

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



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

**Bob  
Coder**

**BAPTISTWAY PRESS**  
Dallas, Texas

# **ADULT BIBLE STUDY IN SIMPLIFIED ENGLISH**

## **Teaching Guide**

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

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# Introduction for Teachers

This purpose of this teaching guide is to provide teachers with a plan for teaching a quality Bible lesson while helping participants improve their English language skills. Use of this material is suggested for International Sunday School classes or any Bible study group taught at a Basic English level.

The Teaching Guide presents each lesson in a standard format. Lessons begin with listings of the Lesson Focus, Focal Text, Background Text, and a Memory Verse. A Teaching Plan gives step-by-step teaching procedures under three section headings. “Connect with Life” is an activity to create interest, “Guide the Study” suggests procedures for achieving the lesson focus, and “Encourage Application” seeks to apply the lesson to life in today’s world. The final element is a listing of three or more “Supplemental Teaching Ideas” that may be used in place of or in addition to one or more of the listed procedures in the Teaching Plan.

The printed Bible text that comes with the Study Guide is taken from the New Life Version of the Bible (NLV) which uses a vocabulary of only 850 words. While not essential to the teaching of these lessons, you may find it desirable to have the entire NLV Bible available for reading background or other passages related to these lessons. The New Life Version of the Bible is available through Christian Literature International, P. O. Box 777, Canby, OR, 97013, telephone 1-800-324-9734.

The NLV Bible uses simplified phrases to express terms generally familiar to anyone raised in a Christian environment. For example, the word grace in the NLV is “loving-favor,” and immortality is “life that never dies.” In the Teaching Guide, the NLV terminology will often be printed first, followed by the usual Christian expression in parentheses. The teacher can choose which of these wordings is more appropriate for the language level of the class.

While prayer has not been specifically recommended as a part of these teaching procedures, it should be made an integral part of any Bible study. The actual times and situations in which prayer is used are left to the discretion of the teacher.

The writers and editors wish you success and give you prayerful support in your teaching of this Adult Bible Study in Simplified English.

**Adult Bible Study in Simplified English is published by the Baptist General Convention of Texas and follows the same curriculum plan as the Bible Study for Texas materials, but has no Texas emphasis. Teachers may wish to purchase Bible Study for Texas lesson comments and teaching guides as additional resources. These may be ordered through your church or directly from the Sunday School/Discipleship Division, Baptist General Convention of Texas, 333 North Washington, Dallas, TX 75246-1798, e-mail [baptistway@bgct.org](mailto:baptistway@bgct.org); FAX 214-828-5187; or toll-free telephone 1-800-355-5285.**

## About the writers

*Bob Coder and his wife, Lenora, live in Allen, Texas and are members of the First Baptist Church of Richardson. After taking early retirement, Bob and Lenora served more than four years on the mission field in London and Zimbabwe. Bob has previously written numerous lessons and teaching procedures for youth as well as for this Adult Bible Study in Simplified English curriculum. The Coders teach in two ESL programs through their church. Their four children all live in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex. They have twelve grandchildren and a growing number of great grandchildren.*

# Suggestions for Teaching

## General Suggestions

1. Provide language edition Bibles so students can read the focal passage in their native languages.
2. Beginning students may require three sessions to complete one lesson.
3. Review the Word Study before beginning the study. Provide page (see resources) for class to keep vocabulary studies in their notebooks.
4. Prepare 9-12 core sentences which tell the most important part of the Bible focal text. Illustrate each sentence with stick figures and symbols in *picture sequence* form (see details below).
5. Prepare lesson outlines or written materials before class—make your own cling sheets by cutting apart white plastic garbage bags and writing on them with markers. The plastic bags will cling to the wall.

## Bible Comments/Focal Text

1. Help students hear English and practice their pronunciation by modeling phrases and sentence. Allow the entire class to repeat. Be consistent with stress and intonation. Speak naturally.
2. Allow individual students to read a sentence or paragraph at a time. For further practice, ask students to tell sections from Bible comments in their own words.
3. When time allows, pairs may read the lesson again to each other.
4. Class may close books and listen as a native speaker reads the section again.
5. Discuss lesson using “Things to Think About.”

## Memory Verse

1. Challenge class members to say the Memory Verse several times each day.
2. Provide Study Sheets for students to write Memory Verses.
3. Write phrases or individual words on separate pieces of paper. Give to students to place in order.
4. Write entire verse on board. Read in unison. Erase key words a few at a time. Recite verse until entire verse is erased and class can repeat by memory.
5. Make a symbol for each word or phrase of the verse.
6. Use the symbols as a reminder for saying the verse.

## Picture Sequencing (Lipson Method)

This method is especially suited for teaching beginners. It consists of a series of pictures with accompanying sentences that tell a story. It may be used solely for oral production (using pictures alone) or for integrated skills (engaging students in reading and writing the story). You may use real pictures, videotape, pictures that are professionally drawn, or stick figures

Other benefits include the following:

1. Relaxed, low-anxiety atmosphere as students focus on the pictures and create their own sentences to tell the story
  - Focus on fluency, not just accuracy
  - Focus on a message or task rather than form or grammar
  - Minimal error-correction as students tell the story
2. Pictures (even stick figures) convey meaning in every language.
3. The same set of pictures can be used with more than one level of students by making the sentences easier or more difficult.
4. The use of pictures helps students learn the language in “chunks” rather than words in isolation.
5. The only item needed is a piece of chalk—or a marker, if using a cling sheet or overhead cell.

## Preparation

1. Put a story into sentences that are suitable for the level of your students. Try to tell the story with a maximum of ten sentences. For low beginners, choose the simplest and fewest words possible. Keep sentences in their most basic form, so students can combine sentences later.
2. Draw simple pictures or stick figures to illustrate key points in the story. These serve as prompts for the telling of the story. Other drawing tips:
  - An “x” in a small square beside a picture enables you to cue for a negative as you tell the story.
  - Direct quotations may be indicated with a cartoon-type bubble.

## Procedure

1. Introduce the story by following your prepared script of sentences (for consistency) and pointing to the pictures as you speak. This will give students the main idea and help them think in chunks of language (as in real-life language use).
2. Introduce the new words as you again reference the pictures. Use props and/or dramatization as needed to establish understanding. Work on individual sounds and word stress as students repeat new words.
3. Lead students in repetition of the story, one sentence at a time, working on sentence stress and intonation.
4. Lead the class in one more repetition of the story (going straight through and continuing to refer to the pictures throughout the story).
5. Ask the class to tell you the story as you cue the story sequence by pointing to the pictures. (You become “stage prompter” at this point.)
6. Then ask for a single volunteer to tell the story. (This may open the door for several more proficient students to use what they know.)
7. Divide the class into small groups of 3-5 students to

give each person practice in telling the story. (Inevitably, the most eager student will go first, followed by another “semi”-eager student. By the time it is the least proficient student’s turn, he/she will have learned a lot by listening, will have observed a good model at least a couple of times, and will have bolstered courage for risk-taking.)

8. Follow with questions to review story (begin by naming the setting, the characters, etc.—easy questions).

9. Conclude with life application questions that require some thought and give students opportunity to express opinion, emotion, and their own ideas.

**Lesson Expansion**

If the setting and circumstances permit, use these ideas:

- Sequencing pictures (a set for each pair of students) while listening to you or to a taped voice tell the story
- Picture sequencing without hearing the story told
- Matching pictures and sentences
- Scrambled sentences to arrange in order (writing numbers or letters in front of sentences to show sequence; cutting up sentences and moving around to position correct order)
- Strip story (cutting up sentences, issuing one strip per student, asking students to arrange themselves in order, having them retell the story by contributing the portion on their paper strip)
- Cloze (supplying a written copy with every n<sup>th</sup> word blank; students work in pairs to fill in the missing words)
- Dictation (teacher or student telling the story while students write what they hear)
- Provide a copy of the sentences for each student. Ask that they read the story to a partner.
- Ask students to write the story in their own words.

**Bible passage as content for reading**

*Procedure:*

1. Tell the parable or story using pictures. Use animation and simple sentences.
2. Ask questions about the main idea of the story.
3. Read story aloud while students follow along and underline unknown words. Go over the meaning of these words with the whole class.
4. Intermediate or advanced students: Have students read silently a second time to look for answers to two or three questions about details that you have written on the board. Ask students to discuss their answers with a partner. Then go over answers with the whole class.
5. Beginning or low-intermediate students: Read story again and ask students to repeat it with you line by line.
6. Invite the class to read the story with you in unison.
7. Ask pairs to read the story to each other.
8. Ask for volunteers to tell the story in their own words.
9. Make drawings large enough for the back row to see.
10. Select a list of new words in the story—unfamiliar words that the students would not likely be able to figure out from context (generally 8-10 new words per lesson).
11. List the new words in categories: verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs. When listing verbs, you may write

both simple present and past tense forms (e.g., eat/ate, walk/walked). Basic beginners would do well to tell the story in present tense, but high beginners could work in present tense, then retell the story in past tense.

**Checklist for Successful Classrooms**

*Right Kind of Input*

1. New language in every lesson
2. Input that is slightly above the students' current level of proficiency
3. Content relevant to the students' real-life needs and interests
4. Language learned in meaningful chunks, not words in isolation
5. Comprehensibility achieved by use of the following:
  - Realia or authentic materials
  - Simplified language (rephrasing, repeating, clear enunciation)
  - Demonstration and multiple examples rather than explanation
  - Lots of gestures and nonverbal language

*Low Anxiety Environment*

Students should not be afraid to make mistakes or take risks in language learning. The following factors contribute to a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere and build a sense of community:

- Personally greeting and bidding farewell to students
- Sincere and frequent affirmation
- Minimal error correction from the teacher
- Frequent reference to the culture(s) of the students
- Smiles and laughter that are commonplace
- Connecting with students through eye contact and positioning yourself on students' eye level
- Calling students by name

*Checklist for Real-Life Interaction*

1. Pace activities with a balance of noisy/quiet and still/active
2. Attention to different learning styles (visual, auditory, tactile, kinesthetic)
3. Variety in grouping (predominately pairs and small groups of three or five; using whole class in initial presentation and again for feedback and wrap-up at the end)
4. A focus on a task or message rather than form (grammar)
5. Provision for all four skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing)
6. Avoidance of questions for which answers are known
7. Use of information gap activity in which partners have different pieces of information and must ask each other questions in order to fill in their gaps of understanding
8. Other useful activities: surveys, interviews, role-play, problem-solving, and interactive games
9. Review previous material.

