

**Adult  
Bible Study  
in  
Simplified  
English**  
•  
**Study  
Guide**



*THE BOOKS OF*  
**Joshua and Judges**

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Raney**

**BAPTISTWAY PRESS**  
Dallas, Texas

# **ADULT BIBLE STUDY IN SIMPLIFIED ENGLISH**

## **Study Guide**

### **The Books of Joshua and Judges**

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# The Books of Joshua and Judges

**J**oshua and Judges tell about an important time in Israel's history. Joshua starts when Israel was getting ready to go in and live in the Promised Land. Judges ends when the Israelites were asking God to give them a king. Between these two times the people had great victories. They also had terrible defeats. Sometimes the people obeyed God. Then God gave good to them. Sometimes they turned away from God. Then God punished them. In all of these stories God showed that He was faithful.

God is faithful to His promises and to His people. These books can teach us a lot about how we should live. We can learn from what happened to Israel. We learn about what God does when His people act in different ways. May these stories help us want to obey God in everything.

**Unit 1—Joshua - Entering the Promised Land** In these lessons we learn how the Israelites moved into the Promised Land. Moses had led them out of Egypt. Now Joshua was leading them as they took over Canaan.

- Lesson 1: When Things are not What They Used to Be (Joshua 1)
- Lesson 2: When People are not Perfect (Joshua 2:1-14; 6:22-25)
- Lesson 3: When You Come to the Edge of the Waters (Joshua 3:7-17; 4:15-24)
- Lesson 4: The Danger of Acting Without God (Joshua 7:1-2, 16-21)
- Lesson 5: God Gives Victory (Joshua 9:3-15; 10:6-14, 40-42)
- Lesson 6: Choose the Lord Today (Joshua 24:1-3, 13-25)

**Unit 2—Judges - Spiraling Downward** In these lessons we learn how the Israelites turned away from God. God punished them for their sin. God later sent people called “judges” to save the Israelites. This happened many times. Israel's sin caused them to even fight each other.

- Lesson 7: The Downward Spiral (Judges 2:6-7, 11-19)
- Lesson 8: Deborah - Prophetess, Judge, Wife (Judges 4:1-17, 21; 5:1-3, 12-13)
- Lesson 9: Gideon - Struggling with Uncertainty (Judges 6:7-18, 21-22, 36-40)
- Lesson 10: Gideon - Relying on God (Judges 7:2-21)
- Lesson 11: Abimelech - Unworthy Leader (Judges 8:22-23; 8:33-9:15)
- Lesson 12: Samson - Wasted Talent (Judges 13:1-7; 16:18-30)
- Lesson 13: The People of God Falling Apart (Judges 17:1-6; 18:1; 19:1; 20:1-5; 21:25)

*The Books of Joshua and Judges*

# Word List

## Lesson 1

**Encourage:** to comfort and help with kind words or actions

**Courage/Courageous:** strength of heart / having strength of heart, being brave

**Tribes:** special family groups named for the twelve sons of Jacob

**Conquer:** to take something for your own

## Lesson 2

**Mysterious:** something not known and not easy to understand

**Pagan:** someone who believes in many gods

**Prostitute:** a person who sells the use of their body

**Protecting:** keeping safe, not allowing something or someone to be hurt

## Lesson 3

**Obstacle:** anything which keeps us from moving forward

**Ark of the Covenant:** the special box of the agreement of the Lord of All the earth

**Tabernacle:** the meeting tent of the Lord that served as the house of God for the people in the desert

**Instructions:** a list of things that must be done

## Lesson 4

**Consequences:** what happens because of what we do

**Community:** a group of people who live together

**Confess:** to tell God about our sins and to be sorry for them

**Confused:** not sure and troubled

## Lesson 5

**Deceive:** to trick someone by telling them lies, to fool them

**Treaty:** an agreement between two people or two groups that they will be partners

## Lesson 6

**Decisions:** choices we make, what we decide

**Descendent:** your children's children for many years in the future

**Ancestor:** your parent's parents for many years in the past

**Commitment:** an act or feeling of having to do something because you said you would

# Word List

## Lesson 7

**Downward spiral:** events or actions that happen again and again getting worse each time

**Relationship:** the bond between two people

**Generation:** a group of people at about the same age

## Lesson 8

**Prophetess:** a woman who tells the people what God says to her

**Rescue:** to save and make someone safe from danger

**Chariots:** war-wagons pulled by horses

## Lesson 9

**Prophet:** a man who tells the people what God says to him

**Threshing:** breaking up grain to use for baking

**Miracle:** an act that only God can do

## Lesson 10

**Prepare:** to get ready for something

**Rely:** to trust in and depend on

**Doubts:** feelings of uncertainty or not trusting

## Lesson 11

**Worthy:** good and honest, can be trusted

**Unworthy:** bad, has not earned the right to be called worthy

**Misled:** made someone believe something that is not true

**Fable:** a story that teaches a lesson

## Lesson 12

**Talents:** things you are able to do better than others can

**Selfish:** thinking only about yourself

**Vow:** a promise to do something

## Lesson 13

**Falling apart:** continuing to have more and more problems without help from anyone

**Shrine:** a special building where gods or idols are worshiped

**Priest:** special religious leader

**Concubine:** a woman who acts like a wife but is not married to the man

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# ◊ Joshua and Judges ◊

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*Adult Bible Study  
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Entering the Promised Land  
(Joshua 1- 24)

**Lesson 1**

When Things are not What  
They Used to Be  
(Joshua 1)

**Lesson 2**

When People are not Perfect  
(Joshua 2:1-4; 6:22-25)

**Lesson 3**

When You Come to the Edge  
of the Waters  
(Joshua 3:7-17; 4:15-24)

**Lesson 4**

The Danger of Acting  
Without God  
(Joshua 7:1-12, 16-21)

**Lesson 5**

God Gives Victory  
(Joshua 9:3-15;  
10:6-14, 40-42)

**Lesson 6**

Choose the Lord Today  
(Joshua 24:1-3, 13-25)

## **JOSHUA:**

### **ENTERING THE PROMISED LAND**

**T**he book of Joshua starts when the people of Israel have a new leader. Moses led the people through the desert for 40 years. Now Moses was dead. Joshua would lead the Israelites into the land God promised them. The book begins when God gave Joshua words of help and comfort. This would help him be the new leader.

The first half of the book tells about the fast taking of the land of Canaan by the Israelites. God told them to drive out all of the people who lived in the land. They were not to let any of the people living there stay there. Then Israel would not want to worship their false gods. In many places Israel had to fight against the people living there. In other places the Israelites were able to move in and live there without a fight.

The second half of the book tells how the land of Canaan was divided among the twelve family groups of Israel. In the final chapter of the book, Joshua calls the people together. At the town of Shechem the people are told to remember the special agreement they have with God.

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### **Bible Text**

Joshua 1

### **Memory Verse**

“Have I not told you? Be strong and have strength of heart! Do not be afraid or lose faith. For the Lord your God is with you anywhere you go.” (Joshua 1:9)

### **Word List**

**Encourage:** to comfort and help with kind words or actions

**Courage/**

**Courageous:** strength of heart / having strength of heart, being brave

**Tribes:** special family groups named for the twelve sons of Jacob

**Conquer:** to take something for your own

# When Things are not What They Used to Be

Most people do not like change. We like the comfort of knowing what to expect each day. Change is a part of everyone's life. We have to do well with change everyday. Many changes are large, like marriage, a new job, or moving to a new city. Other changes are much smaller, such as changes in the weather or changes in our daily schedules. Change will come, so it is important to learn how to live through the changes. At the beginning of the book of Joshua, the Israelites had a lot of changes. Joshua took Moses' place as the leader of the people. Israel was getting ready to change from walking around in the desert to moving into new homes. God had given them bread from heaven to eat. Now the people had to learn to farm and take care of sheep so they could eat. The people had been living in peace. Now they had to fight for the land. The Israelites had to choose how they would face these changes. Their example can teach us how we can please God through the changes in our lives.

### **A new mission for a new leader (Joshua 1:1-4)**

Moses had been the leader of the Israelites for over 40 years. None of the Israelites could remember a time when Moses was not their leader. Now Moses was dead, but the people were still not in the land God promised them. God was still working to keep His promise to Abraham. Now God had chosen Joshua to lead the people into the land. God's plans for Israel had not changed. The plans would continue through this new leader. This

### Things To Think About

1. How do you usually feel about change?  
What do you do when change happens?
2. What promises in the Bible do you find most helpful when change happens?
3. When have you needed to “be strong and have strength of heart” and trust God?  
What happened?

was the man whom God had been preparing for this job. Joshua had been a close helper to Moses. He had learned from Moses how to lead the people. Now Joshua would learn to lead from God. In verse 2 God tells Joshua very clearly what to do. The time for sorrow over Moses' death was done. It was time to take the land that God had promised to give to Israel. If Joshua and the people would obey God, God promised to give them all of the land on which they walked. No longer would they have to walk around lost. Now they were home. When things change, it is important to stay on the path that God has given us. We should keep our focus on God's promises and move ahead toward them.

### **Encouragement for the new leader (1:5-9)**

This was the land that God had promised to give Israel, but the Israelites would have to work to take it for their own. Seven different groups of people were in the land. They had lived there for a long time. They had armies and strong-walled cities. They would not give the land willingly. Joshua saw these people when he was one of the twelve men that Moses sent to spy out the land. Joshua knew the problems that faced the Israelites. In verses 5-9, God talked about Joshua's fears and tried to **encourage** him. God began by promising to always be with Joshua as He had always been with Moses. God had called Joshua to be the leader and now He would be with him to help him overcome all his enemies. Because God was with him, Joshua could be strong and act with **courage**. Three times in verses 6-9, God told Joshua to be strong and **courageous**. Joshua could do this because he knew that God was with him. God would not let him fail. But for this to happen, Joshua had to be sure that he kept obeying God and God's laws.

To do this, Joshua had to know God's law. In verse 8, God told Joshua to memorize His law and to think about it day and night. Joshua was to be thinking all the time about what God wanted him to do. While the things happening around Joshua changed, God's word did not change. Joshua could be sure that God's word would always be the same.

We can read that same Word today. When things change, it is important to see and remember the things that do not change. God and His Word do not change.

### **Joshua obeyed God (1:10-15)**

Joshua obeyed God right away. He called together all of the leaders of the **tribes**. He told them to get the people ready to cross into the land that God had promised them. The people were given three days to get ready. Often in the Bible, three days is a time used to talk about getting ready in every way, inside and outside. The people had to get their things together for their move. They also needed to get ready on the inside. They needed to make sure that their hearts were ready for problems. They needed to be ready to obey God. This was especially hard for the two and a half tribes that would live on the east side of the Jordan River. The women and

children of these families stayed behind while the men crossed the river. They left to help **conquer** the land. These men returned after the land was conquered and moved into their new homes.

### **The people help their new leader**

**(1:16-18)**

In these verses, all the people together agreed to follow Joshua as their leader. They knew that God was with Joshua. They accepted Joshua as their leader just as they had accepted Moses. They accepted the punishment for anyone who did not follow Joshua. The people finished their agreement by telling Joshua to be strong and courageous. These are the same words Joshua heard from God. Joshua could now keep going. He knew that God was with him. He knew that the people would help him.

When things change, it is important to stay together as one and help our leaders. We can know that God is with us. We can be strong and courageous.

## Joshua 1

**1** After the death of the Lord's servant Moses, the Lord said to Moses' helper, Joshua the son of Nun,

**2** "My servant Moses is dead. So you and all these people get up and cross the Jordan River to the land I am giving to the people of Israel.

**3** I have given you every place where the bottom of your foot steps, as I promised Moses.

**4** Your land will be from the desert and from Lebanon as far as the big Euphrates River. It will be all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea on the west.

**5** No man will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. I will be with you just as I have been with Moses. I will be faithful to you and will not leave you alone.

**6** Be strong and have strength of heart. For you will bring the people in to take this land which I promised to their fathers to give them.

