Verses 15-20

How did they solve his riddle?

His wife was threatened by Philistine men to get the answer from Samson. She enticed and pressed him for seven days so that he told her, and she told them.

When he discovered this, he went to Ashkelon and killed 30 Philistine men.

Again the Lord’s Spirit came on him mightily / rushed upon him before he killed the Philistines.

The Lord had said before he was born that he would begin to deliver Israel from the Philistines.

Samson’s wife was given to his companion, one who had been his friend / best man.

JUDGES 15

What is a possible theme for this chapter?

Samson burned grain with fox tails and killed 1,000 Philistines with a jawbone

What are the events of this chapter?

Verses 1-8

When Samson decided to visit his wife, he discovered that she had been given to another. Therefore, he burned their grain, vineyards, and groves / orchards. He used foxes' tails to hold the torches between them.

The Philistines then burned his wife and her father which led Samson to strike them with a great slaughter / blow for revenge.

Verses 9-13

The Philistines went to Judah and camped in Lehi.
They told the men of Judah why they came—for Samson.

3,000 men of Judah went to get Samson.
He asked them to swear that they wouldn't kill him, and he was bound for the Philistines.

Verses 14-17

When taken to the Philistines, he came out of the bonds and killed 1,000 with a donkey's jawbone. This again was a result of the Spirit of the Lord coming / rushing on him mightily to deliver Israel from the Philistines.

Verses 18-19

When he was thirsty, Samson called on the Lord, and God opened a hollow place for water.

Verse 20 gives the time of Samson judging Israel.

It was for 20 of the 40 years of the Philistines' oppression of Israel.
He only began the delivering of Israel from the Philistines; it was not complete during the time he judged.

Give time for your group to discuss relevant application.

JUDGES 16

Ask what they noted on their At a Glance chart as a possible theme for this chapter.

Samson and Delilah; killed many Philistines at his death

Verses 1-3

How does this chapter begin?

Samson went to a harlot in Gaza, a Philistine city.

While he was there, the Gazites surrounded the place because he was their enemy.
But he left at midnight and took the doors of the city gate to the top of a mountain / hill
opposite / in front of Hebron.

Again his strength is shown, but the contrast of his weakness is in the verses that follow.

Verses 4-22

Who and what are these verses about?

Samson loved Delilah, a woman in the valley of Sorek.

Compare these events with Judges 14 and his wife.

Men wanted to know something from Samson, so they went to his woman.
She then enticed / seduced and pressed him so that he gave in to her and told her what the
men wanted to know. The results were devastating both times.

Samson had a problem with women, and did not display much sense where they were
concerned.

He wanted the woman he saw for his wife; she looked good to him.

He went to a harlot.

He loved a woman who betrayed him.

Compare this with Proverbs 7.

Samson seemed to be a man lacking sense when it came to women.

He went for the women he should have stayed away from, and his women were
Philistines, part of those with whom God said Israel was not to intermarry.

They enticed him, seduced him, deceived him, and pressed him daily to get what they
wanted from him.

Verses 23-30

Discuss the end of Samson's life and the related statements in Hebrews 11:32-40.

Samson was taken to Gaza with no hair and no eyes.

The Lord departed from him when his head was shaved.
His strength came from the Lord and was also gone.

His hair grew while he was bound in prison. But he never looked at another woman, was never again enticed by what he saw.

As he called to the Lord to give him strength to bring vengeance on the Philistines, the Lord answered and his strength returned.

He killed more in his death than in his life. There were 3,000 people just on the roof and many more inside the place. He killed all of the lords of the Philistines when he died.

Hebrews 11:32-34

Samson is listed as a man who through faith shut / stopped the mouth of a lion and was made strong from weakness.

But his life was not that of a New Testament, Covenant, believer who has the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

To end this discussion, ask your group what they learned from Samson's life which applies to their own.

JUDGES
LEADER GUIDE
Lesson 7

Lesson emphasis:

- Judges 17–21

REVIEW

Tell your group to look at their At a Glance chart and ask about the segment divisions in Judges.

Judges 1–2

Israel did not drive out their enemies.

The cycle of the entire book is also included in chapter 2.

Judges 3–16

These chapters are about the judges.

3 Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar

4–5 Deborah and Barak

6–8 Gideon

9 Gideon's son Abimelech as king

10 Tola, Jair

11–12 Jephthah; 12 also mentions Ibzan, Elon, Abdon

13–16 Samson

Judges 17–21

The repeated statement in these chapters says there was no king in Israel and every man did what was right in his own eyes.