Some suggestions based on material developed for the EFL Training Manual—Beyond our Borders.

# Teaching Guide

The Books of Joshua and Judges

Unit 1: Joshua - Entering the Promised Land

## Lesson 1: When Things are not What They Used to Be

### Lesson Focus

God calls us to respond to changed circumstances with courageous actions, recognizing that God is with us.

### Focal Text

Joshua 1

### Background 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)

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### Connect with Life

1. Prior to class, cut out from magazines or department store ads three or four pictures of people at different stages of life; for example, an infant, a child or teenager, and an adult or elderly person. These should be large enough to be seen from the back of the class, and full-length views if possible. Display the pictures on a wall or sheet of poster board. Question the class as to what is different about the persons in these pictures. Bring out that each person is at a different stage (or age) in life. Note that the oldest person was much like the younger ones at one time, but that this person *changed* and is no longer what he or she used to be.
2. Suggest that, as we go through life, people and things are always changing. Question class members as to how they feel about change—first, what is good about change and, then, what is bad

about change. Affirm that change is mostly good for us if we respond to it in positive ways as Joshua did in the Bible study today.

### Guide the Study

3. To introduce the study theme for the next 13 lessons, let a class member read “Joshua and Judges” on page 2 of the study guide. Since there is no “Word List” here, you may need to explain that victories are when you win and defeats are when you lose. State that the first unit of this study includes six lessons from the book of Joshua, while the second unit covers seven lessons from the book of Judges. Then read or relate in your own words the item, “Joshua: Entering the Promised Land,” on page 5 of the study guide, to introduce the first unit.

4. Request a worker or class member to read Joshua 1:1-4. Remark that this is one of those times “When Things are not What They Used to Be” (the lesson title). Question the class as to what changed after Moses died (God chose a new leader for Israel). Use the section “A new Mission for a new leader” to comment briefly on how God chose the new leader for the people of Israel.

5. Select a class member to read the next group of verses, Joshua 1:5-9. Use the “Word List” to define the words *courage*, *encourage*, and *courageous*. Relate these words to the phrase “be strong and have strength of heart” used in Joshua 1:6, 7, and 9 as having the same general meaning. Request a class member to read the section “Encouragement for the new leader” from the study guide. Emphasize that God expected Joshua to learn the Law, know the Law, and obey the Law at all times, and God promised that things would go well for him if he did (verses 7-8). Mention that God expects us to know and follow His Word as well.

6. Point out that Joshua 1:9 is the “Memory Verse” for this lesson. Request a volunteer to read the verse aloud. Read it again yourself. Then direct the entire class to read it together.

7. Read or ask a worker to read Joshua 1:10-18 as class members follow in the Bible text. Use the sections “Joshua obeyed God” and “The people help their new leader” to comment briefly on the Bible text. Refer to the words “tribe” and “conquer” in the “Word List” and explain their meanings. Stress the manner in which Joshua obeyed God and how the Israelites (people of Israel) helped and supported Joshua as their new leader.

## Encourage Application

8. Refer to the last sentence of Joshua 1:5 in the Bible text where God says, “I will be faithful to you and will not leave you alone.” Ask: *What changes in your life do you have that, because God is with you, you can face with courage?* Close the session leaving that question for class members to think about.

## Supplemental Teaching Ideas Connect with Life

1. Good Old Days. Comment that older Americans often like to remember “the good old days.” Explain that this means they are thinking back to when they were young—when life was much slower and not so busy as it is today. Add that most people in the good old days lived on the farm or in small towns and seldom traveled very far so that life was simple. Comment that times have *changed* and more people now live in the cities. Add that there are cars and traffic everywhere, there are telephones, televisions, and computers, and that everything moves too fast for those old timers. State that these older Americans know people today have better educations, live better, and have more “things,” yet they still like to remember those good old days when life was not so busy and rushed.

## Guide the Study

1. Changes. (Replaces steps 4 and 5 of the teaching procedures) Divide the class into small groups of 3-5 persons. Provide a notepad and pencil for each group. Give them this assignment:

Read Joshua 1:1-9 and the first three sections of the study-guide lesson. Look for four changes that were happening in the lives of the people of Israel. Let one person in your group list the changes on the notepad.

Identify the three sections as the Introduction (no title), “A new mission for a new leader,” and Encouragement for the new leader.” Allow 10 minutes for the activity, then ask each group to name one change until all four changes have been identified: (1) A new leader [verse 2], (2) A new job or mission to do [verse 2], (3) A new place to live [verses 2-4], and (4) A new way of life [Introduction - as farmers and shepherds rather than people who wandered in the desert].

2. Moses. Before step 4 of the teaching procedures, use Deuteronomy 34:1-12 to summarize the events leading up to the story of Joshua.

## Encourage Application

1. Good Helper, Good Leader. Point out in Joshua 1:1 that Joshua is identified as “Moses’ helper.” Remark that we know from the Bible that Joshua was Moses’ helper for 40 years. Comment that 40 years is a long time to be a helper or follower, but that all of that time Joshua kept busy watching and learning from Moses how to be a good leader of God’s people. Emphasize that to be a good leader, we must first learn to be good followers and helpers of our leaders in the church or elsewhere.

# Teaching Guide

## The Books of Joshua and Judges Unit 1: Joshua - Entering the Promised Land Lesson 2: When People are not Perfect

### Lesson Focus

God uses people who are not perfect and whom others look down on.

### Focal Text

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

### Background Text

Joshua 2:1-14; 5:13-6:27

### Memory Verse

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

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### Connect with Life

1. Write on the chalkboard: *Is it ever right to tell a lie?* Then read it as a question to the class. Encourage class members to offer their thoughts as to why it is or is not right to lie. Take a poll to see (1) who thinks it is sometimes okay to lie, (2) who thinks it is never okay to lie, and (3) who is not sure whether it is okay or not.

### Guide the Study

2. Remark that we have a very interesting Bible story in today’s lesson. State that someone tells a lie. Ask class members to listen closely to the story for who told the lie as you read and they follow in the Bible text for Joshua 2:1-7. After the reading, question the class about who told the lie. Help them as needed to identify Rahab, or the “woman who sold the use of her body,” as the person guilty of lying. Use the section “Rahab protects the spies” in the study guide for further comments on the passage.

3. Ask: *Why do you think Rahab decided to risk her life to help the spies rather than turn them over to the king’s men?* Pause for any responses, then suggest that the next few verses will help answer that question. Select a class member to read Joshua 2:8-14 from the Bible text. Ask again why Rahab helped the spies. Direct class members to look under “Rahab makes an agreement with the spies” in the study guide to learn why she lied. Help them see that she had seen the great power of Israel’s God and had put her faith in Him.

4. Mention in brief the background events of Joshua 6:1-21. Describe how Joshua and Israel’s men of war followed God’s instructions to march around Jericho one time every day for six days with the special box of the agreement and with seven religious leaders blowing ram’s horns without stopping. Add that on the seventh day, they marched around the city in the same way seven times and shouted until the walls of Jericho fell to the ground. State that all of the people of Israel then went in and destroyed the city of Jericho and everything in it.

5. Let a worker or class member read Joshua 6:22-25 from the Bible text. Use “Rahab is protected by the spies” in the study guide to tell how the two spies led Rahab and her family to safety when Jericho was destroyed. Note that the names of the two spies are not mentioned in the story. Explain that Rahab was a pagan and a prostitute—one who was not perfect as a person but who put her faith and trust in God.

6. Recall the question in Step 1, “Is it ever right to tell a lie?” Ask if any class members have changed their minds about whether it is right or not to ever tell a lie. Suggest that if we listen to God, we will know whether it is right or not.

7. Direct class members to look at the “Things to Think About” on the second page of the lesson.

Read each question to the class and give the students a few moments to answer. If there are no responses, either provide your own response or simply move on to the next question.

## Encourage Application

8. Quote Hebrew 11:31a which says, “Because Rahab had faith, she was kept from being killed along with those who did not obey God.” (NLV) State that all of the people of Jericho had heard the same stories about the power of Israel’s God as Rahab had heard. Comment that they believed, but Rahab did more than just believe—she had faith in God. Point out that “When People are not Perfect” (the lesson title), God can still use them for His purposes. Stress that Rahab became an Israelite, and is named in Matthew 1:5 as being one of the persons in the family line of Jesus.

## Supplemental Teaching Ideas Connect with Life

1. Word List. All four of the “Word List” words appear in the first paragraph of the study guide. Review the word definitions, and then read the paragraph as an introduction to the lesson.

2. Perfect People. At the top of the chalkboard, write: *People Who Are Perfect*. Comment: *Let’s make a list of everyone we can think of who is perfect*. Urge class members to give the names of anyone they know of who is perfect in every way. If anyone should offer a name, ask if this person never gets mad, never tells even a little lie, never runs a stop sign, etc. until they realize that the person—like all the rest of us—is not perfect. Lead the class to agree that there are no “perfect” people. Remark that today’s lesson is about a woman who was far from perfect, but who saved herself and her family because of her faith in the God of the Israelites.