**7** Only be strong and have much strength of heart. Be careful to obey all the Law which My servant Moses told you. Do not turn from it to the right or to the left. Then all will go well with you everywhere you go.

**8** This book of the Law must not leave your mouth. Think about it day and night, so you may be careful to do all that is written in it. Then all will go well with you. You will receive many good things.

**9** Have I not told you? Be strong and have strength of heart! Do not be afraid or lose faith. For the Lord your God is with you anywhere you go."

**10** Then Joshua told the leaders of the people,  
**11** "Go among the tents and tell the people, 'Gather together the things you will need. For within three days you will cross this Jordan to go in to take the land the Lord your God is giving you for your own.' "

**12** To the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-family group of Manasseh, Joshua said,

**13** "Remember what the Lord's servant Moses told you, saying, 'The Lord your God gives you rest, and will give you this land.'

**14** Your wives, your children and your cattle will stay in the land Moses gave you on this side of the Jordan. But you and all your strong-hearted soldiers will cross the river dressed for battle in front of your brothers.

You will help them

**15** until the Lord gives your brothers rest, as He has given you. Help them until they own the land the Lord your God is giving them.

Then you will return to your own land. You will own what the Lord's servant Moses gave you on the east side of the Jordan."

**16** They answered Joshua, saying, "We will do all that you have told us. And we will go anywhere you send us.

**17** We will obey you in all things just as we obeyed Moses. Only may the Lord your God be with you as He was with Moses.

**18** Anyone who goes against what you say, and does not obey all that you tell him to do, will be put to death. Only be strong and have strength of heart."



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### Bible Text

Joshua 2:1-14;  
6:22-25

### Memory Verse

“For the Lord your  
God is God in heaven  
above and on earth  
below.”  
(Joshua 2:11b)

### Word List

#### **Mysterious:**

something not known  
and not easy to  
understand

**Pagan:** someone who  
believes in many gods

**Prostitute:** a person  
who sells the use of  
their body

**Protecting:** keeping  
safe, not allowing  
something or someone  
to be hurt

# When People are not Perfect

Have you ever been surprised to be helped by a stranger? Maybe a neighbor you do not know well helped with your yard work. Maybe someone you thought was an unkind trouble-maker showed you kindness. “God works in **mysterious** ways.” This well-known saying often means that God will use surprising people to carry out His plans. Joshua 2 contains a story of one of these times. In this story, God uses a **pagan prostitute** named Rahab to help the Israelites. She helped them take over the land God promised them. No Israelite would have thought that God could use her. She had three problems. She was a woman, she was a non-Israelite, and she was a prostitute. Yet God wants to help those that the world hates. In the case of Rahab, God uses her faith in **protecting** the Israelite spies as an example. Because of her faith, God kept her and her family safe and gave her a place of honor.

### **Rahab protects the spies (Joshua 2:1-7)**

Joshua sent some men as spies into Canaan like Moses had done. But Joshua sent two spies to Jericho, not twelve to all of Canaan. Jericho would be the first city the Israelites would come to after crossing the Jordan River. These spies were sent to get information about the land and the people who lived there. When the spies got to Jericho, they stayed at the home of Rahab who was known to be a prostitute. The Hebrew word that is used here makes it very clear that she took money for sex. The reason why

### Things To Think About

1. Has there been a time when you received help from a surprising place? What happened and what did you do?

2. Rahab had a difficult choice. If she told the truth, the spies would be caught. To protect the spies she had to lie. Have you ever had a problem where you had to do something that might seem bad to make something good happen? What did you do?

3. Rahab was an outsider who no one thought that God could use. Do you know people like that today? Who are they and why do people see them that way?

the spies chose such a place to stay is unknown. Maybe they thought no one would notice foreign men staying there since many men went to her home. Maybe they thought that she would be able to give them a lot of information about the city. Whatever their reason was, someone did notice them and reported to the king. When the king sent men to find the Israelite spies, Rahab kept them safe. She hid them on her roof and lied to the king's men. Rahab told them that the spies had already left the city and encouraged them to chase after them. Why did she lie to her king in order to protect foreign spies? At this point in the story, the reader does not know. Her lie worked. The king's men left to look for the spies.

#### **Rahab makes an agreement with the spies (2:8-14)**

Rahab talked to the spies after the king's men left. Now we learn why she lied. Rahab had heard the stories about Israel. She heard how their God had protected them. These stories were told all over Canaan. Rahab told them two events she had heard. These events showed the power of Israel's God. The first is the story of how God had saved Israel from slavery in Egypt by dividing the Red Sea (Exodus 14). The second is the story of how God had helped Israel defeat the two kings in the land on the east side of the Jordan River (Numbers 21:21-35). These stories had made the people of Canaan afraid of the Israelites. They knew the stories showed the power of Israel's God. They were afraid that God would use that power to help Israel take Canaan. Rahab believed that Israel's God was the true God of heaven and earth. She asked the spies to keep her and her

family from being killed when the Israelites came to take the city. She knew that Israel would have victory with God's help. She wanted to be protected the way she had protected the spies. The spies promised to do this if Rahab did not tell the leaders of the city. Rahab then helped the spies leave the city. She told them how to get away safely. The spies then went back to Joshua and gave him a good report.

**Rahab is protected by the spies  
(6:22-25)**

Chapters 3 - 6 tell the story of how Joshua led the Israelites across the Jordan River. Then about how they took the city of Jericho. They began taking the city. Then Joshua sent the same two spies to find Rahab. They brought Rahab and her family to safety. Rahab and her family lived with the Israelites for many years. Verse 25 says that Rahab was saved because she protected the spies. She had faith.

This example of faith was remembered centuries later by James (James 2:25). Also the writer of Hebrews wrote about her (Hebrews 11:31). Both of these writers give Rahab as an example of

faith and trust in God. She not only trusted God, she also acted on that trust. The greatest fact about Rahab is that she is listed as an ancestor of Jesus (Matt. 1:5). She was thought of as an outsider during her life. But God brought her into His plan of salvation. This is a story of how God can use anyone to make His plans work. Rahab had many problems. But God used her to help Israel take the land God promised them. She was an example of one who was faithful to God.

**Joshua 2:1-14; 6:22-25**

**1** Then Joshua the son of Nun sent two men from Shittim to go in secret to learn about the land. He said to them, “Go and spy out the land, and Jericho.” So they went and came to the house of Rahab, a woman who sold the use of her body, and they stayed there.

**2** Then the king of Jericho was told, “See, men of Israel have come here to spy out the land.”

**3** So the king of Jericho sent word to Rahab, saying, “Bring out the men who have come to you and have gone into your house. For they have come to spy out all the land.”

**4** But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. She said, “Yes, the men came to me. But I did not know where they were from.

**5** When it was time for the gate to be shut after dark, the men went out. I do not know where they went. Be quick to go after them, for you will catch them.”

**6** But she had brought them up to the roof and had hidden them under the grain she had put up there.

**7** The men went after them on the road to the Jordan as far as the river crossing. As soon as those going after them had gone out, they shut the gate.

**8** Before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof.

**9** And she said to the men, “I know that the Lord has given you the land. The fear of you has come upon us. All the people living in the land have become weak with fear because of you.

**10** For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt. We have heard how you destroyed the

two kings of the Amorites, Sihon and Og, on the other side of the Jordan.

**11** When we heard it, our hearts became weak. No man had strength of heart any more because of you. For the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on earth below.

**12** Now I have shown you kindness. So I beg of you, promise me by the Lord that you will show kindness to those of my father’s house. Give me something to show that you will be faithful.

**13** Do not kill my father and mother and my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them. Save us from death.”

**14** So the men said to her, “Our life for yours! If you do not tell anyone what we are doing, we will be faithful and show you kindness when the Lord gives us the land.”

...**6:22** Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, “Go into the house of the woman who sells the use of her body. Bring out the woman and all who are with her, as you promised her.”

**23** So the young men who had spied out the land went in, and brought out Rahab and her father and mother and brothers and all she had. They brought out all of her family and took them outside the tents of Israel.

**24** Then they burned the city with fire, and all that was in it. Only the silver and gold and objects of brass and iron they put into the storehouse of the holy tent of the Lord.

**25** Joshua saved the life of Rahab, the woman who sold the use of her body, and those of her father’s house and all she had. She has lived among Israel to this day, because she hid the men Joshua had sent to spy out Jericho.



*Adult Bible Study in  
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### **Bible Text**

Joshua 3:7-17;  
4:15-24

### **Memory Verse**

“Then Joshua said to the people of Israel, ‘Come here. Listen to the words of the Lord your God.’”  
(Joshua 3:9)

### **Word List**

**Obstacle:** anything which keeps us from moving forward

**Ark of the Covenant:** the special box of the agreement of the Lord of All the earth

**Tabernacle:** the meeting tent of the Lord that served as the house of God for the people in the desert

**Instructions:** a list of things that must be done

# When You Come to the Edge of the Waters

**Obstacles** are a fact of life. As we live our lives having things we want to do, we can be sure that we will have obstacles. Even when we are doing what God has called us to do, there will be obstacles. The Israelites knew this very well. Soon after they had left Egypt they came to the Red Sea. This seemed like an obstacle that was too big to get around. Yet God had a plan and led them through the Red Sea on dry ground. Now the children of those who had crossed the Red Sea faced another obstacle. The Jordan River stood between them and the Promised Land. Looking at a map one can see that this was not necessary. The people could have entered Canaan from the south and not had to cross any rivers. But God had led them to this spot. Many times we blame obstacles on Satan. Often it is God who gives us obstacles. Why would God do this? As we read these chapters we can see that God often uses obstacles to test our faith in Him. There is a lot we can learn from how the Israelites faced this obstacle that will help us face the obstacles in our lives.

### **Getting God’s instructions (Joshua 3:7-13)**

Joshua was now the leader, but the people may have wondered if he would be able to lead them. Moses had been a great leader who had done many powerful works as he led the people. Joshua was new. Joshua had not yet done anything to show God’s power was with him. That was about to change. In

### Things To Think About

1. The Ark of the Covenant reminded the people that God was with them. What do you look at to remember that God is with you?

2. When have you had an obstacle that you could not see what to do about it? What happened? What did you learn about God through this time?

3. What are the special places or things that we have today as tools to teach our children and grandchildren about God's grace and power?

verse 7 God told Joshua that He is going to act in a way that would prove to the people that God was with him. This act would also show the people that their God is living among them. Joshua was to have the religious leaders carry the **Ark of the Covenant** in front of the people. The Ark of the Covenant was the most holy and precious item the Israelites had. It was a gold box that reminded the people that God was with them. It was the only item kept in the Most Holy Place inside the **tabernacle**. It was thought of as the throne of God. God would lead the people into the land. They were sure that they would have victory in taking the land that had seven different groups living there. These groups' names are listed in verse 10.

The first step would be a powerful work of God. God told Joshua that the religious leaders should carry the Ark of the Covenant and step into the Jordan River. The waters would be dried up. The Israelites could overcome this obstacle by walking through on dry ground. Their parents had done the same thing when they left Egypt. But this time God would not cause the waters to be cut off until the religious leaders stepped into the river. This meant they had to act in faith. His people had to act in faith before God would do what He said.

#### **Acting on God's instructions (3:14-17; 4:14-18)**

Crossing the river was a hard thing to do anytime. The Israelites had to cross it when it was at its deepest and widest. Melted snow from the mountains had caused the Jordan River to get bigger. The Jordan River would be very dangerous to cross. But God had given **instructions** to Joshua. Joshua told

the people to get ready to move. The river stopped flowing as soon as the religious leaders carrying the Ark stepped into it. The water from upstream was stopped so that the people could cross on dry ground. The religious leaders stood holding the Ark in the middle of the river. They stood there until all of the people had crossed. They carried the Ark out of the river after all the people had crossed. Then the religious leaders stepped out of the river. It began to flow again. God's people were in the land He had promised them. The river returned to its place which did not allow anyone to follow them. They were safe.

