



## **Week 1: “Can’t Obey? Or Won’t?”**

**Text:** Judges 1:1-3:6

### **Summary:**

The book of Judges is a head-on collision with the ugliness and dangerous consequences of human sin. It is the raw, historical account of an active and continuous rejection of God and obedience to Him. Although it is story of some of the Bible’s most popular “heroes”: Samson, Gideon, Deborah; however as history unfolds, these “heroes” become increasingly flawed and failing. Really, they are hardly heroes at all. Therefore, the book of Judges is not a book of virtues, nor is it filled with inspirational examples to imitate. The core of the book of Judges is this: The Gospel. It is about the God of mercy and long-suffering, who continually works in and through and for his people, EVEN WHILE they deliberately and constantly resist and disobey Him. There is only one hero in this book: God.

Judges begins by looking backwards to the time of Joshua, Moses’ successor. Joshua led the people into the promise land, believing and trusting that God would help them drive out the inhabitants: the Canaanites. Joshua called the people to obey God as He delivered the land, and not worship the pagan idols. Judges chapter 1 shows us the generation after Joshua, who continued to expect land from God while not willing to obey God by driving out all the inhabitants. Therefore, God gives his judgement in chapter 2: “You have not obeyed my voice. What is this you have done? So now I say, I will not drive them out before you, but they shall become thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare to you.” Verses 2:11-19 will set up the repeated cycle observed throughout the whole book: (1) “The people did what was evil in the sight of the Lord”, (2) “They provoked the Lord to anger, who gave them over to their enemies,” (3) “Then the Lord raised up Judges, who saved them from the hand of their oppressors, for the Lord was moved to pity,” (4) “But whenever the judge died, they turned back and were more corrupt than their fathers, serving and bowing to other gods.” Thus repeating the cycle over again, but falling deeper and deeper into spiritual disobedience.

### **Discussion Questions for Study:**

1. For important background context, read Joshua 23:3-13. (1) What are all the things God wants them to do? (2) What are the things they are NOT to do? (3) What are the expected consequences of failing these commands?
2. Read Judges 1:19 and 1:27-35: Make a list of reasons why Israel chose not to take the land God promised them. Do these reasons suggest they “could not” take the land, or “would not.” What’s the difference?

### **Discussion Questions for Application:**

1. Israel experienced success while also being disobedient to God. Think of areas in your life where you might be enjoying “success”. How are you relying on God and obeying Him?
2. How might we say “God I can’t” but God says “you won’t” when it comes to: forgiving others? Telling the truth? Being tempted?