## Guide the Study

1. Map Study. Use a biblical map to locate the lands and places related to this lesson. Include Shittim, Jericho, Jerusalem, the land of Canaan, the Jordan River, and the lands east of the Jordan already occupied by Israel. If a printed map is not available, draw a rough map on the chalkboard.

## Encourage Application

1. Living by Faith. Summarize the lesson by writing on the chalkboard these points:

- *None of us is perfect.*
- *God can use each one of us even when we are not perfect.*
- *All Christians need to live out their faith as Rahab did.*

# Teaching Guide

The Books of Joshua and Judges

Unit 1: Joshua - Entering the Promised Land

## Lesson 3: When You Come to the Edge of the Waters

### Lesson Focus

Trust in God allows people to get past obstacles that seem impossible to get around.

### Focal Text

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

### Background Text

Joshua 3-4

### Memory Verse

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

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### Connect with Life

1. Describe to the class how people once kept all their family records in the family Bible. Explain how all of the births, marriages, and deaths were written on pages at the front of the Bible, and that this family Bible was passed down to the children and grandchildren so that the family’s history could be kept in one place. Point out that this Bible was often the only book owned by a family, that many children learned how to read from this Bible, and that it was a very important part of their lives. Stress that families usually kept the Bible on a table or someplace where it could be seen to remind them of God’s presence. State that the family Bible in early American homes helped the families to remember and honor God.

### Guide the Study

2. Instruct class members to read the first paragraph in the study guide (the Introduction) silently. Question them about the obstacles (see “Word List”) that stood in the way of the people of Israel when they (1) left Egypt and (2) as they now came near to the land of Canaan. Lead them to identify

(1) the Red Sea and (2) the Jordan River as these obstacles.

3. Give a quick summary of Joshua 3:1-6, part of the background text. Tell class members to picture the scene—hundreds of thousands of Israelites including men, women, and children (one commentary says two million people) waiting to cross the river into Canaan, the land that God had promised would be theirs. Ask the class to suggest what kind of thoughts the Israelites might have had at this point. (Possible answers might include fear, doubt, wonder, uncertainty, worry, concern, etc.).

4. Comment that Joshua may have felt some of these same things, but God spoke to him to give him comfort. Let a class member read Joshua 3:7-13 from the Bible text. Use the study guide comments under “Getting God’s instructions” to describe the special box of the agreement (Ark of the Covenant) and how it was to be used to show the faith of the Israelites.

5. Read the first half of “Acting on God’s instructions” from the study guide through where “...Joshua told the people to get ready to move.” Then request someone else (worker or student) to read Joshua 3:14-17 and 4:14-18 from the Bible text. Finally, read the last half of “Acting on God’s instructions,” beginning with “The river stopped flowing...”, as commentary on the Bible passage.

6. Refer back to Joshua 3:12 in the Bible text. State that in the first part of Chapter 4 (background passage), Joshua gave these twelve men a job to do—they each picked up a stone from the middle of the riverbed and carried it to the other side of the river. Indicate that these stones came from the area where the religious leaders stood holding the Ark of the Covenant. Then ask a class member to read Joshua 4:19-24 from the Bible text. Explain the significance of the day the Israelites crossed the Jordan and the purpose of the twelve stones, as

presented under the section “Remembering God’s instructions” in the study guide.

## Encourage Application

7. Question the class about what faith had to do with Joshua’s success as leader of the people of Israel, especially when he came to the edge of the waters of the Jordan River. Guide them to see that, because Joshua trusted God, he was able to lead the Israelites past an obstacle (the flooded river) in a way that did not seem possible. Assure the class that their faith in God can get them past obstacles too—probably not as great an obstacle as the Jordan River—but still obstacles that seem too great to get beyond.

## Supplemental Teaching Ideas Connect with Life

1. Obstacles. Refer to the word “obstacle” in the “Word List.” Read the definition and explain in your own words what an obstacle is. Ask the class members for examples of obstacles that sometimes get in our way. Help them name such obstacles as fences, walls, speed bumps, traffic jams, locked doors, children’s toys, road repairs, etc. Or place a chair or two across an aisle (as an obstacle) and ask a class member on the other side to come up the aisle to the front of the classroom. Comment that obstacles are not always things, but can also be things of the mind such as fear, worry, or anger.

## Guide the Study

1. The Ark of the Covenant. Describe the ark as a box made by Moses from instructions given to him by God (Deut. 10:1-5). The box was twenty-seven inches wide and twenty-seven inches high by forty-five inches long. It was covered with gold. The cover of the ark had two special figures on it that were like lions with wings and human faces. Inside of the ark were the two stone tablets that God gave to Moses with the Ten Laws (Commandments) written on them. The ark stood for the presence of God and was kept in the most holy place of the tabernacle. It could be moved only by the religious leaders, and they had to carry it with long poles run

through gold rings on the ark because anyone who touched the ark would die.

## Encourage Application

1. : Memory Verse. Comment that the memory verse for this lesson is very easy to learn and remember. Write the verse on the chalkboard, as follows:

*Then Joshua said to the people of Israel,  
Come here.*

*Listen to the words of the Lord your God.  
Joshua 3:9*

Allow class members to read the entire verse, pausing briefly at the end of each line. Repeat the entire verse two or three times. Then begin to erase one line at a time, and encourage them to recite the full verse, until all lines have been erased. Finally, request volunteers to repeat the verse from memory. Suggest to the class that “When You Come to the Edge of the Waters” (the lesson title) or face obstacles in your life, that would be a good time to “listen to the words of the Lord your God.”

2. Questions. Involve class members in answering or talking about the three “Things to Think About” on the second page of this lesson in the study guide. Suggest that answers to Question 2 may be too personal to talk about in class, but to think about their answers to themselves, or to tell them to the class if they feel comfortable in doing so.

# Teaching Guide

The Books of Joshua and Judges  
Unit 1: Joshua - Entering the Promised Land  
**Lesson 4: The Danger of Acting Without God**

## Lesson Focus

Acting on our own without first talking to God results in failure.

## Focal Text

Joshua 7:1-2, 16-21

## Background Text

Joshua 7-8

## 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)

## Connect with Life

1. As class members arrive, ask them to read silently the short opening paragraph of the study guide
2. Write on the chalkboard: One bad apple spoils the whole barrel. Explain that this is a famous American saying. Ask class members if they know the meaning of the saying. Confirm or provide the explanation that if one apple in a barrel becomes rotten, it will soon cause all of the other apples in the barrel to become rotten too. Suggest that we have a situation like that in the lesson today in which one bad Israelite’s sin caused all the people of Israel to suffer.

## Guide the Study

3. Review the “Word List,” further defining and giving examples of each word’s use.
4. Request that one class member read Joshua 7:1 (one verse only) and another then read the first paragraph under “Israel did not obey God” in the

study guide. Repeat the last sentence of that paragraph: This one act by one man brought God’s anger on the whole community. Comment that Joshua and the people of Israel did not even know that Achan had taken some of the things that were to be destroyed, yet the whole community of Israel was hurt by Achan’s sin. Assert that sin by one person in the church or community can often cause trouble for everyone.

5. Divide the class into three groups. Give each group one of the problems below. Advise them to read the problem, Joshua 7:2-5, and the second paragraph under “Israel did not obey God” in the study guide. Then instruct them to talk about the problem and answer the questions below.

Problem 1. Joshua could have sent 10,000 or 100,000 men to Ai to be sure of victory. Why do you think he sent only 3,000? Do you think the men of Israel would have won if he had sent more men? Why or why not?

Problem 2. Joshua talked to God before the battle of Jericho. God gave him a plan to win. But the Bible does not tell us that Joshua talked to God before sending only 3,000 men to Ai. Why do you think Joshua did not talk to God? How could his talking to God have changed the result of the battle at Ai?

Problem 3. When the men of Israel destroyed Jericho, they all felt strong and sure of themselves. But when one small battle was lost at Ai, their hearts became weak—like water. Why do you think they were so sure of themselves one day and so weak of heart the next?

After 8-10 minutes, request a volunteer from each group to read the problem and report on their answers to the questions. Bring out such ideas as (1) Without God’s help, Israel may not have won with any number of men, (2) Joshua and his men

may have thought they did not need God’s help to defeat a small city like Ai, (3) If Joshua had talked to God, God might have told him of Achan’s sin before the battle, and (4) Losing when you are sure of winning is hard. When the men of Israel lost, they realized that God was not helping them.

6. Read Joshua 7:6-9 to the class. Use the section “Joshua turned to God” to explain the strange way Joshua and the leaders of Israel showed their grief, sorrow, and confusion. Next, let a class member read Joshua 7:10-12. Then follow the line of thought under “God answered Joshua” in the study guide to comment on the reason God withheld victory from the men of Israel who attacked Ai.

7. Use the first paragraph of “Achan confesses his sin” in the study guide to describe how God told Joshua to find the one guilty of the sin. Then ask someone else—class member or worker—to read the final verses of the Bible text, Joshua 7:16-21. Finally, use the last paragraph of “Achan confesses his sin” as commentary on the passage.

### Encourage Application

8. Remark that Joshua sent 3,000 men to destroy the walled city of Ai without first talking to God. Suggest that he learned “The Danger of Acting Without God” (the lesson title) when his soldiers ran away from Ai. Encourage class members to always rely on God’s power and wisdom rather than their own.

### Supplemental Teaching Ideas

#### Connect with Life

1. Overconfidence. Remark that in sports, many teams have lost games because its players were too sure that they would win and did not play their best. Describe how the team that everyone thinks will win does not play hard while the other team does play hard and surprises everyone by winning. Comment that Joshua and the Israelites learned in today’s lesson that the same thing could happen to them in battle when they didn’t listen to and obey God.