### **Remembering God's instructions**

**(4:19-24)**

Verse 19 tells us that the people crossed the river on the tenth day of the first month. This was a special day for the Israelites. It was the beginning of Passover. (Exodus 12:2-3) The first act of the people in the new land was to thank God for keeping them safe. The people set up their first camp at Gilgal. This would also become a special holy place for the Israelites. Here Joshua told them to set up a

special place of remembering. Twelve stones that were taken from the Jordan were set up here. They were set up as a special place to remember what God had done for the people. These stones were to remind the people how God dried up the river so that they crossed on dry ground. They were also to be a special place of remembering for their children. The story of God's power and rescue would be told to any child who asked in the years to come. In this way these stories would stay a part of who the people were. Whenever the people faced obstacles, they could look at these stones. They could remember that God's power could help them overcome anything that might stand in their way.

**Joshua 3:7-17; 4:15-24**

**7** The Lord said to Joshua, “Today I will begin to give you honor in the eyes of all Israel. Then they may know that I will be with you just as I have been with Moses.

**8** Tell the religious leaders who are carrying the special box of the agreement, “When you come to the water of the Jordan River, stand still in it.”

**9** Then Joshua said to the people of Israel, “Come here. Listen to the words of the Lord your God.”

**10** And Joshua said, “You will know that the living God is among you because He will be sure to drive away from in front of you the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Hivite, the Perizzite, the Girgashite, the Amorite and the Jebusite.

**11** See, the special box of the agreement of the Lord of All the earth is crossing over in front of you in the Jordan.

**12** Now choose twelve men from the families of Israel, one man for each family.

**13** The religious leaders who carry the special box of the agreement of the Lord of All the earth, will rest their feet in the water of the Jordan. Then the water of the Jordan will be cut off. The water flowing down from above will gather together in one place.”

**14** So the people left their tents to cross the Jordan. The religious leaders carried the special box of the agreement in front of the people.

**15** They carried it to the Jordan and put their feet in the water. (For the Jordan water floods during the time of gathering grain.)

**16** Then the water flowing down from above stood and rose up in one place far away at Adam, the city beside Zarethan. The water

flowing down toward the sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, was all cut off. So the people crossed beside Jericho.

**17** The religious leaders who carried the special box of the agreement of the Lord stood on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan. And all Israel crossed on dry ground, until all the nation had crossed the Jordan.

...**4:15** The Lord said to Joshua,

**16** “Tell the religious leaders who carry the special box of the agreement to come up from the Jordan.”

**17** So Joshua told the religious leaders to come up from the Jordan.

**18** The religious leaders who carried the special box of the agreement of the Lord came up from the middle of the Jordan. When their feet stepped on dry ground, the water of the Jordan returned to its place. It flowed over its sides as before.

**19** The people came up from the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month. Then they stayed at Gilgal on the east side of Jericho.

**20** Joshua set up at Gilgal the twelve stones they had taken from the Jordan.

**21** He said to the people of Israel, “Your children will ask their fathers some time in the future, ‘What do these stones mean?’

**22** Then let your children know that Israel crossed this Jordan on dry ground.

**23** For the Lord your God dried up the water of the Jordan before you until you had crossed. It was just as the Lord your God had done to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed.

**24** Now all the people of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is powerful, so that you may fear the Lord your God forever.”



*Adult Bible Study in  
Simplified English*

### **Bible Text**

Joshua 7:1-12, 16-21

### **Memory Verse**

“Joshua said to Achan, ‘My son, I beg you, give honor and praise to the Lord, the God of Israel. Tell me now what you have done. Do not hide it from me.’” (Joshua 7:19)

### **Word List**

**Consequences:** what happens because of what we do

**Community:** a group of people who live together

**Confess:** to tell God about our sins and to be sorry for them

**Confused:** not sure and troubled

# The Danger of Acting Without God

Joshua 7 teaches us about always trusting in God. It tells us what can happen when we have sin in our life. Joshua and the Israelites learned quickly that it is very important to God that they obey and trust in Him. God will not bring good to us if we do not **confess** our sins and want to learn God’s way.

### **Israel did not obey God (Joshua 7:1-5)**

God gave the people instructions about their defeat of Jericho. The people were to give all of the riches of the city to God. No one was to take anything out of the city. One man secretly took some of the riches after they defeated Jericho. No one saw what he did. God saw him and became angry that he disobeyed. This one act by one man brought God’s anger on the whole **community**.

Joshua sent spies to the small village of Ai. The spies came back and told Joshua that the town was small. They said that Joshua did not need to send the whole army. So Joshua sent only 3000 men to conquer the town of Ai. As the small Israelite army got close to the town, the people who lived there attacked them. Thirty-six Israelites were killed. This defeat caused the Israelites to become afraid. When we fail we often become very sad and afraid. We need to learn to look for the cause when we are defeated. We should not look so much at the **consequences** of defeat. We need to ask God for help.

### Things To Think About

1. Has there been a time that you have forgotten how important God is in your life? How did you realize that this was what you were doing?
2. What do you think about the idea of a person's sin hurting the whole community?
3. What has it been like for you to confess your sin? How does it make you feel?

### **Joshua turned to God (7: 6-9)**

Joshua prayed to God. In those times, people often tore their clothes and put dust on their head to show sadness and shame. Joshua did not know why God was angry with His people. Joshua believed that their defeat was a sign of God's punishment. In verses 7-9, Joshua called out to God. Joshua asked God why this had happened. Joshua was **confused** and needed answers. He knew that the only place to get those answers was from God. The end of verse 7 shows that Joshua was feeling confused and very upset. He said that it would have been better if the people had not entered into Canaan. Joshua then said he was afraid of what this defeat will mean for Israel's future. Other cities in Canaan would hear about this defeat. They would think it would be easy to attack and kill the Israelites. If this happened, how would God's plans happen? Joshua did not ask God before the battle. But he showed that he understood that the people had to depend on God.

### **God answered Joshua (7:10-12)**

God answered Joshua quickly. He told Joshua to stand up and take care of the problem. The problem was not that God did not help them to win. The problem was that Israel had sinned against God. They had not obeyed God's instructions about Jericho. They had taken some of the riches and hidden them. Notice how the sins of one person had caused the whole community to suffer. Sin can be one person's secret, but it can have consequences for more than that one person. God had told them many times that they must obey. If they obeyed, God

would bring good to them. Disobedience would bring punishment. As long as the sin was there, Israel would be punished again and again. God would no longer be with them as long as the sin was there. This is a strong statement about the consequences of sin, but it gave Joshua reason to hope. Now he knew why they had been defeated. He also knew what needed to be done. By taking care of this sin, Joshua could bring God and His people back together again.

#### **Achan confesses his sin (7:16-21)**

God did not tell Joshua who had sinned. In verses 13-15 God told Joshua how to find out who was guilty. God told Joshua to call the people together. Joshua should tell them that someone had stolen some things from Jericho. The things were to be given to God. The tribes would then come forward one at a time. God would show Joshua the guilty person. In those times this was often done by “casting lots.” This usually involved throwing objects like dice on the ground and reading what they said.

Joshua followed God’s instructions. The family of Achan from the tribe of

Judah was shown to be guilty of the sin. Joshua tried to get Achan to confess his sin. Achan told the people that he had taken some of the riches from Jericho. He had hidden them in his tent. The total amount that Achan took was not very large. But he had sinned against God. This caused God’s anger to fall on the whole group. God tells Joshua to punish Achan and his family without pity. They were all killed in the Valley of Achor. The Israelites later conquered Ai (Joshua 8:1-29). The people worshipped God there. They remembered their agreement with God (Joshua 8:30-35). They had learned an important lesson about God. God brings good when we obey fully. Sin, even if it seems small and hidden, will bring God’s punishment.

#### **Joshua 7:1-12, 16-21**

**1** But the people of Israel sinned with the things that were to be destroyed. Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, from the family of Judah, took some of the things that were to be destroyed. So the Lord was very angry with the people of Israel.

**2** Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth-aven, east of Bethel. He said to them, “Go and spy out the land in secret.” So

the men went and spied out Ai.

**3** When they returned to Joshua, they said, “Do not have all the people go there. Only about 2,000 or 3,000 men need to go to Ai. Do not make the whole army fight, for the people of Ai are few.”

**4** So about 3,000 men of Israel went, but they ran away from the men of Ai.

**5** The men of Ai killed about thirty-six of their men and ran after them from the gate as far as Shebarim. And they killed more on the way down. So the hearts of the people became weak. They became like water.

**6** Then Joshua and the leaders of Israel tore their clothes. They fell with their faces on the ground in front of the special box of the agreement until evening. And they put dust on their heads.

**7** Joshua said, “O Lord God, why did You ever bring this nation over the Jordan, only to give us into the hand of the Amorites to be destroyed? If only we had been willing to live on the other side of the Jordan!

**8** O Lord, what can I say? Israel has turned their backs in front of those who fight against them.

**9** The Canaanites and all the people living in the land will hear of it. They will gather around us and destroy our name from the earth. Then what will You do for Your great name?”

**10** The Lord said to Joshua, “Get up! Why have you fallen on your face?”

**11** Israel has sinned. They have gone against My agreement which I told them to keep. They have even taken some of the things that were

to be destroyed. They have stolen and lied. And they have put them among their own things.

**12** That is why the people of Israel cannot stand in front of those who fight against them. They turn their backs in front of those who hate them because they are being punished. I will not be with you any more unless you destroy the things among you that should be destroyed.

**13** So Joshua got up early in the morning and brought Israel near by family groups. The family group of Judah was taken.

**14** He brought the family group of Judah near. And he took the family of the Zerahites. He brought the family of the Zerahites near man by man. Zabdi was taken.

**15** Then he brought those of Zabdi’s tent near man by man. And Achan, son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, from the family of Judah, was taken.

**16** Joshua said to Achan, “My son, I beg you, give honor and praise to the Lord, the God of Israel. Tell me now what you have done. Do not hide it from me.”

**17** Achan answered Joshua, saying, “It is true. I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel. This is what I did.

**18** I saw among what was left of the city a beautiful coat from Shinar. I saw 200 pieces of silver, and a large piece of gold as heavy as fifty pieces of silver. I had a desire for them and took them. See, they are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver under it.”



*Adult Bible Study in  
Simplified English*

### **Bible Text**

Joshua 9:3-15;  
10:6-14, 40-42

### **Memory Verse**

“The Lord said to Joshua, ‘Do not be afraid of them. For I have given them into your hands. Not one of them will stand in front of you.’ ”  
(Joshua 10:8)

### **Word List**

**Deceive:** to trick someone by telling them lies, to fool them

**Treaty:** an agreement between two people or two groups that they will be partners

# God Gives Victory

We all like to win. We like to watch our favorite sports teams win. We like to be rewarded at work for finishing a big task. We like to feel like we can defeat any problems in our lives. God likes it when we win, too. God’s plan is to help us do well. Christians all have an enemy who wants to defeat us. Satan has a lot of different ways to attack us. God promises to give us victory over all of Satan’s plans. In these stories in Joshua, Israel’s enemies tried to defeat them in different ways. Some tried to **deceive** the Israelites so that they would not attack them. Others tried to attack Israel before Israel attacked them. Every time, God protected Israel. God fought for Israel so that they would be able to defeat their enemies.

## **God gives victory over those who want to deceive us**

### **(Joshua 9:3-15)**

Gibeon was a town near Ai. The people there heard about Israel’s victories. They were afraid that the Israelites would attack them. They did not want to fight the Israelites. They wanted to live in peace with the Israelites. They decided to try to deceive the Israelites. They wanted the Israelites to think that they came from a distant land to help them. In those days people kept wine in skin bags. The Gibeonites made their wine bags look old. They dressed in tattered clothes. They carried dry and moldy bread. All of this was to make the Israelites believe they had traveled a long way.

### Things To Think About

1. Have you ever been deceived or tricked?  
How did you feel?  
What did you do?
2. Why is it important to always keep your promises?
3. Do you think God still uses nature to accomplish His plans?  
Can you think of examples?