JUDGES 17-21 TIMING

Ask your group about the time of chapters 17–21, based on the cross-references in this lesson. Tell them to look at the chart in the lesson “Dates of the Judges” and the map as visual aids.

Judges 17–18

The tribe of Dan took Laish, Leshem in Joshua 19:47-48.

Judges 17–18 took place before Samson was judge, Judges 13–16.

NOTE: In Judges 13:25 Samson, who was from the tribe of Dan, was stirred by the Lord at Mahaneh-dan, which had been so named from when men of Dan passed through there on their way to Laish.

Judges 19–21

Phinehas was the high priest during the time of these events.

He was the grandson of Aaron, Moses' brother, and was born before Israel left Egypt, Exodus 6:25.

Joshua 22 and 24

After his father Eleazar the priest died, then he was the next high priest. Eleazar's death is recorded at the end of Joshua and parallels Judges 2:8-10.

This put his priesthood at the beginning of the 300+ years of the judges.

On the chart "Dates of the Judges" these events are during the time of Othniel, the first judge of Israel.

Othniel was a contemporary of Phinehas; both are mentioned in Joshua as well as Judges.

Chapters 17–21 took place close to the beginning of Judges, but they serve as a summary at the end of this book. These chapters show what the times and people were like.

JUDGES 17

Ask what your group noted on the At a Glance chart as a theme for this chapter.

Micah's images and Levite

Verses 1-6

How does this chapter begin?

Micah lived in the hill country of Ephraim.

He confessed to his mother that he had taken her 1,100 pieces of silver.

Hearing her curse might have had something to do with his confession.

She dedicated the silver to the Lord, and then some of it to make images. Micah kept them in his house with his ephod and household idols. He also consecrated one of his sons as priest.

It seems he was a religious man.

Verse 6 describes the times. Micah was doing right in his eyes.

Verses 7-13

Who and what is the rest of this chapter about?

A Levite from Bethlehem in Judah went looking for a place to live and came to Micah's place. Micah invited him to be part of his family. He also consecrated the young man as priest. He said God would prosper him because he had a Levite as priest.

Ask what your group learned about Levites and priests from the cross-references.
Tell them to look at Levi's family tree in the lesson.

Exodus 28:1

Descendants of Aaron were chosen by God to be the priests of Israel.
Aaron was of the tribe of Levi.

Exodus 32:14-28

The Levites were chosen by the Lord because of their gathering to Moses and obedience.

Numbers 3:6; 8:14-19

The Lord also chose the tribe of Levi to serve the priests. They were a gift to Aaron and his sons, the priests from the line of Levi, to perform / do the service at the tent of meeting, the tabernacle.

Deuteronomy 10 and 18

The Levites were given no land inheritance in Israel.
The Lord is their inheritance. He was their provider.

He set them apart to carry the ark and to stand before Him.

Deuteronomy 33:1-5, 8-11; Joshua 21:41; and Numbers 35:1-8; Joshua 14:1-4

The Levites were to teach the Law of the Lord to Israel. And since they were to live in the 48 cities throughout the land, then all of Israel was to hear and know His law.

The Levites had no inheritance of the land, but were given those cities in which to live and minister to the people.

Numbers 25:1-13

Phinehas was Aaron's grandson to whom God gave the covenant of the perpetual priesthood.

He was jealous for the Lord and stopped His wrath on Israel.
His descendants would be the priests of Israel—no one else.

How does this relate to Micah?

He consecrated his own priests and thought the Lord would prosper him for it.
He was doing what was right in his eyes, but unknowingly going against what God said.

NOTE: If the Levite in Judges 17 was truly of the family of Judah, he was not really a Levite. Some Bible scholars think he might have been a true Levite, descended from Levi and not Judah, but he lived in Judah.

Give time for your group to discuss application.

JUDGES 18

Ask about a possible theme for this chapter.

Dan took Micah's images and Levite, went to Laish and took the city

How does this chapter begin?

There was no king in Israel in those days. The repetition of this statement indicates it was an important fact the author of Judges wanted to communicate.

What happened in this chapter? Discuss cross-references also.

The tribe of Dan was seeking an inheritance. They did not take from the Amorites the land which had been given them as their inheritance, Judges 1:34-35.

Zorah and Eshtaol are mentioned as where Dan originated. Relate this to Judges 13:2, 25. Samson was from there and was of the tribe of Dan.