### Guide the Study

1. Ai. Provide information about Ai (pronounced āī) as follows: Ai was a small walled city of about 12,000 people (Joshua 8:25). The city was about two miles from Jericho but about 3,300 feet higher. It probably stood in a mountain pass through which Israel needed to travel in order to cross the mountains into Canaan. The number of men of fighting age in Ai may have been the same as the 3,000 men Joshua sent to take the city. The men of Ai did have the advantage of living on the rugged mountainside and knowing how to fight there. Also, the men of Israel may have been tired from the steep uphill climb so that their bodies were weak before the battle started. After taking care of Achan’s sin so that God was again with Israel, Joshua destroyed the city of Ai.

### Encourage Application

1. Lessons. Write at the top of the chalkboard or on newsprint: What We Can Learn from This Lesson. Help the class to suggest lessons and add to the list such thoughts as these:

*God knows when you sin in secret.*

*Sin by one person always hurts others.*

*There is punishment for sin.*

*Sin, even when hidden, hurts God’s people.*

*Acting on your own without talking to God results in failure.*

# Teaching Guide

The Books of Joshua and Judges  
Unit 1: Joshua - Entering the Promised Land  
**Lesson 5: God Gives Victory**

## Lesson Focus

God provides victory for His people when they trust and follow him.

## Focal Text

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

## Background Text

Joshua 9-12

## 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)

## Connect with Life

1. As class members arrive, ask them to look at the “Word List” in the study guide and read the definitions of the two words listed there.

2. Present this scenario to the class: *You live in a city that is about to be attacked by a very large and powerful army. You have heard stories about this army. When it attacks a city, it destroys everyone and everything in that city. You are afraid of this army and what it will do to your city and your people? What would you do?*

- (1) *Get ready to fight until you die.*
- (2) *Run for your life.*
- (3) *Try to get the enemy to sign a peace treaty with you.*
- (4) *Hide under the bed.*

Repeat the question and choices if necessary, and encourage class members to respond. Then explain that we will see in the lesson today what the people in the city of Gibeon did in this situation.

## Guide the Study

3. State that even without radio, television, and telephones, news spread quickly across Canaan. Relate how the kings of the six tribes in the country heard about Israel’s victories at Jericho, Ai, and on the other side of the Jordan River, so they made a treaty among them that they would fight together against Israel. (Joshua 9:1-2)

4. Divide the class into three listening teams with these things to listen for: *Team 1. Where were the people from? Team 2. Where did the people say they were from? Team 3. Where did the leaders of Israel think the people were from?* Read Joshua 9:3-15 as class members follow in the Bible text. After the reading, lead the listening teams to identify: (1) *Gibeon*, (2) *a far country*, and (3) *a far country, not in the land of Canaan*.

Use “God gives victory over those who want to deceive us” for comments and bring out these key points:

(1) Israel claimed only Canaan as their Promised Land and any “far country” outside of Canaan was not their enemy. The people of Gibeon knew this and that is why they decided to deceive Israel.

(2) “The men of Israel took some of their food” (verse 14a) means that they ate a meal together to confirm their treaty with the people of Gibeon.

(3) The leaders of Israel had not yet learned their lesson. When they did not talk to God before their first battle at Ai, they were badly defeated. Here, again, before making the treaty with Gibeon, they did not talk to God (verse 14b).

5. Describe how the last part of Joshua 9 (background) tells how the Israelites learned that they had been deceived by the men of Gibeon. Next, relate how the first part of Joshua 10

(background) tells how the king of Jerusalem heard that Gibeon had made a peace treaty with Israel, and how this king had joined with four other kings of the Amorites to fight against Gibeon. Then let a class member read Joshua 10:6-14 from the Bible text.

6. Ask what two miracles of God helped the army of Israel defeat the Amorites completely. Help the class identify the two miracles as (1) large hailstones fell upon the Amorites, killing more of them than the men of Israel killed with their swords, and (2) the sun stood still so that Israel could have time to punish those who fought against them.

7. Mention the reference in Joshua 10:13 to the Book of Jashur, and use the second paragraph under “God gives victory over those who seek to defeat us” in the study guide to explain this reference.

### Encourage Application

8. Remark that life is full of battles—small battles like at Ai, and large battles like with the Amorites. Comment that *this lesson teaches us that we should:*

- (1) Trust and follow God.
- (2) Keep sin out of our lives.
- (3) Talk with God before we act.

Assert that if we do these three things, we can depend on God to give us victory.

### Supplemental Teaching Ideas Connect with Life

1. Trust. Raise the question: *If you give your word on something, how important is it for you to keep that promise.* Allow two or three responses, then ask: *How important do you think it is to most Americans today to keep their word?* Recall how in early America, a man who gave his word could be trusted to keep it. Suggest that it isn’t that way today. Note that we now must have everything signed, witnessed, and recorded because too many people can’t be trusted to keep their word. Comment that we will see in the lesson today how Joshua and the leaders of Israel were tricked into making a promise, but kept their word even after they learned

that they had been deceived.

### Guide the Study

1. Battle Orders. To help class members understand the actions of Israel as it fights the tribes of Canaan, read all or selected parts of Deuteronomy 20:10-18.

2. Memory Verse Scramble. Type or reproduce several copies of the “Memory Verse” before the session so that there is one complete verse for each three students. Make the copies in larger print if possible. Cut each verse into three strips so that there is one sentence of the verse on each strip. To begin the activity, divide the number of class members by three and put that number of verse sets into a box or basket (add one extra set of verse strips if the divided number of class members does not come out evenly). First, instruct participants to read the “Memory Verse” in the study guide, noting the order of each sentence in the verse. Next, shake the container to mix the sentence strips, and allow each participant to draw one strip from the container. Then instruct them to find two other players with two other sentence strips needed to complete the memory verse. Allow the first group to complete a matched set to read the verse aloud—each person reading his or her own sentence strip in order.

### Encourage Application

1. Promises. Recall how the leaders of Israel made a mistake in not talking to God before making the peace treaty with the people of Gibeon. But express that they did the right thing in keeping their word and honoring the treaty after they learned that they had been deceived. Refer to Question 2 under “Things to Think About” in the study guide.

Encourage class members to answer that question. Follow with questions such as:

- (1) How does keeping your promises make you feel?
- (2) How do you think it makes others feel about you?
- (3) How does keeping your word affect others?
- (4) How do you think God responds when you keep your promises?

# Teaching Guide

## The Books of Joshua and Judges Unit 1: Joshua - Entering the Promised Land Lesson 6: Choose the Lord Today

### Lesson Focus

We are called to honor and serve God as the Lord of our lives.

### Focal Text

Joshua 24:1-3, 13-25

### Background Text

Joshua 24

### Memory Verse

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

### Connect with Life

1. Before the class, enlist someone with a good speaking voice to make a tape recording of the first paragraph (Introduction) in the study guide. Play this recording or simply read the paragraph to the class.

### Guide the Study

2. Provide this brief summary of our study in the book of Joshua to this point:

We have followed Joshua as he led Israel from the eastern side of the Jordan River, across the river on dry ground, to Jericho and Ai, to Gilgal where Israel was deceived by the people of Gibeon, and all through the land of Canaan where God gave Israel great victories.

We have seen how altars were built, walls fell down, Achan’s sin was punished, the sun stood still for a day, and Israel made its home in the land that God had promised them.

Now Joshua is about 110 years old (Judges 2:8). It is time for Israel to look to the future without Joshua as their leader. It is time for the people of Israel to make a new promise to the Lord their God.

3. Request a class member to read Joshua 24:1-3 from the Bible text. Then ask someone else to read the first paragraph only of “The decision was called for” in the study guide. Identify the river mentioned in verse 2 as the Euphrates River. Describe this as one of the four rivers of Eden (Genesis 2:14) and the area from which Joshua’s ancestors (“fathers” in verse 2) came.

4. Observe that in verses 4-12 (background), God mentions all of the things He had done to help Israel because of His agreement (covenant) with Abraham. Note that God’s summary of what He had done for Israel ends with verse 13. Direct the class to follow in the Bible text as you read Joshua 24:13-15. Point out that the reason Joshua called all of Israel’s families together was to prepare them for the time he would no longer be their leader. Add that he wanted them to make a new promise to continue to serve the Lord, their God. Draw additional comments as needed from the second paragraph under “The decision was called for” in the study guide.

5. Remark that Joshua made his commitment clear—he and his family would serve the Lord. State that now it was time for all of Israel’s tribes and families to make their commitment—who would they serve? Ask for a volunteer from the class to read Joshua 24:16-22 from the Bible text. Write on the chalkboard: *Why did Joshua speak so strongly to the people of Israel in verses 19-20?* Instruct the class to read silently “The decision was clear” in the study guide. Allow volunteers to respond to the question, bringing out the answer that Joshua wanted the people of Israel to be sure of their reply because God would punish them if they did not keep their promise.

6. Permit a class member to read Joshua 24:23-25 from the Bible text. Either read or put into your own words the comments under “The decision was correct” in the study guide.

## Encourage Application

7. Comment that many Christians have parts of Joshua 24:15 framed and hanging on the walls of their homes. First read the entire verse from the Bible text. Then explain that the parts of the verse framed to hang in people's homes are taken from Joshua's words in the verse, "Choose today whom you will serve. As for me and my family, we will serve the Lord." (NLV wording) Mention that the next verse is Joshua 24:16, our "Memory Verse" for this lesson. Direct the class to look at the memory verse in the study guide. Explain that you will read the first part of the verse and they should read the rest of the verse together in response. Begin reading, "The people answered..." and raise your hand to encourage their response, "May it never be...etc." Repeat this several times. Then encourage different class members to repeat the entire verse without looking at it.

8. Remark that God wants us to be very sure of our promise to serve Him. *Ask: How sure are you?* Refer to the lesson title and say, "I hope you will 'Choose the Lord Today.'"

## Supplemental Teaching Ideas Connect with Life

1. Personal Testimony. Enlist someone to give a personal testimony of her or his experience in coming to know and believe in Jesus Christ. The person may be a class member, church member, friend, or—yourself. Provide information to this person about the class members and their language skills, the subject matter of the unit and this lesson, or anything else that might help them focus their testimony to be of interest to your students. Limit the testimony to about five minutes.