They asked Joshua to make a **treaty** with them. God had told the Israelites not to make treaties with people who lived in Canaan. They could make treaties with people from other countries. Joshua and the Israelites were not sure if the people were from Canaan or not. The Gibeonites showed them their old food and clothes. Joshua did not ask God for help. He believed the Gibeonites. He made a treaty with them. There is a phrase “treaty of peace”. It means that both groups would live together without fighting. Because Israel was larger, they may have also promised to help protect the Gibeonites. The Gibeonites deceived the Israelites. But later they found out about the lies. They forced the Gibeonites to become their servants. Sometimes Satan will try to trick us into doing something that looks right. We need to be sure we always ask God before we agree to do new things.

### **God gives victory over those who seek to defeat us (Joshua 10:6-14, 40-42)**

Because the Gibeonites were partners with the Israelites, other groups wanted to attack them. One of these groups was the Amorites. The Gibeonites called for Joshua to come help them. Joshua remembered his treaty with them. They had tricked him but Joshua knew he still needed to keep his promise to them. God promised Joshua that he would defeat this enemy. Joshua took all the army. They attacked the Amorites. During the battle, the Amorites began to run away. God commanded Joshua to chase them. God sent large hailstones to kill even more of the Amorites. God also made the sun stay up for a full

day. He did this so that they would have light for the battle. The Israelites were able to kill all of the Amorites.

In verse 13 the writer talks about the “book of Jashur.” This book is also talked about in 2 Samuel 1:18. This may have been a book of poems. Perhaps it was poems about great victories in Israel’s history. The book of Joshua was written long after Joshua died. The writer may have used different books to help him write. These books had different stories about Joshua and the Israelites. We do not know what was in these books. We do not have any copies of the “book of Jashur” or any of these other books.

The end of chapter 10 tells us that Joshua conquered the whole land of Canaan. He defeated all of the kings he fought against. He killed all of the people who lived there. He was able to do this because God fought for Israel. But Joshua 15:63 shows that the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem still lived in the land. The first chapter of Judges says that there were other groups still living in Canaan. The main point is that God gave victory to the Israelites. With God’s help the Israelites

were able to move into their new land. With God’s help we can also enjoy victory. God promises to always help us when we need Him. God can defeat any enemy that comes against us.

### **Joshua 9:3-15; 10:6-14, 40-42**

**3** The people of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai.

**4** So they went out to fool him, as men from another land. They took old bags on their donkeys, and skin bags of wine that were old and torn and mended.

**5** They wore old and mended shoes on their feet, and old clothes on themselves. All their bread was dry and broken.

**6** They went to Joshua among the tents at Gilgal. And they said to him and the men of Israel, “We have come from a far country. Now make an agreement with us.”

**7** The men of Israel said to the Hivites, “It may be that you are living within our land. How then can we make an agreement with you?”

**8** But they said to Joshua, “We are your servants.” Then Joshua said to them, “Who are you? Where do you come from?”

**9** They said to him, “Your servants have come from a very far country because of the name of the Lord your God. For we have heard about Him and all He did in Egypt.

**10** We heard what He did to the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, to Sihon king of Heshbon and to Og king of Bashan who was at Ashtaroth.

**11** So our leaders and all the people of our country said to us, ‘Take what you need for traveling. Go to meet them and tell them, “We are your servants. Now make an agreement with us.’ ”

**12** Our bread was warm when we took it along with what we needed from our houses on the day we left to come to you. But now look, it is dry and broken.

**13** These skin bags that we filled with wine were new. Now look, they are torn. And our clothes and shoes have become old because of the very long way we had to travel.”

**14** So the men of Israel took some of their food. They did not ask the Lord what they should do.

**15** Joshua made peace with them and made an agreement with them, to let them live. And the leaders of the people made a promise to them.

**10:6** Then the men of Gibeon sent word to Joshua at the tents at Gilgal, saying, “do not leave your servants alone. Hurry and help us. For all the kings of the Amorites who live in the hill country have gathered against us.”

**7** So Joshua went up from Gilgal. He took with him all the men of war and all the strong soldiers.

**8** The Lord said to Joshua, “Do not be afraid of them. For I have given them into your hands. Not one of them will stand in front of you.”

**9** So Joshua came upon them by surprise by traveling all night from Gilgal.

**10** The Lord brought trouble upon the Amorites in front of Israel. He killed many of

them at Gibeon, and went after them on the way up to Beth-horon. He killed them as far as Azekah and Makkedah.

**11** They ran from Israel. And while they ran from Beth-horon, the Lord made large hail-stones fall from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died. More died from the hail-stones than the sons of Israel killed with the sword.

**12** Then Joshua spoke to the Lord on the day when the Lord made the Amorites lose the war against the sons of Israel. He said, in the eyes of Israel, “O sun, stand still at Gibeon. O moon, stand still in the valley of Aijalon.”

**13** So the sun stood still and the moon stopped, until the nation punished those who fought against them. Is it not written in the Book of Jashar? The sun stopped in the center of the sky. It did not hurry to go down for about a whole day.

**14** There has been no day like it before or since, when the Lord listened to the voice of a man. For the Lord fought for Israel.

**...40** So Joshua won the war against the whole land, the hill country, the Negev, the valleys, the hill-sides, and all their kings. He left no one alive. He destroyed all who breathed, just as the Lord, the God of Israel, had told him.

**41** Joshua killed them from Kadesh-barnea as far as Gaza. He killed them in all the country of Goshen as far as Gibeon.

**42** Joshua took all these kings and their lands at the same time. Because the Lord, the God of Israel, fought for Israel.



*Adult Bible Study in  
Simplified English*

### **Bible Text**

Joshua 24:1-3, 13-25

### **Memory Verse**

“The people answered, ‘May it never be that we turn away from the Lord and serve other gods.’” (Joshua 24:16)

### **Word List**

**Decisions:** choices we make, what we decide

**Descendent:** your children’s children for many years in the future

**Ancestor:** your parent’s parents for many years in the past

**Commitment:** an act or feeling of having to do something because you said you would

# Choose the Lord Today

We make **decisions** every day. Some of these decisions are small, like what we will eat. Some decisions are more important, like what job we will have. There are some decisions that we make that affect our whole life. The most important decision we can make is to choose to give our life completely to God. This decision puts God in control of making decisions for us. This decision affects our friendships, our family, and how we live each day. This is the decision that the Israelites had to make in Joshua 24. Joshua had led them in taking over the land of Canaan. He had divided the land between the different tribes. Then Joshua called all of the people together at the town of Shechem. He called them to remember all God had done for them. He told them to choose to always follow God as they lived in their new land. Their choice would decide if they would please God. This decision would affect all of their lives in the new land.

### **The decision was called for (Joshua 24:1-3, 13-15)**

After he had gathered the people together, Joshua reminded them of where they came from. He reminded them of God’s promise to Abraham. God promised Abraham that He would give Abraham’s **descendents** this land. The people Joshua spoke to were the ones who had received that gift from God. They were Abraham’s descendents. They were now in the land God had promised them, the Promised Land. This land was a gift from God. They did not have to build the cities. God gave them a land with cities already built. They did not have to plant seeds.

### Things To Think About

1. Think about the major decisions in your life. How were you able to make those decisions?
2. What events in your life do you remember as times when God most clearly helped you?
3. How can you tell when a person has fully committed their life to God?

God gave them a land with groups of fruit trees and vegetables and grains already planted. The people simply had to accept the gift and enjoy it.

In verse 14, Joshua reminds the people that they need to choose what to do with this gift. “Fear the Lord” does not mean that the people were to be afraid of God. It means that the people were to respect God for who He is. They were to understand that God expected them to obey. Disobedience would bring God’s punishment. The people are told that they should throw away the gods their **ancestors** had worshiped. Their ancestors had worshiped false gods and idols. God had been good to these people in many ways. All He asked was that they worship only Him. Joshua could not make the decision for the people. He could not make them make the right decision. Joshua ended this call by saying that he would be an example. He would lead his family to worship God.

#### **The decision was clear (24:16-22)**

All together the people answered Joshua’s call. They agreed that God had been good to them. They remembered how God had taken them out of slavery in Egypt. They remembered how He had kept them safe on their way to the Promised Land. They knew that it was God Who had defeated all of their enemies. They said that they would obey and serve God, too.

Joshua’s answer in verse 19 might surprise you. He told them that they were unable to serve God. Why did he say this? Joshua knew these people. He knew that they often said things that they did not do. He wanted to make them think about their

decision. He did not want them to think that all they had to do was promise to follow God. He reminded them that if they did not keep this promise, God would punish them. The people answered that they would surely keep their promise. They would not worship idols. They would serve God. One final time Joshua tested their **commitment**. He wanted them to say again that this was their decision. They could not blame him if they didn't obey. The people once again agreed that they understood what they were promising.

### **The decision was correct (24:23-25)**

The people had promised to worship God. Joshua called for action. He told the people to throw away their idols. These idols would take the people away from God. The people needed to make sure that their hearts were fully committed to God. The people agreed so Joshua made a new agreement with them. It was not really new. This was the same agreement they had made with Moses at Mount Sinai. This was an agreement between the people and God. This agreement put in writing the people's promise to follow and obey God. It also

reminded the people of what God expected.

Now that Joshua's work was done, he died and was buried (Joshua 24:29-30). The people were without a leader again. They had obeyed God while Joshua had led them. Now they would have to learn to follow God on their own. They had made a decision and promised to obey God. Now they would have to live up to that promise.

### **Joshua 24:1-3, 13-25**

**1** Then Joshua gathered all the families of Israel to Shechem. He called for the leaders of Israel, the heads of the families and those who judged between what is right or wrong. And they showed themselves before God.

**2** Joshua said to all the people, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'Long ago your fathers lived on the other side of the River. There was Terah, the father of Abraham and Nahor. And they worshiped other gods.

**3** Then I took your father Abraham from the other side of the River. I led him

through all the land of Canaan. I gave him many children, and I gave him Issac...’

**...13** ‘I gave you a land you did not work for. You live in cities you did not build. You are eating from vines and olive trees you did not plant.’

**14** “So fear the Lord. Serve Him in faith and truth. Put away the gods your fathers served on the other side of the river and in Egypt. Serve the Lord.

**15** If you think it is wrong to serve the Lord, choose today whom you will serve. Choose the gods your fathers worshiped on the other side of the river, or choose the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living. But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord.”

**16** The people answered, “May it never be that we turn away from the Lord and serve other gods.

**17** For the Lord our God is the One Who brought us and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house where we were made to work. He did these powerful works in front of our eyes. He kept us safe everywhere we went, among all the nations we passed through.

**18** The Lord drove away from in front of us

all the nations, even the Amorites who lived in the land. So we will serve the Lord. For He is our God.”

**19** Then Joshua said to the people, “You will not be able to serve the Lord. For He is a holy God. He is a jealous God. He will not forgive your wrong-doing or your sins.

**20** If you turn away from the Lord and serve strange gods, He will turn and punish you. He will destroy you after He has been good to you.”

**21** The people said to Joshua, “Not so, for we will serve the Lord.”

**22** Then Joshua said to the people, “You have spoken for yourselves that you have chosen to serve the Lord.” And they said, “We have spoken for ourselves.”

**23** Joshua said, “So put away the strange gods that are among you. Give your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel.”