Evidently most of the Danites, but not all, went north toward the hill country of Ephraim. The five spies went first; then 600 warriors went to take land for a possession.

Relate the prophecy of Genesis 49 to the actions of the tribe of Dan in Judges 18. They took what they wanted: Micah's priest, idols, ephod, etc.

They took land from a quiet and secure people, and burned the city. But they did not go to help Deborah and Barak in the battle against the Canaanites in Judges 5.

They were doing what was right in their own eyes.

After taking Laish, the Danites rebuilt it and named it Dan.

They set up the image there, and all the time God's house was at Shiloh the image was at Dan, the same image made by Micah with the silver he had stolen from his mother. She had dedicated it to the Lord for an image.

NOTE: The NASB and the ESV differ in verse 30. The priest was named Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh—NASB. ESV says "Moses" instead of "Manasseh." Commentaries also point out this difference. If "Moses" is the correct interpretation, the Levite of these chapters was from the tribe of Levi as was Moses.

They had all done what was right in their own eyes.

Give time for application discussion at any point.

JUDGES 19

Ask your class what they noted on their At a Glance chart as the theme of this chapter.

Men of Gibeah murdered Levite's concubine; he sent her to 12 tribes of Israel

Who and what is this chapter about?

A Levite had a concubine who played the harlot (ESV—was unfaithful to him). Instead of putting her to death for her adultery, he went after her to bring her back to him after 4 months.

NOTE: A concubine was a woman who "possessed the status of a wife yet was not the principal wife of her husband."¹

On the way back to Ephraim from Bethlehem the concubine was brutally killed.

The men of Gibeah, which belonged to the tribe of Benjamin, tried to take the man for homosexual sin, but instead were given his concubine.

Nothing like that had ever taken place in Israel before.

This is a very gruesome chapter, and many of its details are horrible to think about. But it describes what happened in Israel during the time of the judges.

JUDGES 20

Ask about the possible theme of this chapter.

Israel and Benjamin war

What are the events?

Israel assembled as one man to the Lord at Mizpah to decide what was to be done about the sin the men of Gibeah had committed.

NOTE: This Mizpah does not seem to be the same as in Judges 10 and 11. The Mizpah of Judges 20 was on the west side of the Jordan.

Verse 18, Israel went up to Bethel to inquire of God who should go first into battle.

Bethel is also in verse 26 and 21:2 as being the place to inquire of the Lord.
Verses 27-28, the ark and Phinehas the priest were also there.

¹Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Old Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1994), H6370, p. 2354.

Israel heard from the Lord because Phinehas, the high priest, was before the ark ministering in those days. He was the rightful high priest designated by God to hold the priesthood after his father Eleazar, Aaron's son.

He gave the Lord's directions to Israel as they inquired of Him.

Twice Israel suffered loss, about 40,000, as they went to battle against the tribe of Benjamin. The reason was most likely sin.

Then Israel killed all but 600 men of the tribe of Benjamin, totaling 25,100, plus another 30 men of Israel were killed. These internal battles, brought on by sin, brought death to over 65,000 of the people who were to be holy to the Lord.

The nation of Israel had degenerated into this at the time of the judges.

JUDGES 21

What is the theme of this chapter?

Wives for the tribe of Benjamin

What are the events of this chapter?

Since Israel had sworn an oath at Mizpah that none of them there could give their daughters to a man of Benjamin in marriage, a solution was needed for the tribe to continue as part of the nation of Israel.

Relate the seriousness of this oath with what your group remembers from studying vows in connection with Jephthah.

Israel came up with a couple of solutions to their problem.
It does not say in this chapter that they inquired of the Lord as before.

They destroyed the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead, except 400 virgins, since no one from there had been at Mizpah and made the oath. But they still needed 200 more wives for the 600 men of Benjamin.

Letting virgins be taken from the feast of the Lord at Shiloh was the next course of action by Israel. They did what was right in their own eyes.

Ask what your group learned from the last two cross-references in the lesson.

1 Samuel 7:15–8:5

Samuel was the last judge of Israel, and he appointed his sons as judges.

In Judges, the Lord raised up the judges.

Israel asked for a king to rule them like the other nations.

Ruth 1:1-2

The events of Ruth took place during the time of Judges.

Encourage your group to study these two books of the Bible next.

To end this last discussion of Judges, ask your group how this study has impacted their lives. Give time for them to share.