## Guide the Study

1. A Gift. (For Guide the Study, use this activity between steps 4 and 5 of the Teaching Plan.) Place enough treats on a silver platter for each class member. Explain that having something given to you on a silver platter means that you get it free—without any effort on your part. Take the platter to

each person and allow them each to take a treat. Explain that the treats are a gift, that the class members did no work, paid no money, or did nothing to earn their treat—it was "given to them on a silver platter." State that this was the way the people of Israel received their land and homes in Canaan—the Promised Land—and that God gave it to them on a silver platter so to speak. Advise them to remember this as they study this last lesson from the book of Joshua.

## Encourage Application

1. Litany. Comment that the Bible text today has some very wise words about our need to commit ourselves to honor and serve God as the Lord of our lives. Write these excerpts on the chalkboard or newsprint or project them onto a wall using an overhead projector. Explain that you will read the Leader's part, one line at a time. Then the class should read their part in response. (Writing them side by side may work best). Write:

### LEADER

1. *Fear the Lord.*
2. *Choose today whom you will serve.*
3. *Put away the strange gods that are among you.*
4. *We will serve the Lord.*

### CLASS

1. *Serve Him in faith and truth.*
2. *As for me and my family we will serve the Lord.*
3. *May it never be that we turn away from the Lord and serve other gods.*
4. *For He is our God.*

# Teaching Guide

## The Books of Joshua and Judges Unit 2: Judges - Spiraling Downward Lesson 7: The Downward Spiral

### Lesson Focus

Each generation is responsible for setting an example of faith in God for future generations.

### Focal Text

Judges 2:6-7, 11-19

### Background Text

Judges 1-2

### 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)

### Connect with Life

1. Display this generation chart on the chalkboard or display it by any other means available:

#### GENERATION CHART

Great, great grandparents	“	Ancestors
Great grandparents	“	“
Grandparents	“	“
Parents (You)		
Descendants	Children	
“	Grandchildren	
“	Great grandchildren	
“	Great, great grandchildren	

Make these points: (1) Each step in the chart is a generation, (2) Anyone above you on the chart is an ancestor,\* (3) Anyone below you on the chart is a descendant,\* and (4) You have a relationship to all of these people.

\*From Lesson 6 “Word List”

### Guide the Study

2. Refer to the introduction for this new unit of study, “Judges: Spiraling Downward,” on page 30 of the study guide. Question the class to see if

anyone knows what it means to “spiral downward.” Expand on any explanation offered by the class as needed. As an illustration, hold one hand high with your index finger pointed down, then slowly move it in downward circles like a spiral. Then read the unit introduction, noting how not only the events but even some of the words and sentences as you read seem to almost spiral downward (emphasize that effect as you read).

3. Invite class members to look at the first paragraph of the study guide, the lesson introduction. Without reading the entire paragraph, simply point out the thoughts presented there and the situation Israel found itself in without a strong national leader.

4. Request a class member to read Judges 2:6-7 from the Bible text. Remark that the next verse, Judges 2:8 tells us that Joshua died when he was 110 years old. Continue the comparison of what it was like before and after the deaths of Joshua and the other leaders. Express how there were no longer any people of Israel who had seen any of the great things God had done for Israel—leading them out of Egypt, giving them the bread from heaven (manna) to eat in the desert, leading them across the Jordan River on dry ground, causing the walls to fall at Jericho, and giving them great victories all across Canaan. Quote or read parts of “The death of Joshua” in the study guide to describe how Israel began to spiral downward and turn away from God. Develop also the idea that we should teach and be examples to our children so that they too will follow the Lord.

5. Enlist three class members to read a group of verses from the Bible text, as follows: (1) Judges 2:11-13, (2) Judges 2:14-15; and (3) Judges 2:16-19. After each reading, question the class as to what is the main idea or most important thought of that group of verses. Help them identify, and list on the chalkboard, these main points: (1) The people of

Israel were turning away from the God of their ancestors to serve other gods, (2) The Lord was angry and punished the people of Israel for serving other gods, and (3) The Lord gave the people of Israel special judges to save them from their enemies.

6. Instruct class members to look again at Judges 2:11-19 in the Bible text. Call attention to how over and over again we are told that the people of Israel served or worshiped Baal and Ashtaroah and other gods (verses 11, 12, 13, 17, and 19). Remind the class that the people of Israel were God's chosen people, but they had turned away from Him to serve other gods—the gods of the people of Canaan. Remind them also that the first of the Ten Great Laws (Commandments) God gave to Moses said, "Have no gods other than Me." Use the study guide section, "The second generation," for other comments.

### Encourage Application

7. Instruct class members to look at the "Things to Think About" questions in the study guide. Read all three questions, pausing a moment or two for class members to think about the question. Encourage anyone who will to respond but, if there are no volunteers, move on to the next question. Press a little for comments regarding Question No. 3 and try to get some discussion started. Assuming that students in your class are mostly adults and parents, question them about what we can do as parents to help our children and grandchildren honor God. Help them identify such means as to set a good example by being faithful to God ourselves, finding a children's Bible class that they enjoy, reading or telling them Bible stories at home, talking to them about God and Jesus and letting them know that you love God, etc. Request class members to think about their hope for future generations and decide what they need to do so that there is an upward spiral of faith in their families.

## Supplemental Teaching Ideas

### Connect with Life

1. Leaderless. Read the first paragraph (the introduction) of the study guide to explain the situation Israel faced without a national leader.

2. Visual. To illustrate the concept of spiraling downward, bring to class a Slinky toy, large spring, or spiral notebook. Show this object to the class and point out how the spiral goes steadily downward. Point out that, once the spiral downward begins, it keeps going down-down-down all the way to the bottom. State that this is the idea expressed in the unit and lesson titles for this study.

### Guide the Study

1. Anger. Judges 2:14-15 describes God's anger at Israel. Some class members may be surprised that anger could come from the loving God of the New Way of Worship (New Testament). Explain the difference in this manner: God's anger is not like human anger. When people get angry, we want to fight or hurt or get back at those with whom we are angry. We want to prove that they are wrong. We want to punish them. God gets angry when people sin and worship other gods. He doesn't want to hurt or punish them. He wants only to help them and make them sorry for their sin. He wants them to turn away from their sin and honor Him. He wants them to have the life that lasts forever that only He through His Son Jesus can give them. Thus, God's anger is an anger of love.

### Encourage Application

1. Involve three or four class members, one at a time, in reading aloud the "Memory Verse." Then encourage anyone who will to try to say it from memory.

# Teaching Guide

The Books of Joshua and Judges  
Unit 2: Judges - Spiraling Downward  
**Lesson 8: Deborah—Prophetess, Judge, Wife**

## Lesson Focus

God uses women as well as men to do His work.

## Focal Text

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

## Background Text

Judges 4-5

## 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)

## Connect with Life

1. Pronounce the name, “Deborah.” Remark that Deborah is a woman’s name. Suggest that we would probably call her “Debbie” today. Question the class about the name, Deborah—is it a pretty name? Do you like it? What do you think a woman named Deborah would look like? Do you know anyone named Deborah? Call attention to the lesson title in today’s study guide and note that she was a prophetess, judge, and wife. Refer to the definition of a **prophetess** in the “Word List” and recall the term judges from the previous lesson. Further define a judge as one who (1) spoke for God, (2) was a leader over parts of Israel, and (3) **rescued** the people from other nations who attacked Israel. Observe that in this lesson we will learn how God uses women as well as men in His work.

2. Remark that this lesson is like a mystery story. Explain that in a mystery story, you don’t know what will happen until the very end—and then you are surprised at how it ends. Mention also that there are many names of people and places that are hard to say, and not to worry if they have trouble saying these names. Point out that you will read all of the Bible text because of these biblical names.

## Guide the Study

3. Recall in the last lesson how Israel kept “spiraling downward.” Mention how they sinned by worshiping other gods, were punished by God, and then were **rescued** by one of the judges—over and over again. Read Judges 4:1-3 as class members follow in the Bible text. Explain that Ehud was an early judge of Israel. Then let a class member read “God punishes Israel” from the study guide.

4. Read Judges 4:4-5. Then ask a class member to read “Deborah the prophetess speaks for God” in the study guide. Question the class to see if they noticed that the tree where Deborah sat had been named after her. State that this suggests how much the people of Israel honored Deborah.

5. Direct the class to follow in the Bible text as you read Judges 4:6-10. Before reading, however, try to build up a little suspense. Suggest that we begin to think about this as a mystery story. Tell class members to listen and look for anything that will help us know what the surprise ending will be. Then begin to read the Bible text. Afterward, tell class members to look at the second paragraph under “Deborah the prophetess speaks for God.” Point out that (1) Barak, the head of Israel’s army, was not sure he should go into battle against Sisera, (2) he agreed to go only if Deborah would go with him, and (3) because he did not trust God, God would honor a woman, not Barak. Ask: *Who do you think that woman will be?*

6. Read Judges 4:11-17 from the Bible text, building suspense as you read. Comment as below:

*After verse 12. Heber was a friend of Jabin, king of Canaan, and Sisera, the head of his army. So Heber told Sisera of Israel’s secret movement.*

After verse 13. *Sisera got ready to attack the army of the Israelites with his army and 900 chariots.*

After verse 15. *The Lord was helping Israel. Sisera ran away on foot (his chariot probably got stuck in the mud.)*

After verse 17. *Sisera's army was defeated. Where did Sisera go to hide? Remember his friend, Heber? Sisera ran to the tent of Heber's wife, Jael! What do you think will happen next in this mystery? Listen...*

7. Read Judges 4:21 from the Bible text. As you finish reading, pause with a puzzled look on your face. Then comment that this wasn't the way you expected the story to end. Question why Jael killed Sisera—he was her husband's friend. State that Barak won the victory over Sisera's army (with God's help). But stress that Jael—not Deborah as we all expected—was the one who took the honor away from Barak as promised in verse 9.