**24** The people said to Joshua, “We will serve the Lord our God. We will obey His voice.”

**25** So Joshua made an agreement with the people that day. And he made Laws for them in Shechem.

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# ◊ Joshua and Judges ◊

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**Unit 2**

*Adult Bible Study  
in Simplified English*

Spiraling Downward  
(Judges 2 - 21)

**Lesson 7**

The Downward Spiral  
(Judges 2:6-7, 11-19)

**Lesson 8**

Deborah - Prophetess,  
Judge, Wife  
(Judges 4:1-17, 21;  
5:1-3, 12-13)

**Lesson 9**

Gideon - Struggling with  
Uncertainty  
(Judges 6:7-18, 21-22, 36-40)

**Lesson 10**

Gideon - Relying on God  
(Judges 7:2-21)

**Lesson 11**

Abimelech - Unworthy Leader  
(Judges 8:22-23; 8:33-9:15)

**Lesson 12**

Samson - Wasted Talent  
(Judges 13:1-7; 16:18-30)

**Lesson 13**

The People of God  
Falling Apart  
(Judges 17:1-6; 18:1; 19:1;  
20:1-5; 21:25)

## JUDGES: SPIRALING DOWNWARD

**T**he book of Judges begins like the book of Joshua. The leader of the Israelites died. The people had to work with change. They were trying to learn a new way of life. They were not walking around in the desert. They were living in new houses. But they did not have a leader to help them. Other people were still in the land. The Israelites did not make them leave like God told them to. These people worshiped different gods. The Israelites began to worship these gods. This made God angry. God punished them. He let other people rule over them. The Israelites were sad because of this. They knew they had sinned against God. They cried and prayed to God. They asked God to forgive them. God helped someone defeat Israel's enemy and free the people. After they were free, the people started worshiping the false gods again. This happened again and again in the book of Judges. Every time the people sinned, God punished them. Every time God punished them, the Israelites prayed for forgiveness. Every time God forgave them, God sent a new judge. Every time the people were free, they sinned again.

What can we learn from this book? We can learn about God's forgiveness. We can learn how God can use anybody. We can learn how to choose good leaders. We can learn how to trust God.

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*Adult Bible Study in  
Simplified English*

### **Bible Text**

Judges 2:6-7, 11-19

### **Memory Verse**

“Then the Lord gave them special men to judge what was right or wrong. These men saved them from those who robbed them.”  
(Judges 2:16)

### **Word List**

**Downward spiral:** events or actions that happen again and again getting worse each time

**Relationship:** the bond between two people

**Generation:** a group of people at about the same age

# The Downward Spiral

Everyone has a leader that they follow. When we are children, our parents lead us. When we go to school, our teachers lead us. When we get a job, our boss leads us. As citizens, our President leads us. Leaders are important. They help teach us. They help keep us safe. They guide us through trouble. But leaders cannot live our lives. Leaders cannot make us follow. Each person must decide how he or she will live. What happens to us when the leader dies? Will we be able to go on doing what they taught us? Joshua was a great leader. He had led the people into the Promised Land. He had helped them defeat most of the people who lived in the land. Now he was dead. What would the people do without a leader? Would they continue doing what he taught them to do? Judges 1-2 show us how the Israelites did not obey God after Joshua died. We can learn a lot from their example.

### **The death of Joshua (Judges 2:6-7)**

While Joshua was their leader, the Israelites had a good **relationship** with God. They obeyed God. They were not perfect. They did sin while Joshua led them. But when they sinned, they prayed to God to forgive them. Close to the end of his life, Joshua sent the people to their new homes. There were still other people in the land. Judges 1 tells us that the Israelites had not defeated all of the people. God had told them to kill all of the people who lived in the land. God told them to do this so that the Israelites would not worship the false gods. But the

### Things To Think About

1. How are you helping the next generation know about God?
2. What stories about God do you have that you can share?
3. Do you have hope for the next generation's relationship to God? Why or why not?

Israelites did not obey. They let some of the people stay in the land. In the book of Judges, these people lead the Israelites away from God. God then uses these same people to punish the Israelites for turning away from God.

Judges 2:6-7 tell us that the Israelites obeyed God as long as Joshua and the other leaders were alive. After these leaders died, the people quickly turned away from God. Verse 10 tells us that a new **generation** grew up that did not know God. This verse tells us a lot about the leaders that had died. It tells us that they did not teach their children how to obey God. They did not teach their children the stories about all God had done for the Israelites. Instead of learning about God, their children learned about the false gods. They grew up worshiping these false gods. The rest of the chapter tells us about what happened to them. This chapter shows us that it is very important to teach our children about God. We should tell them the stories about God from the Bible. We should also tell them the good God has done for us.

#### **The second generation (2:11-19)**

After Joshua died, the people turned away from God. They started worshiping the gods of the Canaanites. The chief god of the Canaanites was named Baal. The people saw Baal as a great soldier. They thought that Baal was the god that kept them safe. This made God angry with the people. Worshiping Baal was a sin.

Some people do not like to think about God getting angry. God does love us and shows mercy to us. But God is

angry with us when we sin. God is like a parent who gets angry when their children disobey. Because God was angry, He let people who hated Israel rob them and rule over them. Verse 15 reminds us that God had told the people that this is what He would do. These people did not like Israel and treated them badly. The Israelites cried and prayed to God. They asked God to forgive them for worshiping false gods.

God heard their prayers. God gave them new leaders who helped them. The Bible calls these leaders “judges.” These leaders saved the people from the ones that hated them. They also helped the people start worshiping God again. But again the people did not learn. They did not teach their children to always obey God. When the judge died, the people went back to worshiping the false gods. God would again become angry and punish the people. This downward spiral happened several times in the book of Judges. The people always went back to their sin when a leader died.

Many times we are like the Israelites. When we have hard times, we promise God that we will obey. When the bad times go away, we go right back to our sin. We

forget about our promise. This story in Judges shows us what can happen when we act like this. It shows us that it is important to always try to obey God. It is important to always talk about God to others and our children. When we do this it teaches others to obey. It also reminds us to obey. When we do this, we please God.

**Judges 2:6-7, 11-19**

**6** When Joshua sent the people of Israel away, each one went home to his own land.

**7** The people served the Lord all the days of Joshua and all the days of the leaders who lived longer than Joshua and who had seen all the great works the Lord had done for Israel.

**11** Then the people of Israel sinned in the eyes of the Lord. They served the Baals, the gods of the Canaanites.

**12** They turned away from the Lord, the God of their fathers, Who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They followed other gods of the nations around them, and worshiped them. So they made the Lord angry.

**13** They turned away from the Lord and served Baal and the Ashtaroth.

**14** The Lord was angry with Israel. He gave them into the hands of the angry men who robbed them. He sold them into the hands of those around them who hated them. The people of Israel could no longer stand in front of those who hated them.

**15** The Lord punished them everywhere they went. The Lord did what He had told

them He would do. The people were very troubled.

**16** Then the Lord gave them special men to judge between what was right or wrong.

These men saved them from those who robbed them.

**17** But the people did not listen to those chosen to judge. The people were not faithful to the Lord and they worshiped other gods.

They were quick to turn aside from the way their fathers had walked in obeying the Laws of the Lord. They did not do as their fathers had done.

**18** When the Lord gave them special men to judge them, the Lord was the judge. And He saved them from those who hated them. For the Lord showed them pity because of their pain when others made it hard for them and hurt them.

**19** But when the judge died, they would turn again and act worse than their fathers. They would follow other gods and serve them and worship them. They would not give up their sinful acts or their strong wills.



*Adult Bible Study in  
Simplified English*

### Bible Text

Judges 4:1-17, 21;  
5:1-3, 12-13

### Memory Verse

“Hear, O kings!  
Listen, O rulers! I will  
sing to the Lord. I  
will sing praise to the  
Lord, the God of  
Israel” (Judges 5:3)

### Word List

**Prophetess:** a woman  
who tells the people  
what God says to her

**Rescue:** to save and  
make someone safe  
from danger

**Chariots:** war-  
wagons pulled by  
horses

# Deborah – Prophetess, Judge, Wife

Some of God’s best leaders have been women. There are many examples of this in the Bible. Miriam was a **prophetess** and leader of the Israelites (Exodus 15:20, Micah 6:4). Esther helped save the Israelites (Esther). In the New Testament, Paul names many women who were leaders in the church: Phoebe, Priscilla, and Junia. There have been many other great women in the history of the church.

Think about your own life. Who taught you about God? Who first told you the stories from the Bible? It was probably a female Sunday School teacher. God has given women special gifts. God wants women to be able to use those gifts in the church.

In Judges 4-5, there is a story about two women. These women were very different. Deborah was a leader of the Israelites. She was a prophetess who spoke God’s message to the people. Jael was not a leader. She was not an Israelite. God used both of these women to save Israel. It does not matter to God if you are a man or woman. It does not matter to God if you are rich or poor. If we trust God, He will help us to do what He wants us to do.

### **God punishes Israel (Judges 4:1-3)**

Ehud had **rescued** the Israelites from the Moabites. He had brought peace to Israel for 80 years. After he died, the people once again started to sin against God. They began to worship idols. God became angry with the people. God let Jabin, the king of Hazor, rule over the Israelites. Jabin had a very large army. He

### Things To Think About

1. Can you think of a time when you trusted a person more than God?  
What happened?

2. Who are some great women leaders you know?  
What makes them great leaders?

3. Should women be allowed to be leaders in the church?  
Explain your answer.

had 900 **chariots** made of iron. The leader of the army was Sisera. Sisera and Jabin were cruel to the Israelites for 20 years. The people called for God to help them. They wanted God to come and save them from Sisera and Jabin. They knew that they had turned away from God. They knew that the idols could not help them. They asked God to forgive them and to rescue them.

#### **Deborah the prophetess speaks for God (4:4-10)**

Deborah was an important person in Israel. Everybody knew she was a prophetess of God. Everyone came to her for answers to their questions. She was a leader of the people. Judges 4:4 tells us three things about Deborah. She was a prophetess. This means she gave the people messages from God. She was a wife. This means she had a family to care for. She was a judge in Israel. This means she was a leader in the community. Everyone followed her. No one said that she could not be a leader because she was a woman. No one said she could not speak for God because she was a woman.

Barak was a leader of Israel's army. Many soldiers followed him. Deborah told Barak to take 10,000 soldiers to fight Sisera. This is what God had told her to tell Barak. God was going to help him defeat Sisera. Barak was afraid. He told Deborah that he wanted her to go with him. Barak did not trust God. Many times we do not trust God. We think we need someone else to help us. That person could be our teacher or pastor. These people can help us. But God wants us to trust Him to help us. Sometimes God does not give good to us because we do not trust Him. Deborah said that she would go with Barak.

He did not trust God. God would let a woman win the battle. Barak and Deborah led the army to fight Sisera.

### **The battle with Sisera (4:11-17, 21)**

Sisera heard that Israel's army was coming. He got his army and chariots ready. Deborah told Barak to attack Sisera's army. God caused Sisera's army to be confused. We do not know what happened. The chariots may have gotten stuck in the mud. They did not know what to do. Israel's army defeated them. While the soldiers fought, Sisera ran away. He came to the home of a man named Heber. Sisera thought Heber and Jabin were friends. Heber's wife was Jael. She told Sisera to come into the house. Sisera thought he would be safe there. Jael gave him some food and something to drink. She let him rest on her floor. Jael killed Sisera while he was asleep. She told the Israelites what she had done.

### **The song of Deborah (5:1-3, 12-13)**

Deborah wrote a poem about the battle. She thanked God for helping Israel. She told what happened. She knew that

God had helped them defeat their enemy. She thanked all of the people who fought the battle. She also cursed the Israelites who did not come to help. Deborah also praised Jael for what she did. Jael helped save Israel. Deborah helped save Israel. They helped give Israel peace for 40 years. At that time no one thought a woman could be a leader. No one thought God spoke to women. God shows us here that God does not care if a person is male or female. All God wants is for His leaders to trust Him. When someone trusts God, they can do great things. We should thank God for the way He uses men and women to do His work.

### **Judges 4:1-17, 21; 5:1-3, 12-13**

- 1 After Ehud died, the people of Israel sinned in the eyes of the Lord again.
- 2 So the Lord let them be taken by Jabin king of Canaan, who ruled in Hazor. The head of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-hagoyim.
- 3 The people of Israel cried to the Lord, for Jabin had 900 iron war-wagons. He made it very hard for the people of Israel for twenty years.
- 4 Now Lappidoth's wife Deborah, a woman who spoke for God, was judging Israel at the time.
- 5 She would sit under the tree of Deborah

between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim. And the people of Israel came to her to find out what was right or wrong.

**6** She sent for Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh-*naphtali*, and said to him, “The Lord, the God of Israel, says, ‘Go to Mount Tabor. Take with you 10,000 men from the sons of *Naphtali* and *Zebulun*.

