

Tapes For Growing Christians

Study Guide for
Judges

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Lesson 1

The Tribe of Judah Takes Over the Land That Had Been Allotted to Them at the Time of the Conquest Judges 1:1-15

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. Godly beginnings do not guarantee godly endings.
2. Godly individuals do not guarantee godly communities.

practical applications

1. Don't think your hardened, unbelieving neighbor doesn't know when God is speaking.
2. Don't be reluctant to ask God for specific blessings.

questions

1. The Book of Judges covers the history of the nation of Israel from the time of the _____ to the time of the _____. It covers a period of about _____ years.
2. After the conquest, the land was divided up among the twelve tribes of Israel. What was the responsibility given by God to each tribe?
3. What was the result of Israel's failure in meeting her given responsibility?
4. Who was Adoni-Bezek? What happened to him?
5. Refer to Joshua 14:6-15. How was this promise to Caleb fulfilled in the Judges account?

answers

1. conquest, kings, 350
2. To drive out the enemy that still existed in its allotted territory.
3. Israel's enemies, both inside and outside the land were able to control Israel, rather than Israel controlling them.
4. Adoni-Bezek was a great warrior and an enemy of Israel, who at one time cut off the thumbs and big toes of seventy kings. In turn, Judah cut off his thumbs and big toes. Why? It made a man helpless in military action, for he couldn't handle a weapon and he couldn't run.
5. Judges 1:10 records the death of three giants living in Hebron. Caleb at last possessed his inheritance. See also Joshua 14:6-15.

discuss / consider

1. Compare the first and last verses of the Book of Judges. The time of the judges began in a godly way, but it didn't end that way. The problem? They failed to ask God for guidance.
 - a. Review the beginnings of our country. What is the situation today?
 - b. Is there a parallel in some of our churches?
 - c. Recall the time when you received Christ. Have you been faithful in asking God for His guidance in your life?
2. Two individuals, Caleb and Othniel, were faithful in obedience and they were conquerors. In turn, they affected others, regardless of the ungodliness of the nation. Are you, by your faithfulness, obedience and courage positively affecting others?

challenge

1. Adoni-Bezek was a hardened man, but he knew that God was speaking. Can you identify some people within your spheres of influence who are like this? Are you tuned in to them so you can speak of Christ in their time of need?
2. Achsah asked her father, Caleb, for a specific blessing. She specifically asked for springs of water. Recall times when you asked your heavenly Father for a specific blessing. Are you asking for spiritual springs of water? Remember, God loves to bless His children to make them more productive and fruitful in the land of spiritual blessing.

memorize

*"...the children of Israel asked the Lord...
...everyone did what was right in his own eyes." Judges 1:1; 21:25*

"...the Lord delivered the enemy into their hand..." Judges 1:4

"Achsah said to Caleb, 'Give me a blessing...give me springs of water.'" Judges 1:15

Lesson 2

The Various Tribes of Israel Were Only Partially Successful in Taking Over Their Territory Judges 1:16-36

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. Partial obedience results in plenty of bad fall-out.
2. Partial obedience results in pockets of enemy resistance.

practical application

1. Don't let the enemy come back to hurt you.

questions

1. Who were the "ites" listed here? Refer to Genesis 10:15-18.
2. God had commanded Israel to completely drive out all the Canaanites from the land. Did they obey God's command?
3. Why did God command Israel to utterly destroy the inhabitants of the land?
4. Refer to Judges 1:19. Was God's power limited because of the iron chariots? What was the problem here?
5. Why was Israel only partially successful in taking over the land? Is this same principle true today?
6. What do the following represent in the Christians' spiritual warfare?
a) the land of Canaan, b) the land of battles, c) the inhabitants of Canaan

answers

1. They were the table of nations that descended from Noah. In particular, the Canaanites were descended from Canaan, Noah's grandson.
2. No, and they reaped some bitter consequences as a result.
3. The Canaanites were wicked people, and God did not want His people contaminated and polluted with their gross immorality and idolatry.
4. Of course not. What is iron compared to omnipotence? The problem was that Judah did not fully trust and obey the Lord.
5. They were only partially successful because they were only partially obedient to the Lord. This is still true today, and there will be bad fall-out when there is only partial obedience to Him.
6. a) spiritual blessings that God has promised us, b) spiritual battles, and c) the enemies in our land of spiritual blessing

discuss / consider

1. The key to Israel's partial success was that they were only partially obedient. In their failure to fully drive out the enemy, they became enmeshed in the idolatry and immorality of the Canaanites. God did not fail; the people failed. What a sad story. Is the same is true today? If you only partially obey with your body, heart and mind, will there be bad fall-out? How?
2. Partial obedience results in pockets of enemy resistance. Does Satan have any pockets of resistance in your life? If so, identify them. What is the key to victory? Are you enjoying the blessings God has promised to you? Do you have victory over the enemy? Read Ephesians 6:10-17.

challenge

1. Don't let the enemy come back to hurt you. Read Judges 1:23-26 (concerning the two pagan cities of Luz). Unjudged sin comes back to hurt you. David ruthlessly dealt with the sins of the flesh. Are you dealing ruthlessly with the sins of your flesh?

memorize

"...the Lord was with Judah. They drove out the mountaineers, but they could not drive out the inhabitants of the lowland, because they had chariots of iron." Judges 1:19

"...they gave Hebron to Caleb...then he expelled from there the three sons of Anak." Judges 1:20

"...when Israel was strong...they did not completely drive out the Canaanites...so they continued to dwell among them." Judges 1:28-29

Lesson 3

More Background in the Time of the Judges, Particularly the Spiritual Background, and the Reason Why God Let Israel Be Oppressed By Her Enemies Judges 2:1-23

background notes

1.