8. Express that Deborah is still the important person in this story. Explain that Chapter 5 of Judges is a poem about Israel's victory over Sisera. Indicate that the last few verses of the Bible text tell about that victory. Then read Judges 5:1-3, 12-13.

### **Encourage Application**

9. Read "The song of Deborah" from the study guide.

### **Supplemental Teaching Ideas Connect with Life**

1. Musical Memory Verse. If you are musically gifted, make up a joyful little tune and sing the "Memory Verse." As you sing it again, invite class members to look at the verse in the study guide and sing along with you. Explain that this is part of the Song of Deborah, the woman we will talk about in the lesson today.

### **Guide the Study**

1. Chariots. Provide this description: *A chariot was a small wagon-cart with two wheels. The chariot had a front and two sides, but was open at the back. It was made of wood and some iron to make it stronger. The chariot was pulled by two horses. One or two men stood in the back of the chariot. How strong a nation was could be measured by how many chariots it had. The people of Israel did not have any chariots until after the time of the judges. Chariots were not often used to break through the front lines of the enemy as we might think. They were mostly used to chase down enemy soldiers running away from the battle after the lines were broken.*

2. Heber and Jael. Heber and Jael were Kenites. The Kenites were people who moved from place to place and lived in tents (nomads). Heber was a metal worker. That may be why he was at peace with Jabin, the king of Canaan. He may have made some of the metal parts for the 900 chariots belonging to Sisera, Jabin's general. Perhaps he thought telling King Jabin about Israel's army moves would be good for his business. We know nothing about Jael until Sisera came to her tent in Judges 4:17. Barak, the head of Israel's army, was chasing Sisera to kill him. Sisera was tired and afraid, so Jael let him into her tent where he fell asleep. Then Jael killed Sisera by driving a tent nail through the side of his head. To do such a thing now is against the law. But under the laws of the people who moved from place to place, a man who came into a woman's part of the tent while her husband was away could be put to death. We wonder, of course, why Jael did this terrible thing. But the people of Israel were clearly happy that Sisera was dead. This made Jael their friend and they probably helped her after that.

### **Encourage Application**

1. Questions. Involve class members in answering or talking about the three "Things to Think About" on the second page of this lesson in the study guide. Suggest that answers to Question 1 may be too personal to talk about in class, but to think about their answers to themselves, or to tell them to

# Teaching Guide

The Books of Joshua and Judges

Unit 2: Judges - Spiraling Downward

## Lesson 9: Gideon - Struggling with Uncertainty

### Lesson Focus

God is always with us and will guide us when we struggle with uncertainty.

### Focal Text

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

### Background Text

Judges 6

### 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)

### Connect with Life

1. Write on the chalkboard the lesson title, “Gideon - Struggling with Uncertainty.” Announce that Gideon is the judge we will talk about in today’s lesson. Ask: *But what does it mean to be struggling with uncertainty?* as you point to those words on the board. Explain that to struggle means to strain or try to do something that fights back against you, or to work very hard at something that isn’t easy to do. Give as an example that people from other countries often struggle with learning to speak English. Define uncertainty as not being sure about something.

### Guide the Study

2. Recall that in the previous lesson we learned about Deborah, who was a judge or leader over the people of Israel. Remind the class of “The song of Deborah” (Judges 5) that told how happy they were because of Israel’s victory over the army of the king of Canaan. Remark that, sadly, Deborah died after leading Israel through 80 years of peace. State that

once again Israel had no judge as their leader. Exclaim: *And guess what happened!* With your index finger pointed down, start spinning it in a spiral motion downward. Announce that the people of Israel started to worship other gods and that, because of this, God once again made it hard on them.

3. Use the first part of “God sent a prophet” in the study guide to summarize the events of Judges 6:1-6. Then ask a class member to read Judges 6:7-10 from the Bible text. Base your comments for this passage on the last half of the study guide section, “God sent a prophet.”

4. Direct the class to read silently the Bible text for Judges 6:11-18 and then “God called Gideon” in the study guide. Instruct them, as they read, to identify anything they learn about Gideon, his family, or his feelings. As they name these, list them on the chalkboard. After they finish reading, mention any of these things not previously named: he was a farmer (threshing grain, v. 11), his father’s name was Joash (v. 11), he had older siblings (v.15), he knew the stories about the power of God (v. 13) he thought God must have left Israel alone (v. 13), he was uncertain of himself (vv. 13, 15), he felt weak and unimportant (v. 15), he felt sad because the people of Midian made it hard for the people of Israel (v. 13), he was afraid of the people of Midian (v.11), and he did not think God could use him (v. 15).

5. Remark that one other thing about Gideon is that it was very hard to make him understand and be sure that God was talking to him. Point out God’s words in verse 12: “The Lord is with you.”, verse 14 “Have I not sent you?”, and verse 16 “For sure I will be with you.”. Then remark: *And after all this, he still was not sure...*

6. Mention that in Judges 6:19-20, we are told that Gideon went to his house, killed a young goat, and

made a very large amount of bread without yeast. Continue, saying that Gideon brought these back out to the angel of the Lord and set them down before him. Then ask a class member to read Judges 6:21-22 from the Bible text.

7. Give a brief summary of the background events in Judges 6:23-35, as follows: God told Gideon to tear down the altars to the false gods, Baal and Asherah. Gideon did this, then built a new altar to the Lord. The men of the city wanted to kill Gideon when they learned what he had done. But Gideon's father told them that if Baal was truly a god, he could fight for himself. Then the enemies of Israel crossed the Jordan and set up their tents. So Gideon blew his horn and called the people of Israel together.

8. Call on a class member to read Judges 6:36-40 from the Bible text. Remark that when Gideon asked God to make the wool wet or dry, he was talking about "dew." Write the word on the chalkboard. Explain dew as: *water from out of the air that makes the grass wet early in the morning.* Then ask someone to read the first paragraph of "Gideon asked for more signs" from the study guide.

### **Encourage Application**

9. Read or relate in your own words the second paragraph of "Gideon asked for more signs" in the study guide. Then read the "Main Focus" at the beginning of the lesson in this teaching guide.

### **Supplemental Teaching Ideas Connect with Life**

1. God's Will. Read the first paragraph in the study guide as an introduction to the study. Then, for Step 9 of the Teaching Plan, ask and discuss the questions under "Things to Think About" at the end of the study guide.

### **Guide the Study**

1. Threshing. Explain that "beating out grain" (Judges 6:11) is called threshing. Describe threshing as beating ripe grain spread on the ground or on a stone floor where grapes are crushed. Tell how the farmer would put the grain on the ground and hit it with a wooden stick until the part of the grain that can't be used (chaff) would blow away in the wind. State that the good part of the grain (the kernels) would be left for the farmer to pick up and grind to make bread.

2. Memory Work. Use a felt-tip marker pen to print the "Memory Verse" on poster-board. Cut the verse into 3-8 segments by sentence or phrase. Distribute the segments in order. Let each participant read her or his segment in order. Read the verse through in this manner two or three times. Then begin to pick up one or two segments each time around, requiring those persons without a segment to say their part from memory. Eventually, all participants will be saying their part of the verse from memory. If time permits, mix the verse segments up and enlist volunteers to place them in order.

### **Encourage Application**

1. Life Application. Refer to Gideon's questions and arguments in verses 13 and 15. Involve the class in identifying positive answers to these questions and arguments for people today who are struggling with uncertainty. Bring out such responses as: we must read the Bible to know the great things God has done; God is always there for us; God helps us when we ask for His help; we are all important in God's eyes; we need not be afraid when we have God's strength within us; and God can use anyone for His work.

# Teaching Guide

The Books of Joshua and Judges  
Unit 2: Judges - Spiraling Downward  
Lesson 10: Gideon - Relying on God

## Lesson Focus

God calls on us to rely fully on Him and His way of getting things done.

## Focal Text

Judges 7:2-21

## Background Text

Judges 7

## 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)

## Connect with Life

1. Advise the class that you will ask some questions. Explain that their answer to each question will be, “I doubt it.” Give them a test to see if they understand. Ask: *What is your answer?* They should answer, “I doubt it.” Then ask a series of question (at least 4 or 5) to which the answer is, “I doubt it.” For example, “Will I ever be rich?” or, “Will there ever be peace in all the world?” And, as the last question: *Will you ever stop saying, ‘I doubt it?’* Question the class about what the word doubt means. Refer to the “Word List” definition, and add that doubts are things you don’t believe will ever happen or that you think are probably not true.

2. Ask a class member to read the other two words (rely and prepare), and their definitions from the “Word List.” Give examples for the use of these words. Refer to their use in the introduction at the beginning of this lesson in the study guide, and request that class members read that paragraph silently.

## Guide the Study

3. Recall the situation the people of Israel faced leading up to this lesson, as follows:

Midian had crossed the Jordan and its people had set up their tents on Israel’s land (Judges 6:33). When they set up their tents beside Israel like this every year, they would attack Israel and take their food of the field and their animals. Then the people of Israel had no food to eat (Judges 6:1-6).

The people of Israel cried to the Lord because of Midian (Judges 6:6b). God called Gideon to lead an army to save Israel from the power of Midian (Judges 6:14).