**7** I will have Sisera, the head of Jabin’s army, meet you at the river *Kishon*. He will have his war-wagons and his many soldiers with him. But I will give him into your hand.’ ”

**8** Then Barak said to her, “I will go if you go with me. But if you do not go with me, I will not go.”

**9** And she said “For sure I will go with you. But the honor will not be yours as you go on your way. For the Lord will sell Sisera into the hands of a woman.” Then Deborah got up and went with him.

**10** Barak called *Zebulun* and *Naphtali* to come to *Kedesh*. He went up with 10,000 men. And Deborah went with him.

**11** Now *Herber* the *Kenite* had gone away from the *Kenites*, from the sons of *Hobab* the father-in-law of *Moses*. He had put up his tent as far away as the big tree in *Zaananim*, near *Kedesh*.

**12** They told Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor.

**13** Sisera gathered together all his 900 iron war-wagons. He gathered together all the people who were with him, from *Harosheth-hagoyim* to the river of *Kishon*.

**14** Deborah said to Barak, “Get up! For this is the day the Lord has given Sisera into your

hands. See, the Lord has gone out before you.”

So Barak went out down from Mount Tabor, and 10,000 men followed him.

**15** The Lord brought trouble upon Sisera and all his army in front of Barak with the sword. Sisera got down on foot from his war-wagon and ran away on foot.

**16** But Barak went after the war-wagons and the army as far as *Harosheth-hagoyim*. All of Sisera’s army fell by the sword. Not one was left.

**17** Sisera ran away on foot to the tent of *Jael* the wife of *Heber* the *Kenite*.

...**21** But *Heber*’s wife *Jael* took a big tent nail in her hand and a tool to hit it with. Because Sisera was very tired, he went into a deep sleep. She went to him in secret and hit the big nail into the side of his head. It went through and into the ground. So he died.

...**5:1** That day Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam sang this song:

**2** “The leaders led in Israel. The people were willing to help them. For this we give thanks to the Lord!

**3** Hear, O kings! Listen, O rulers! I will sing to the Lord. I will sing praise to the Lord, the God of Israel.”

...**12** “Awake, awake, Deborah! Awake, awake, sing a song! Get up, Barak! Lead away the people you took in war, O son of Abinoam.

**13** Those who were left came down to the rulers. The people of the Lord came down to me as soldiers.



Adult Bible Study in  
Simplified English

### **Bible Text**

Judges 6:7-18,  
21-22, 36-40

### **Memory Verse**

“So Gideon knew that he was the angel of the Lord. And he said, ‘I am afraid, O Lord God! For now I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face.’” (Judges 6:22)

### **Word List**

**Prophet:** a man who tells the people what God says to him

**Threshing:** breaking up grain to use for baking

**Miracle:** an act that only God can do

# Gideon – Struggling with Uncertainty

“What is God’s will for my life?” Have you ever asked this question? It seems everyone wants to know the answer to this question. Christians often spend a lot of time praying about this question. We all want to do what God wants us to do. But finding out what that is can be hard. We cannot always hear God speak to us. Sometimes we hear but we do not like the answer.

Finding God’s will was hard for the people in the Bible also. Many of them talked to God about it. Many of them asked God for special signs. The story of Gideon is one of these stories. Gideon wanted to do what God wanted him to do. Gideon prayed to God about what he should do. We can learn a lot from the story of Gideon. We can learn how to look for God’s will. We can also learn a lot about God.

### **God sent a prophet (Judges 6:7-10)**

After Deborah died, the Israelites turned away from God again. Judges 6:1-6 tells how God used the Midianites to punish Israel. The Midianites lived in the area to the south of Israel. The Midianites had been friends with Moses. Moses lived in Midian for forty years before he led Israel out of Egypt. His wife was a Midianite. After Moses died the Midianites became enemies of the Israelites. They came and attacked Israel. They stole crops and animals from the Israelites. They did this many times. The Israelites called out to God for help. God sent a **prophet** to the

### Things To Think About

1. How can we be sure we know what God wants us to do?
2. Is it okay to ask God for signs? Why or why not?
3. Has God ever asked you to do something that you did not think you could do? What happened?

people. We do not know this prophet's name. This prophet did not come to save the people. The prophet reminded the people of all God had done for them. God promised to give them land. God had kept His promise. God told them not to worship idols. The people had not listened. They had sinned against God. They had turned to worship idols. This is why God was punishing them.

### **God called Gideon – (6:11-18)**

The Bible does not tell us what the people did when they heard the prophet. Verse 11 says that “the angel of the Lord” came to Gideon. “The angel of the Lord” was sent with a word from God. God had a special job for Gideon to do. Gideon was hiding from the Midianites. He was **threshing** wheat inside so the Midianites would not steal it. The angel spoke to Gideon. The angel called him a “powerful soldier.” The angel told him that God was with him. Gideon wondered why the angel called him a soldier. He asked the angel why God was letting bad things happen to them. Gideon knew what God had done for the people before. Gideon thought that God had left His people.

The angel told Gideon that God wanted him to save the people. Gideon would defeat the Midianites. Gideon did not believe the angel. He did not think that he could do it. He thought that he was too weak. He thought that God needed someone important. Gideon questioned God like Moses did (Exodus 3). The angel told him that God would be with him. God often chooses poor or weak people to do great things. God always helps them do what He asks them to do. Gideon wanted

God to prove this. He wanted God to show him a **miracle**. Gideon went to get a gift to give to God. He asked the angel to wait until he came back.

**Gideon made a gift to God – (6:21-22)**

Gideon brought a gift of meat and bread to the angel. The angel told him to put it on a rock. Gideon obeyed. The angel touched the meat and bread with a stick. Fire came from the rock and burned the gift. This was the miracle Gideon had asked for. The angel disappeared. Gideon knew that the angel was from God.

**Gideon asked for more signs – (6:36-40)**

Gideon was still not sure God wanted him to fight the Midianites. He was afraid to fight them. He wanted to be sure God would help him. Gideon asked God for more signs. Gideon wanted God to do more miracles. Gideon laid a wool cloth on the ground. He asked God for a miracle. He wanted dew to fall only on the cloth. He wanted the ground around the cloth to be dry. The next morning the cloth was wet and the ground was dry. But Gideon still wanted another miracle. He put a new wool

cloth on the ground. He wanted dew to fall on the ground and not on the cloth. He wanted the cloth to stay dry. The next morning the cloth was dry and the ground was wet.

We often think we know what God wants us to do. We often struggle with uncertainty. We can learn a lot from Gideon. We can learn that God wants us to be sure. God wants us to ask for His help. God will help us be sure. God will answer our prayers for help. God wants us to know that He will always be with us.

**Judges 6:7-18, 21-22, 36-40**

**7** The people of Israel cried to the Lord because of Midian.

**8** And the Lord sent a man to speak for Him to the people of Israel. The man said to them, “The Lord, the God of Israel, says, ‘I brought you here from Egypt. I brought you out of the house where you were made to work.

**9** I set you free from the power of the Egyptians and from the hands of all who made it hard for you. I drove them away from in front of you and gave you their land.

**10** I said to you, “I am the Lord your God. Do not be afraid of the gods of the

Amorites in whose land you live.” But you have not obeyed Me.’ ”

**11** Then the angel of the Lord came and sat under the oak tree in the Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite. The angel came as Joash’s son Gideon was beating out grain where grapes are crushed, to save it from the Midianites.

**12** The angel of the Lord showed himself to Gideon and said to him, “The Lord is with you, O powerful soldier.”

**13** Gideon said to him, “O sir, if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all His powerful works which our fathers told us about? They said, ‘Did not the Lord bring us out of Egypt?’ But now the Lord has left us alone. He has put us under the power of Midian.”

**14** The Lord looked at him and said, “Go in this strength of yours. And save Israel from the power of Midian. Have I not sent you?”

**15** Gideon said to Him, “O Lord, how can I save Israel? See, my family is the least in Manasseh. And I am the youngest in my father’s house.”

**16** But the Lord said to him, “For sure I will be with you. You will destroy Midian as one man.”

**17** Gideon said to Him, “If I have found favor in Your eyes, show me something to prove that it is You Who speaks to me.

**18** I ask of You, do not leave here until I return to You with my gift and lay it before

You.” And the Lord said, “I will stay until you return.”

...**21** The angel of the Lord put out the end of the stick that was in his hand and touched the meat and the bread without yeast. And fire came up from the rock and burned up the meat and the bread without yeast. Then the angel of the Lord was seen no more.

**22** So Gideon knew that he was the angel of the Lord. And he said, “I am afraid, O Lord God! For now I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face.”

...**36** Then Gideon said to God, “Save Israel through me, as You have said.”

**37** See, I will put wool on the floor where grain is crushed. If the wool is wet, and it is dry on the ground, I will know that You will save Israel through me, as You have said.”

**38** It was so. Gideon got up early the next morning and took the wool in his hand. Enough water poured from the wool to fill a pot.

**39** Then Gideon said to God, “Do not let your anger burn against me for speaking to You once again. Let me make one more test with the wool. Let it be dry only on the wool. And let the ground be wet all around it.”

**40** God did so that night. For it was dry only on the wool. And all the ground was wet around it.



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### **Bible Text**

Judges 7:2-21

### **Memory Verse**

“That same night the Lord said to Gideon, ‘Get up. Go down and fight against them at their tents. For I have given them into your hands.’ ” (Judges 7:9)

### **Word List**

**Prepare:** to get ready for something

**Rely:** to trust in and depend on

**Doubts:** feelings of uncertainty or not trusting

# Gideon — Relying on God

In 1999, many people were worried about the future. The news said that a lot of bad things would happen on January 1, 2000. They said that computers would stop working. Water and electricity would stop. Grocery stores would run out of food. A lot of people bought a lot of extra things. They bought extra food. They bought extra batteries. They bought extra water. They stored all of this in their homes. They wanted to be ready. None of the bad things happened. Many people had a lot of extra things they did not need. Many people like to be **prepared** all of the time. We often make plans that we never need to use. We often buy more than we ever need. We often **rely** on things rather than God.

The story of Gideon can teach us how to rely on God. It teaches us that God does not need a lot of things. God can do great things with a small group.

### **Preparing for battle (Judges 7:2-8)**

In Judges 6, God told Gideon to fight the Midianites. Gideon called the men of Israel to join an army. Thirty two thousand men came to fight the Midianites. Gideon thought that this was a good number of men. God thought that this was too many men. God wanted the Israelites to rely on Him. If they won with a large army, they would forget God. They would think they had won because they were strong. God told Gideon to send

### Things To Think About

1. How do you prepare to do God's work?
2. Why do we think that we need a lot of things to do God's work?
3. Have you seen God do something great with something small?  
What happened?

some of the men home. God told Gideon to send away anyone who was afraid to fight. Twenty two thousand men went home. This left 10,000 men. God thought that this was still too many. God told Gideon to take the men to a stream. Gideon told the men to get a drink of water from the stream. Some of the men knelt down and drank without using their hands. Three hundred men drank the water like a dog, scooping it with their hands and using their tongues. God told Gideon to keep the 300 who drank like a dog. All the rest of the men were sent home. God told Gideon that He would use the 300 men to defeat the Midianites. Three hundred men was a very small army. There were many more Midianites. How could this small army defeat all the Midianites?

### **Gideon spied on the Midianites (7:9-15)**

Gideon was not sure this small group could win the battle. God knew Gideon had **doubts**. He told Gideon to sneak into the Midianite camp. God told Gideon to listen to what the Midianites were saying. This would help Gideon have courage to fight them. Gideon and his servant went to the Midianite camp. They heard two men talking. One man told about his dream. In the dream, a large loaf of bread rolled into the Midianite camp. It broke a lot of things in the camp. The other man explained the meaning of the dream. He said that the loaf of bread was Gideon. The dream meant that Gideon would destroy the Midianite camp. This was a sign from God. Gideon knew that the Israelites would win the battle.

**God gave Gideon the victory (7:16-21)**

Gideon prepared the men for the battle. He gave each man a horn and a pot with a stick of fire in it. They did not have swords. Gideon divided the men into three groups. While it was dark at night, the men surrounded the Midianites. Gideon gave a signal. All of the men broke the pots. They raised up their sticks of fire. They blew on their horns. They all yelled, “A sword for the Lord and for Gideon.” The noise and light woke up the Midianites. They looked around their camp. It looked like a large army was attacking them. They became very afraid. They started grabbing their swords. They began fighting each other. They all ran away. The Israelites chased them. The Israelites defeated the Midianites. God gave the Israelites a great victory.

God did not need a large army to defeat the Midianites. He used a small army without swords to defeat them. God still works like that today. God does not need a lot of things to do His work. Sometimes we think we need a lot of money to do great things for God. Sometimes we think we need a lot of education to do God’s will.

God only needs people to trust Him. God can give anyone the strength to do great things. If we trust God, He will help us do everything He asks us to do.

**Judges 7:2-21**

**2** The Lord said to Gideon, “The people with you are too many for Me to give Midian into their hands. Israel might say with pride, ‘Our own power has saved us.’”

**3** So say to all the people, ‘Whoever is afraid and shaking with fear many leave Mount Gilead and return home.’ ” Some 22,000 people returned. But 10,000 stayed.

**4** Then the Lord said to Gideon, “There are still too many people. Bring them down to the water. I will test them for you there. Whoever I say is to go with you will go. But whoever I say is not to go with you will not go.”

**5** So Gideon brought the people down to the water. The Lord said to Gideon, “Divide every man who drinks the water as dogs drink with their tongues from every man who gets down on his knees to drink.”

**6** There were 300 men who drank from their hand, putting their hands to their mouth. But all the rest of the people got down on their knees to drink water.

**7** The Lord said to Gideon, “I will save you

with the 300 men who drank from their hands. I will give the Midianites into your hands. Let all the others return, every man to his home.”

**8** So the 300 men took the people’s food and their horns. Gideon sent all the other men of Israel to their tents. He kept only the 300 men. And the tents of Midian were below him in the valley.

**9** That same night the Lord said to Gideon, “Get up. Go down and fight against them at their tents. For I have given them into your hands.

**10** But if you are afraid to go down, go with your servant Purah down to their tents.

**11** You will hear what they say. Then your hands will become strong enough to go down and fight against them.” So he went with his servant Purah down to the side of the tents where soldiers were keeping watch.

**12** The Midianites and Amalekites and all the people of the east were lying in the valley. They were like locusts, there were so many. Their camels were too many to number. They were like sand beside the sea, there were so many.

**13** When Gideon came, a man was telling a dream to his friend. The man said, “I had a dream. A loaf of barley bread was rolling toward the tents of Midian. It came to the tent and hit it so it fell down. It turned it upside-down so the tent fell apart.”

**14** His friend answered and said, “This is

nothing else but the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel. God has given Midian and all the army into his hand.”

**15** When Gideon heard the story of the dream and what it meant, he bowed down and worshiped God. Then he returned to the tents of Israel and said, “Get up! For the Lord has given the army of Midian into your hands.”

...**16** He divided the 300 men into three groups. He gave horns and empty pots with fire sticks inside to each of them.

**17** And he said to them, “Watch me, and do what I do. When I come to the side of their tents, do as I do.

**18** I and all those with me will blow the horns. Then you blow the horns all around the tents and say ‘For the Lord and for Gideon!’ ”

**19** So Gideon and the 100 men who were with him came to the side of the tents. It was late in the night. Different soldiers had just come to keep watch. Then the men blew the horns and broke the pots that were in their hands.

**20** All three groups blew their horns and broke their pots. They held the sticks of fire in their left hands and horns to be blown in their right hands. And they called out, “A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!”

**21** Each man stood in his place around the tents. And all the Midianite army ran away. They cried out and ran away.



*Adult Bible Study in  
Simplified English*

### **Bible Text**

Judges 8:22-23;  
8:33-9:15

### **Memory Verse**

“But Gideon said to them, ‘I will not rule over you. And my son will not rule over you. The Lord will rule over you.’”  
(Judges 8:23)

### **Word List**

**Worthy:** good and honest, can be trusted

**Unworthy:** bad, has not earned the right to be called worthy

**Misled:** made someone believe something that is not true

**Fable:** a story that teaches a lesson

# Abimelech - Unworthy Leader

All groups need leaders. Leaders help the group know what to do. They protect the group. **Worthy** leaders help their group do great things. There have been many great leaders. We remember the stories of these leaders. We try to be like them.

There have also been many bad leaders. Sometimes they did not care about their people. These leaders often hurt their own people. They were often **unworthy** of being a leader.

The Bible tells us stories about some good leaders. It also tells us about bad leaders. One of these unworthy leaders was Abimelech. He was Gideon’s son. He caused the Israelites to suffer.

We can learn a lot about the trouble bad leaders can cause. We can learn how to tell if a leader is bad. This story can help us not to choose bad leaders.

### **A worthy leader points people to God (Judges 8:22-23)**

The people were tired of having a lot of different leaders. They were tired of being attacked by other groups. They wanted to have one leader all of the time. They wanted a king. Gideon had defeated the Midianites. He had saved Israel. The people asked him to be their king. They wanted him to protect them. They wanted his son to be their king after Gideon died. Gideon told them that he would not be their king. He told them that they should make God their king. They needed to always follow God.

### Things To Think About

1. Who are some bad leaders you can think about?

What made them bad leaders?

2. Bad leaders usually make people argue and dislike each other.

Have you ever seen this happen?

What happened?

3. What are some ways that you can stand up against bad leaders?

Only God could always protect them. Gideon showed that he was a good leader. A **worthy** leader will always point people to God.

#### **An unworthy leader points to himself (8:33-9:6)**

When Gideon died, the people turned away from God again. They started worshiping idols. They forgot that God had saved them. They also forgot what Gideon had done for them. They were not kind to Gideon's family. They followed a bad leader. Gideon had seventy sons. One of Gideon's sons wanted to be king. His name was Abimelech. This name means "my father is king." This is a strange name for one of Gideon's sons. Gideon had told the people he did not want to be king. At that time all the other nations had kings. Whenever a king died, his son would become king. Gideon was never king. His sons would not be kings. Abimelech went to his mother's home town. He got all of the people together. He told them that they should make him king. He said that one leader was better than seventy. The people thought Gideon's other sons would try to rule them. The Bible does not say that the other sons of Gideon wanted to rule the people. Abimelech **mised** the people so they would help him. He told them to remember that he was one of them. The people believed him. They gave him money.

Abimelech used the money to hire very bad men. He led them to Gideon's house. All of Gideon's sons were there. These men were Abimelech's brothers. He was afraid that his brothers would fight against him. Abimelech and the other men killed all of Gideon's sons. One of Gideon's sons hid from the bad men.

They did not kill him. His name was Jotham. Then the people made Abimelech their king. Many times bad leaders get power by killing.

**Good people stand up against bad leaders (9:7-15)**

Jotham heard that the people made Abimelech their king. Jotham knew that Abimelech had tried to kill him. Jotham knew that Abimelech would be a bad leader. He knew that God had not chosen Abimelech to lead the people. Jotham went to tell the people that they had sinned. He stood on Mount Gerezim and told them a story. This story was a **fable**. This is a story that teaches a lesson. Jotham's story was about the people. It showed them that they had done wrong. The trees in the story stand for the people. The olive and fig trees and the vine stand for the men who had refused to be king. The thorn bush stands for Abimelech. This bush did not give much shade. It was used mostly for firewood. The thorn bush told the other trees to rest in his shade. Abimelech had told the people they should make him king. The thorn bush and

Abimelech had lied. Jotham knew that Abimelech would be a bad leader. He knew he had to stand up against Abimelech. He tried to tell the people the truth.

“Good faith” means doing something honestly. The people thought they made Abimelech king in good faith. He had misled them. The people forgot that God was their king. Many times bad leaders mislead people. They make people forget things. They make people believe lies. It is important for people to always look to God to lead them. We need to be careful that we do not forget God. Abimelech was king for three years. Later, his men turned against him. They started causing trouble.

Abimelech went to punish them. He was killed in the battle. Bad leaders often have trouble with the people. Good people need to be ready to stand up against bad leaders.

**Judges 8:22-23; 8:33-9:15**

**22** Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, “Rule over us, both you and your son, and your grandson also. For you have set us free from the power of Midian.”

**23** But Gideon said to them, “I will not rule over you. And my son will not rule over you. The Lord will rule over you.”

...**33** As soon as Gideon was dead, the people of Israel started again to worship the false gods of Baal. They made Baal-berith their god.

**34** The people of Israel did not remember the Lord their God, Who had saved them from the power of all those around who hated them.

**35** They did not show kindness to the family of Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon). They did not remember all the good he had done to Israel.

**9:1** Jerubbaal’s son Abimelech went to his mother’s family at Shechem. He said to them and to all those of the family of his mother’s father,

**2** “Speak to all the leaders of Shechem. Say to them, ‘Which is better for you? Should all seventy of Jerubbaal’s sons rule over you? Or should one man rule over you? Remember that I am your own bone and flesh.’ ”

**3** So his mother’s family spoke all these words for him in the ears of the leaders of Shechem. And they decided to follow Abimelech. For they said, “He is our brother.”

**4** They gave him seventy pieces of silver from the family of Baal-berith. Abimelech used the money to hire wild men of no worth who followed him.

**5** Then he went to his father’s house at Ophrah. And he killed his brothers, the sons of Jerubbaal.

He killed all seventy men upon one stone. But Jerubbal’s youngest son Jotham was left alive, because he hid himself.

**6** Then all the men of Shechem and of Beth-millo gathered together. They went and made Abimelech king, by the tree that had been set up in Shechem.

**7** When it was told to Jotham, he went and stood on the top of Mount Gerizim. He called out to them in a loud voice, “Listen to me, O men of Shechem. So God may listen to you.

**8** One time the trees went out to choose a king to rule over them. They said to the olive tree, ‘Rule over us!’

**9** But the olive tree said to them, ‘Should I leave my riches of oil by which God and men are honored, and go to wave over the trees?’

**10** Then the trees said to the fig tree, ‘You come and rule over us!’

**11** But the fig tree said to them, ‘Should I leave my good sweet fruit, and go to wave over the trees?’

**12** So the trees said to the vine, ‘You come and rule over us!’

**13** But the vine said to them, ‘Should I leave my new wine which makes God and men happy, and go to wave over the trees?’

**14** Then all the trees said to the thorn bush, ‘You come and rule over us!’

**15** And the thorn bush said to the trees, ‘If in truth you are choosing me as king over you, come and be safe in my shadow. But if not, may fire come out of the thorn bush and burn up the tall trees of Lebanon.’



*Adult Bible Study in  
Simplified English*

### **Bible Text**

Judges 13:1-7;  
16:18-30

### **Memory Verse**

“Then the woman gave birth to a son and named him Samson. The child grew up and the Lord brought good to him.”  
(Judges 13:24)

### **Word List**

**Talents:** things you are able to do better than others can

**Selfish:** thinking only about yourself

**Vow:** a promise to do something

# Samson - Wasted Talent

God gives everyone special **talents**. God wants us to use them to serve Him. Some people do great things for God. Some people do not use their talents to serve God. They use them for **selfish** purposes. Samson was one of these people. God brought good to him. God gave him special strength. Samson was stronger than anyone else. God wanted him to use this strength to save Israel. God gave Samson this strength to defeat the Philistines. He did not please God. He did not use his special strength to save Israel. Samson could have been a great leader. But he wasted his special gift from God.

We can learn a lot from the story of Samson. We can learn what happens when we do not use our talents to serve God.