After Gideon tore down the altars of the false gods and made an altar to the Lord God, his fame spread through northern Israel. When Midian set up its tents in Israel, Gideon blew his trumpet to tell the people to prepare for battle with Midian. About 32,000 men came together ready to fight against Midian with Gideon as their leader. Stress that even with this many soldiers, Israel still may have been up against an army with even more fighting men. Raise the question: *So what do you think God told Gideon to do?*

4. Let someone (worker or class member) read Judges 7:2-8 from the Bible text. After the reading, comment that God told Gideon to make the number of soldiers smaller—and then even smaller—only 300 men. Compare the strength of Israel’s army to that of the Midianites. Explain that we don’t know how many fighting men Midian had, but Judges 6:2 tells us that “Midian was stronger than Israel.” Point out that Midian likely had more soldiers than the almost 32,000 men of Israel that Gideon sent home. Quiz the class as to how they think Gideon,

with only 300 men, could win against thousands and thousands of Midianite soldiers. Ask: *How could that be possible?* Answer your own question.; *Remember, Gideon had God on his side. With God, anything is possible.*

5. Continue by questioning the class as to why God wanted Gideon to have so few soldiers. Call for a volunteer to read “Preparing for battle” in the study guide. Lead the class to understand that God wanted Gideon and Israel to understand that it was not through their own power and strength but through His power and strength that they had won over Midian.

6. Comment that Gideon had done all God told him to do. Point out that he still had doubts, however, that he could win against Midian with only 300 men. Suggest that we can certainly understand Gideon’s doubts and uncertainty. Add that God also understood that Gideon had doubts, and that He had a plan to help Gideon know for sure that God had given the Midianite army into his hands.

7. Read Judges 7:9-15 to the class. Add comments from “Gideon spied on the Midianites” in the study guide as needed. Also emphasize that Gideon was finally sure that God was with him, and he bowed down and worshiped Him right there. State that he then returned to his own camp.

8. Request a class member to read Judges 7:16-21 to see what happened next. Use the first paragraph of “God gave Gideon the victory” in the study guide to describe how God caused the Midianites to fight amongst themselves. Suggest that there is nothing to make us think that Gideon and his 300 men even had to fight.

### Encourage Application

9. Read or put into your own words the ideas expressed in the last paragraph of “God gave Gideon the victory” in the study guide.

### Supplemental Teaching Ideas Connect with Life

1. Simulation. Sit in a chair facing the class. Advise class members to imagine that they are outside on a very dark night. Instruct them to do everything exactly as you do and all at the same time, but caution them not to make noises so loud as to disturb another class nearby. First, pretend to hold a ram’s horn to your mouth and make a low noise like a long horn blast. Urge the class to do likewise. Then say: *For the Lord and for Gideon!* Explain that this activity was just to give them some idea of what we will read about in the Bible text today, except that the noises Gideon and his men made would have been much louder and with lights flashing in the darkness.

### Guide the Study

1. Feelings. On the chalkboard, make a chart of the feelings Gideon may have had for each of the events or actions in the lesson, as follows:

<u>Time</u>	<u>Fear</u>	<u>Doubt</u>	<u>Bold/Sure</u>	<u>Faith/Trust</u>
<i>With 32,000 soldiers</i>				
<i>With 300 soldiers</i>				
<i>After he spied on Midian</i>				
<i>After the victory over Midian</i>				

After Step 3 of the Teaching Plan, let class members rate how weak or strong they think Gideon’s feelings were under each of the headings as M=Much, S=Some, N=None (or Little). Repeat the activity after Step 4 (with 300), after Step 7 (after spying), and after Step 8 (after the attack). You can take a consensus of the entire class or let a different class member do the rating each time.

### Encourage Application

1. Central Truth. Direct the class to look back at the lesson title, the Bible text, and the study guide, and to try to say in one sentence what the main point of this lesson is. Accept any responses or, if there are none, offer your own from either the “Main Focus” or the “Study Aim” in this teaching guide.

# Teaching Guide

The Books of Joshua and Judges  
Unit 2: Judges - Spiraling Downward  
Lesson 11: Abimelech - Unworthy Leader

## Lesson Focus

Bad things happen to people who follow unworthy leaders.

## Focal Text

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

## Background Text

Judges 8:22-9:15

## 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)

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## Connect with Life

1. Write at the top of the chalkboard the word: *Leaders*. Remark that wherever we go in life, we have leaders. Question the class as to whether or not all leaders are good. Lead them to understand that there are both good leaders and bad leaders. Below the word “Leaders,” make two columns on the board with the headings of “Good Leaders” and “Bad Leaders.” Involve class members in naming things that make leaders good or bad and list these under the appropriate column on the board. When this has been done, cross out the words “Good” and “Bad” at the tops of the columns and write in the words “Worthy” and “Unworthy.” Refer to the definitions in the “Word List” for these two words.
2. Direct class members to now look at the lesson title and ask: *From this title, do you think Abimelech was a good leader or a bad leader?* Advise class members to look in the introduction (first paragraph) of the study guide for the answer.

## Guide the Study

3. Ask someone to read Judges 8:22 (just one verse) from the Bible text. Explain that what the men of Israel wanted was for Gideon and his family to rule over them from generation to generation. Then call on someone else to read Gideon’s answer to their request in Judges 8:23. Use the study guide section “A worthy leader points to God” to affirm Gideon’s response as one that does point to God.
4. Identify Judges 8:23 as the “Memory Verse” for this lesson. Break the verse into four parts. Write each part on the chalkboard, one phrase or sentence under the other. Underline the words “rule over you” in each of the last three parts. Read the verse with emphasis on “I,” “my son,” and “the Lord.” Lead the class in repeating the verse three or four times, pausing momentarily between each part.
5. Provide a quick summary of the background passage, Judges 8:24-33, as follows:

*Gideon did right in saying that the Lord should rule over Israel. But he did some things that brought more honor and attention to him than it did to God. Gideon sinned when he did these things. And he caused other people to sin too. Midian was put under the power of Israel. Then Israel had peace for 40 years. As long as Gideon lived, the people of Israel honored God. Gideon did not want to be king, but he lived like a king. He had his own house in Ophrah. He had many wives and children. This suggests that he was very wealthy. He also had a woman in Shechem who acted as his wife. She gave birth to Gideon’s son, Abimelech. Abimelech caused much trouble for Israel, as we will see. Gideon died at a very old age and was buried in Ophrah, his home town.*

6. Ask the class what they think happened to Israel after Gideon died. Then hold your hand up, point downward, and begin the spiraling down motion. Request one class member to read Judges 8:33-35 from the Bible text. Explain that Baal-berith was the false God of the town of Shechem, and that Jerubbaal (going against Baal) was another name for Gideon (given to him when he tore down his father's altar to the false god, Baal). Then request another class member to read Judges 9:1-6. Refer to the section "An unworthy leader points to himself" in the study guide. Use this section to describe how Abimelech misled the leaders of Shechem into making him king. Point out that this may have been easy because Abimelech's mother and family were likely Canaanites, as also the town's leaders seem to have been. Note Abimelech's words in verse 2, "Remember that I am your own bone and flesh."

7. Read Judges 9:7-15 to the class. Explain that Jotham may have spoken from a rocky spot high up on the mountain, where his voice could be heard through the clear mountain air in the town below. From there, he could make a quick escape before they could climb up the mountain after him. Let someone read the first paragraph of "Good people stand up against bad leaders" from the study guide to relate the fable to the situation with Abimelech.

### Encourage Application

8. Relate briefly the events of Judges 9:16-57 as summarized in the last paragraph under "Good people stand up against bad leaders." State that we hope to always have leaders who are worthy—who are good and honest and can be trusted. Emphasize that whenever there are unworthy leaders like Abimelech, good people need to stand up against them.

### Supplemental Teaching Ideas Connect with Life

1. Leadership. Begin with the question: *Where have you ever been a leader?* Mention some places class members may have been leaders - in school, family, clubs or groups, military service, at work, in a

church, etc. Encourage anyone who has been a leader of any kind to tell what it was like being a leader. If there are no responses, prod the class with other questions: *What does a leader do? Do you think you would like to be a leader? Why or why not?* Recall last week's lesson where we learned about Gideon who was a worthy leader. Refer to today's lesson title and note that we will now talk about Abimelech, an unworthy leader.

### Guide the Study

1. Jotham Stands Up. Present this information on Jotham: Jotham was the youngest of Gideon's 70 sons. After Gideon's death, Jotham's half brother, Abimelech, misled the men of Shechem into making him king. Abimelech used his power as king to kill all of Gideon's sons except Jotham, who was the youngest. Jotham hid from Abimelech and lived. Jotham stood up against Abimelech. He went up on Mt. Gerezim and spoke from a place where he could be heard by the men of Shechem below. He told a fable about trees and a thorn bush. Then he said that bad things would happen to Abimelech and the men of Shechem. Jotham's words came true three years later. The city of Shechem was destroyed by Abimelech. Then Abimelech died in a battle.

2. Names. Contrast the meanings of the names of Jotham (God is perfect) and Abimelech (my father is king). Note that, strangely, Abimelech's father (Gideon) was never king while Abimelech himself was, though he was king over only a part of Israel. Suggest that Jotham may have been named by his father, who trusted God, and that Abimelech may have been named by his mother who knew that Gideon could have been king.

### Encourage Application

1. Questions. Lead the class in responding to the "Things to Think About" at the end of the study guide.

# Teaching Guide

## The Books of Joshua and Judges Unit 2: Judges - Spiraling Downward Lesson 12: Samson - Wasted Talent

### Lesson Focus

People who waste the talents and abilities that God gives them miss out on the blessings of using them.

### Focal Text

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

### Background Text

Judges 13-16

### 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)

### Connect with Life

1. Present this case study to the class:

*Amy had a beautiful voice. Some of her friends tried to get her to join the church choir. They said the choir needed more people who could sing well. The choir director asked her to come to choir practice. But Amy said no. She would not come. She said it would take too much time. She had better things to do with her time.*

Instruct the class to look in the study guide at the lesson title, “Word List,” and introduction to (1) find a word to describe Amy’s way of thinking and (2) find two words that describe Amy’s not wanting to use the special gift that God had given her. Lead them to identify the answers as:

(1) *selfish*, and (2) *wasted talent*.

### Guide the Study

2. Read Judges 13:1-7 from the Bible text in the study guide. Use “The birth of a leader” in the study guide and bring out these points:

*The downward spiral of Israel continued: (1) another judge died and Israel sinned; and (2) God let another nation rule over Israel. The Philistines ruled over Israel for 40 years. Israel did not cry out to God this time. They seem to have accepted the Philistine’s power over them. God acted to help them out of His great love for His people. The Bible doesn’t say so, but it seems that Manoah and his wife were chosen because of their faith in God. The mother made the vow for both herself and her son to live by the rules of a Nazirite (identify these rules as explained in the study guide). Thus, the boy was to live as a Nazirite from the time he was formed in his mother’s body. The son of Manoah and his wife would “begin to take Israel away from the Philistines’ power.” The Philistines continued to cause trouble for Israel for many years. But they did not rule over them.*

3. Point out that in verse 7, Manoah heard about the angel’s promise to his wife. But state that he wanted to hear all this himself and he prayed for the angel to return. Explain that the rest of Chapter 13 tells of the angel’s return and of Samson’s birth. Identify Judges 13:24 as the “Memory Verse.” Display a copy of this verse written on poster board or newsprint. Allow a class member to read the verse aloud. Encourage the class to study the verse and try to learn it as the class continues. Quote the next verse, Judges 13:25, which says, “And the Spirit of the Lord began to work through him at the tents of Dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.”

4. Mention that Judges 14:1-16:3 is not part of the Bible text but tells some important parts of Samson’s story. Request a class member to read aloud “Sampson grows up” from the study guide.

5. Advise the class to follow in the Bible text as you read Judges 16:18-21. Then let a class member read the section “God uses Samson” from the study guide. Point out that Delilah had selfish reasons for wanting to know the secret of Samson’s strength. Explain that the leaders of the Philistines had offered her a very large amount of money if she could tell them that secret (Judges 16:5).

6. Call attention to verse 22. Question the class as to what they think the hair growing back on Samson’s head meant. Ask: *Will long hair help Samson if God is not with him?* Then conclude that we really don’t know what the purpose of this verse is, but that it does tell us that things are about to change.

7. Request a volunteer to read Judges 16:23-30 from the Bible text. Then instruct class members to read silently the second paragraph of “God uses Samson” in the study guide. Allow a minute or two for them to read. Then encourage class members to make comments or ask questions about this part of the Bible text. Ask the class: *Why did Samson want God to give him his strength back?* Refer to verse 28 if needed. Then ask: *Was this a selfish reason, or did it honor God?*

8. Comment that we have studied for the last few weeks how the people of Israel kept “spiraling downward” in their faithfulness to God. Remark that in this lesson we have seen how Samson spiraled downward in his life and faith in God. Point out that Samson had great talents and abilities that could have been used to serve God, but he wasted them.

### Encourage Application

9. Comment that it’s easy to look back on Samson and others and see how they wasted their talents, abilities, and opportunities. Say: *But let’s look at ourselves!* Urge class members to think about what talents or abilities they have that God could use. Warn them against being selfish like Samson.

Quote the “Main Focus” at the top of this teaching guide.

### Supplemental Teaching Ideas Connect with Life

1. Nazirite. Ask the class if they have ever known a man who had never cut his hair or who had very long hair. Question them about why a man might let his hair grow that long. Then describe how in Bible times a man would sometimes make a special promise or “vow” for a certain length of time. Explain that anyone who did this became a Nazirite and set himself apart to the Lord. Comment that we will learn about a Nazirite named Samson in the lesson today.

### Guide the Study

1. Map Study. Display a Bible map of the Twelve Tribes in Canaan, or draw a rough sketch of the area on the chalkboard. Identify the two separate areas settled by the tribe of Dan, one in the far northern part of Canaan and the other smaller area in the south. As you study these places, point out the town of Zorah (where Samson was born), the valley of Sorek (where Delilah lived), the coast of The Great Sea (where the Philistines lived), and Gaza in the southern part of the Philistine area (where Samson was kept in prison).

2. The Story of Samson. Encourage class members to read the complete story of Samson in their Bibles at home (using a Bible in their own language if applicable). The story is told in Judges 12-18.

### Encourage Application

1. Questions. Involve class members in answering or talking about the three “Things to Think About” on the second page of this lesson in the study guide. Suggest that answers to Question 2 may be too personal to talk about in class, but to think about their answers to themselves, or to tell them to the class if they feel comfortable in doing so.

# Teaching Guide

The Books of Joshua and Judges  
Unit 2: Judges - Spiraling Downward  
Lesson 13: The People of God Falling Apart

## Lesson Focus

Bad things happen when people decide to follow their own selfish ways with each person doing what he or she thinks is right.

## Focal Text

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

## Background Text

Judges 17-21

## Memory Verse

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

## Connect with Life

1. Give this analysis of the early days of our country: There were 13 places where people from England came to settle and make their homes. These places were called colonies. None of the colonies had their own king. Their king lived in England. But the king of England made life hard on the people in the colonies. So the people in the 13 colonies came together as one nation. They fought the armies of the king of England. They won the right to be free from rule by a king. They came together as the United States, a nation ruled by the people. There was never a king in the United States. Remark that in the lesson today we will talk about another nation—the nation of Israel. Explain that Israel was a nation of 12 tribes. Comment that these 12 tribes were not coming together as a nation, but were falling apart, for “there was no king in Israel in those days.” (Judges 18:1, 19:1 & 21:25)

## Guide the Study

2. Mention that this is the last lesson in the unit, “Judges: Spiraling Downward.” Lament that today

Israel reaches the end of the spiral—they hit bottom—they go as low as they can go. Recall this sequence of events: Moses died. Joshua died. Israel had no leader to lead the nation. Then God called the judges to lead. They led some of the tribes, but not the whole nation. Some of the judges were good leaders, like Deborah and Gideon. Others were bad leaders, like Abimelech and Samson. Note that all the time Israel was spiraling downward—God would give them a judge, the judge would die, and the people would turn to false gods again. Stress how this cycle kept getting worse and worse, and now Israel was at the bottom of the spiral.

3. Direct the class to look at the last verse in the Bible text, Judges 21:25. Identify this as today’s “Memory Verse.” Lead the class in reading the verse together. Note that the verse has a twin verse in Judges 17:6 above in the Bible text. Read together the same words in that verse.

4. Refer to the study guide section “The people forgot about right and wrong.” Indicate that this section tells how bad things were in Israel. Read or relate the comments in the first paragraph of that section. Then ask a class member to read Judges 17:1-6 from the Bible text. As the class member finishes reading, repeat the words of verse 6. Lead the class through the comments in the second paragraph of “The people forgot about right and wrong” in the study guide. Explain that a curse is a call for some unknown power to bring evil on another person. Also emphasize that the woman did not punish her son but rewarded him for doing wrong.

5. Continue as in Step 4, focusing on verses 4-6. Use the “Word List” to define the words “shrine” and “priest.” Consider using the item “Levites” from “Additional Teaching Ideas.”

6. Ask someone to read Judges 18:1. Afterwards, call attention to the real reason the tribe of Dan did not have enough land—they had not taken all of their land from the Amorites when they entered Canaan and the Amorites had kept the best land in the valleys (Judges 1:34). Then use the third paragraph of “The people forgot about right and wrong” to briefly relate the events of Chapter 18.

7. Use the “Word List” to define the word “concubine.” Then let a class member read Judges 19:1 from the Bible text. Inform the class that you will read the last paragraph of “The people forgot about what was right and wrong” from the study guide. State that you would like for them to watch in the study guide for any kind of sin or trouble that we hear about in the newspapers today. Read the paragraph. Then call for responses from the class. Help them identify such things as religious leaders doing sex sins, gangs of bad men causing trouble, men doing sex sins with men, rape, murder, and cutting up dead bodies. Comment that all of these things have been reported in the newspapers in recent years.

8. Read Judges 20:1-5 to the class. Summarize the rest of that chapter, as follows:

- (1) *The men who hurt the Levite’s concubine so that she died were from the tribe of Benjamin.*
- (2) *All the people of the other tribes of Israel became angry with the tribe of Benjamin because of this act.*
- (3) *They asked the tribe of Benjamin to give them the men who caused the trouble. They wanted to kill them. But the tribe of Benjamin would not give the men up.*
- (4) *The other tribes of Israel attacked the tribe of Benjamin. In the first two battles, they were beaten back by the men of Benjamin. Then they talked to God, and God told them to attack again. This time they killed almost all of the people of Benjamin.*
- (5) *Then they stopped fighting. They did not want to kill all of the people of one of the families of Israel. They were sorry that all this had happened to Israel.*

Advise the class to read more about this in the study guide under “The people fight each other.”

## **Encourage Application**

9. Comment that the book of Judges tells us how the people of Israel had spiraled downward. Remind the class that bad things happen when people decide to follow their own selfish ways, with each person doing what he or she thinks is right. Remark that we do not want to be the “The People of God Falling Apart” (lesson title), but we should come together as the people of God.

## **Supplemental Teaching Ideas Connect with Life**

1. Falling Apart. Prerecord the introduction (first paragraph) of the study guide. Play this recording to replace Step 1 of the Teaching Plan.

## **Guide the Study**

1. No King in Israel. After Steps 5, 6, and 7 of the Teaching Plan, repeat the memory verse as an additional aid to memorization. Cite the verse reference, Judges 21:25, after each repetition.
2. Kingship. Describe kingship in Israel, as follows: The people of Israel often cried out for a king. They wanted a king to lead them into battle. They could not accept that God was their King. After the book of Judges, God let them have a king. But God knew some of the kings would cause trouble. Some of them, like David, sinned. But they were sorry for their sins and obeyed God. Other kings did not honor God. They followed their own selfish ways and did what they thought was right. Israel did well when their king honored God. But it fell apart when the king did not.