### **The birth of a leader (Judges 13:1-7)**

At the end of Judges 12, another judge had died. The people turned away from God again. Judges 13:1 tells us that God let the Philistines rule over them for forty years. God was punishing them for worshiping idols. There is no statement about the people crying out to God. There is no mention of God sending a judge to save the people. The Bible simply begins telling a story about one family. The man’s wife could not have children. An angel from God came to her. The angel told her that she would have a son. This son would be a special man. He was going to be a Nazarite. These were people who were special servants of God (Numbers 6:1-21). They did not drink wine. They did not shave or cut their hair. They also never touched dead bodies. This was a special **vow**

### **Things To Think About**

1. How can parents help their children live a right life?
2. How much time do you spend alone with God?
3. How can we stop thinking selfish thoughts?

that people took to serve God. This vow was made by a person after they were older. Judges 13 tells us about a special event. This boy's mother made the vow for him. This son was to be God's servant all of his life. The angel told the woman that her son would begin to save the people from the Philistines. Judges 13:24 says that the boy was born. His mother named him Samson.

#### **Samson grows up (14:1-16:3)**

Samson's parents did what the angel had told them. They raised him as a Nazarite. They never cut his hair. They never gave him wine to drink. God brought good to Samson. He grew to be very strong. After he grew up, he started making his own choices. Samson made many bad choices. He often acted very selfishly. He forgot about God. He thought mostly about beautiful women. He always wanted a beautiful girlfriend. He often did things because of his anger. He killed many Philistines to punish them. In Judges 14 and 15, Samson never prays to God. He was a servant of God, but never talked to God. He lived a very selfish life. When we do not pray, we can become selfish. Prayer reminds us that we need God's help. Samson forgot this. He wanted to live his own way. Living like this caused problems for Samson.

#### **God uses Samson (16:18-30)**

Samson fell in love with Delilah. She was a Philistine. The other Philistines wanted her to help them capture Samson. He was much stronger than they were. They wanted Delilah to find out how to make Samson weaker. He knew his hair was never cut. He thought that his hair was the secret of his strength. His strength

was really because of God. Delilah asked him why he was so strong. He lied to her. He made up a story. He did this three times. Each time Delilah tied him up. She tried to help the Philistines capture Samson. Each time he broke loose and escaped. Delilah became very troubled. She kept asking him why he was so strong. In Judges 16:17, Samson tells her the truth. He tells her that if his hair was cut, his strength would go away. That night Delilah cut Samson's hair. The next morning he was too weak to fight the Philistines. They took him and put him in prison. They also made him blind. Samson was born to be God's great servant. Now he was a blind prisoner. All of this was because of Samson's bad choices.

The Philistines had a big party because they were happy. They had 3,000 Philistines in their temple for the party. They were thanking their god for helping them catch Samson. Samson was tied with chains. They tied him to the pillars that held up the temple. He prayed to God. He asked God for help. Samson wanted to be strong again. He was still acting selfishly. He wanted God to help him punish the Philistines for making him blind. Samson was not thinking about

saving Israel from the Philistines. He wanted to punish them because of what they did to him. God answered his prayer. God gave him his strength back. Samson began to push on the pillars. Soon the whole temple fell. All of the Philistines were killed. Samson also died.

Samson is remembered as a hero. But this story tells us a lot about God. God used Samson even though he was selfish. God used him even though he did not try to serve God.

God calls us to be His servants. If we want to serve God, we need to spend time with God. We need to give up selfish thoughts. We need to think mostly about doing what God wants us to do.

### **Judges 13:1-7; 16:18-30**

- 1** The people of Israel sinned in the eyes of the Lord again. So the Lord gave them into the hands of the Philistines for forty years.
- 2** There was a certain man of Zorah, the family of the Danites. His name was Manoah. His wife was not able to have children.
- 3** Then the angel of the Lord came to the woman and said to her, "See, you have not been able to have any children. But the Lord will make it possible for you to have a child and you will give birth to a son.
- 4** So be careful not to drink wine or strong

drink. Do not eat anything that is unclean.

**5** You will have a child and give birth to a son. His hair must never be cut. Because the boy will be a Nazarite to God from the time he is born. He will begin to take Israel away from the Philistines' power."

**6** Then the woman came and told her husband. She said, "A man of God came to me. He looked like the angel of God, filling me with fear. I did not ask him where he came from. And he did not tell me his name.

**7** But he said to me, 'See, it will be possible for you to have a child and give birth to a son. Do not drink wine or strong drink or eat anything that is unclean. For the boy will be a Nazirite to God from the time he is born to the time he dies.'"

**16:18** Delilah saw that Samson had told her the truth. She sent and called the leaders of the Philistines, saying, "Come once again. For he has told me all he knows." So the leaders of the Philistines came to her. And they brought the money in their hands.

**19** She made Samson sleep on her knees. Then she called for a man to cut off the seven parts of Samson's hair. She began to hurt Samson, and his strength left him.

**20** She said, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" He awoke from his sleep and said, "I will go out as I have at other times. I will shake myself free." But he did not know that the Lord had left him.

**21** The Philistines took hold of him and cut out his eyes. They brought him down to Gaza and tied him with brass chain. Samson was made to grind grain in the prison.

**22** But the hair of his head started to grow again after it was cut off.

**23** Now the leaders of the Philistines gathered to give a large gift to their god Dagon. They were happy, for they said, "Our god has given us Samson, the man who has fought against us."

**24** The people praised their god when they saw Samson. They said, "Our god has given us the one who fought against us, destroyed our country, and killed many of us."

**25** After the people had had much to drink, they said, "Bring Samson here so we can have some fun with him." So they called Samson out of prison and made fun of him. They made him stand between the stone pillars that held up the building.

**26** Samson said to the boy who was holding his hand, "Let me feel the tall pillars that hold up the building. I want to rest against them."

**27** Now the building was full of men and women. All the leaders of the Philistines were there, and there were about 3,000 men and women on the roof looking down and laughing at Samson.

**28** Then Samson called to the Lord and said, 'O Lord God, I beg You. Remember me. Give me strength only this once, O God. So I may now punish the Philistines for my two eyes.'

**29** Samson took hold of the two pillars that held up the building. He pushed against them, with his right hand on one and his left hand on the other.

**30** Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines!" Then he pushed with all his strength so that the building fell on the leaders and all the people in it.



*Adult Bible Study in  
Simplified English*

### **Bible Text**

Judges 17:1-6; 18:1;  
19:1; 20:1-5; 21:25

### **Memory Verse**

“There was no king in  
Israel in those days.  
Each man did what he  
thought was right.”  
(Judges 21:25)

### **Word List**

**Falling apart:**  
continuing to have  
more and more  
problems without help  
from anyone

**Shrine:** a special  
building where gods  
or idols are worshiped

**Priest:** special  
religious leader

**Concubine:** a woman  
who acts like a wife  
but is not married to  
the man

# The People of God Falling Apart

The book of Judges tells us about life in Israel before there was a king. The people turned away from God many times. God punished the people many times. The people cried out to God many times. Things kept getting worse. The people kept forgetting God. They were not telling the stories of what God had done for them. They treated each other badly. Everyone thought they knew the best things to do. Everyone did whatever they wanted to do. They did not have a king. God wanted to be their king. The people did not listen to God. We can learn a lot from these stories. We can learn what can happen when we do things our way. We can learn why we need to always listen to God.

### **The people forgot about right and wrong (Judges 17-19)**

Samson died. The people began to sin again. This time God did not act. Not much is said about God in Judges 17-21. God did not punish the people. God did not save them. The people did not cry out to God. Judges 17-21 tells stories of God’s people **falling apart**. They totally forgot God. They forgot the difference between right and wrong.

The first story in Judges 17 is about a man named Micah. Someone had stolen 1100 pieces of silver from his mother. His mother called for a curse on the person. Micah was the person. He confessed that he had stolen the silver.

### Things To Think About

1. How do we sometimes do what is right in our own eyes?
2. What are some signs that people today might be falling apart?
3. How can we tell right from wrong today?

Instead of punishing him, she praised him. Here we can see part of the problem. Parents were not teaching their children about right and wrong. Micah gave her back the silver. She took 200 pieces and made an idol. She gave Micah the idol. He built a **shrine** and worshiped the idol. He made one of his sons a **priest** in his shrine. Some time later a Levite came to Micah's house. Levites were the true priests in Israel. Micah asked the Levite to live with him. Micah wanted to have a true priest for his shrine. The Levite agreed. Here we see even God's priests did not follow God. The people of Israel were in a lot of trouble.

Judges 18 tells another story of the people's sins. A group from the tribe of Dan went to look for land. They were not happy with the land they had been given. On their way, they stayed at Micah's house. They met the Levite. They asked him if God would help them find land. The Levite told them that God would help them. They found land and brought soldiers to conquer it. These soldiers stopped at Micah's house. They stole Micah's idol. They made the Levite go with them. Later the Levite built a new house of worship in the town of Dan. He put the idol in it. The people in the area worshiped the idol. The people again forgot about right and wrong.

Judges 19 tells how the sin of the people got even worse. There was a Levite and his **concubine** traveling on their way home. One night they stayed in a town named Gibeah. This town was in the tribe of Benjamin. Some bad men came to the house where they were staying. They told the owner of the house to make the man come outside. They wanted to have sex

with him. The owner wanted to protect his guest. He sent the woman outside to the men. The men of the city hurt her. They left her to die outside the man's house. The next morning the Levite found the woman's body. He took her home. He cut her body into twelve pieces. He sent one piece to the leaders of each tribe. He wanted them to help him punish the men who killed her. Here we also see the people acting without thinking about right and wrong. They had forgotten all that God had taught them.

### **The people fight each other (20:1-5)**

Leaders from eleven of the tribes met in Mizpah. They sent a message to the tribe of Benjamin. They told them to give them the men who killed the woman. The leaders of Benjamin said, "No." They got their army together. The other tribes got their armies together. The armies fought each other three times. Israelites were fighting against Israelites. More than 60,000 men were killed. The women and children of Benjamin were also killed. They stopped fighting before all of the people in Benjamin were killed. The

people had sinned greatly against God. They had started fighting each other. They killed each other. They were not one group. Everyone did what they wanted to do. They had forgotten right and wrong. The people were falling apart. How could these people still be God's chosen people? They needed to ask God to forgive them. They needed someone to help them follow God.

We need to be careful to learn from them. We need to treat each other nicely. We need to remember what is right and what is wrong. We need to be sure we always follow God.

**Judges 17:1-6; 18:1; 19:1; 20:1-5; 21:25**

**17:1** There was a man of the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Micah.

**2** He said to his mother, “There were 1,100 pieces of silver taken from you. And I heard you pray that the robber would be cursed. See, the silver is with me. I took it.” His mother said, “May the Lord bring good to you, my son.”

**3** He returned the 1,100 pieces of silver to his mother. And she said, “I set apart all the silver from my hand to the Lord for my son. It is to be used in making an object to look like a god. So I will return the silver to you.”

**4** When he returned the silver to his mother, she gave 200 pieces to the man who works with silver. He made them into an object to look like a god for Micah’s house.

**5** The man Micah had a special building where gods were worshipped. He made a holy vest and gods for the house. And he set apart one of his sons to be his religious leader.

**6** There was no king in Israel in those days. Each man did what he thought was right.

**...18:1** There was no king of Israel in those days. At that time the family of the Danites was looking for their own land to live in. For no land had been given to them yet among the families of Israel.

**...19:1** There was no king in Israel in those days. And there was a certain Levite staying in a far away part of the hill country of Ephraim. He took a woman from Bethlehem in Judah to act as his wife.

**...20:1** Then all the people of Israel from Dan to Beersheba and from the land of Gilead came out. The people gathered together as one man to the Lord at Mizpah.

**2** The leaders of all the people, all the families of Israel, showed themselves in the meeting of the people of God. There were 400,000 soldiers on foot who used the sword.

**3** (The people of Benjamin heard that the people of Israel had gone up to Mizpah.) The people of Israel said, “Tell us. How did this sinful thing happen?”

**4** The Levite, the husband of the woman who was killed, answered, “I came with my woman to stay the night at Gibeah, a city of Benjamin.

**5** But the men of Gibeah came against me. They gathered around the house at night because of me. They wanted to kill me. But they did sex with my woman instead, so she died.

**...21:25** There was no king in Israel in those days. Each man did what he thought was right.