2.

3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. There are five steps in the sin cycles of Israel:
 - 1) The people would sin by rebelling against the Lord
 - 2) The Lord would allow one of the enemies of Israel to gain control and to plunder and oppress Israel
 - 3) The people would cry out to the Lord because of the oppression and the Lord would hear
 - 4) The Lord would raise up a judge and deliver the people from the enemy
 - 5) There would be a measure of rest and revival as long as that judge lived.
2. There can be sin cycles in the lives of believers.

practical application

1. Have you had a first-generation experience?

questions

1. Why did God command the tribes of Israel to fully conquer and occupy their respective territories?
2. Why did God permit surrounding nations to come in and oppress Israel?
3. What did Israel do when the angel of the Lord confronted them?
4. List or describe the five steps of Israel's sin cycles during the time of the judges.
5. What happened when a judge died?

answers

1. God did not want His people to be contaminated by the idolatry and immorality of the Canaanites.
2. Because of Israel's disobedience to obey His commands.
3. They wept and they sacrificed to the Lord. (See Judges 2:4-5.)
4.
 - 1) The people would sin by rebelling against the Lord.
 - 2) The Lord would allow one of the enemies of Israel to gain control and to plunder and oppress Israel.
 - 3) The people would cry out to the Lord because of the oppression and the Lord would hear.
 - 4) The Lord would raise up a judge and deliver the people from the enemy.
 - 5) There would be a measure of rest and revival as long as that judge was alive.

Alliterated:

- 1) Sin or Rebellion
 - 2) Servitude or Retribution
 - 3) Supplication or Repentance
 - 4) Salvation or Restoration
 - 5) Silence or Rest
5. The people would revert to their old ways of rebellion and disobedience.

discuss / consider

1. The sin cycle that Israel went through again and again in the time of the judges can also take place in the life of a believer. Consider these references, stage by stage in the sin cycle: James 1:14-15; Hebrews 12:5-11; 1 John 1:9; 1 Peter 5:6-7; Matthew 11:28-30.

2. The Lord will bring discipline into our lives. If we repent and cry out to the Lord, He brings deliverance and restoration to our lives, and there is rest. Have you experienced the Lord's discipline? How have you responded?

challenge

1. Have you had a first-generation experience in seeing the great works the Lord has done? You can have a first-generation experience if you are willing to step out in faith.

memorize

"You shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars. But you have not obeyed My voice. Therefore, they shall be thorns in your side, and their gods shall be a snare to you." Judges 2:2-3

"The people served the Lord all the days of Joshua and the elders, who had seen all the great works of the Lord. Another generation arose who did not know the Lord nor the work He had done for Israel. Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord...they forsook the Lord and served other gods." Judges 2:7, 10-13

"I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which were left...so that through them I may test Israel, whether they will keep the ways of the Lord, to walk in them...or not." Judges 2:21-22

Lesson 4

The First Judge of Israel, Othniel, the Nephew of Caleb Judges 3:1-11

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. God uses a believer's mistakes along with His wisdom for testing and training.
2. God uses a believer's experience along with His power for victory and deliverance.

practical application

1. Beware of creeping compromise.

questions

1. The period of the judges, about 350 years in Israel's history, extended from the time of the death of _____ until the time of _____, the first king of Israel.
2. Who is most likely the author of the Book of Judges?
3. Who was the first judge in Israel?
4. Review the sin cycle from the previous lesson. Now outline the sin cycle found in Judges 3:7-11.

answers

1. Joshua, Saul
2. Samuel, who is sometimes considered the last of the judges and the first of the prophets in Israel.
3. Othniel, the nephew of Caleb.
4.
 - 1) The sin stage or the wandering away from the Lord stage, where they did evil in the sight of the Lord and served other gods (v.7)
 - 2) The discipline stage, when the Lord was angered and sold them into the hands of the king of Mesopotamia (v.8)
 - 3) The repentance stage, when they cried out to the Lord (v.9)
 - 4) The salvation or restoration stage, when a deliverer was raised up (Othniel), and the Lord delivered the enemy into their hand (vs.9-10)
 - 5) The rest stage, when the land had rest for 40 years, and there was a measure of moral reform and return to the Lord (v.11).

discuss / consider

1. When God brought Israel into the land of promise at the time of the conquest, Israel's responsibility was to completely cleanse the land of all enemies. God did not want any pockets or enclaves of the enemy left around to influence His people with their idolatrous or immoral practices, but they did not obey. However, God did not give up and reject His people even then, but He continued to work patiently with them, providing deliverance and rest. Furthermore, He used their failures to test them and train them. The lesson here? God uses a believer's mistakes along with His wisdom for testing and training. How has God used your failures and mistakes to test and train you?
2. Othniel was already battle-hardened when he was successful in war. Apply this to your life. How has God used your experience along with His power for victory and deliverance?

challenge

1. Beware of creeping compromise. The children of Israel did not become idol worshippers overnight. As they lived with the enemy, they gradually compromised with them. Today, this is often true in churches, families, and in individuals. Beware of creeping compromise in your life.

memorize

"The Lord left nations that He might test Israel by them...this was so they might be taught to know war...and to see whether they would obey the commandments of the Lord." Judges 3:1-4

"...the children of Israel dwelt among the 'ites.' They intermarried and served their gods. So the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord. They forgot the Lord their God, and served other gods." Judges 3:5-7

"When the children of Israel cried out to the Lord, He raised up a deliverer...and they had rest." Judges 3:9, 11

Lesson 5

The Account of Ehud's Judgeship and the Record of Shamgar Judges 3:12-31

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. The flesh not held in check is not a pleasant picture.
2. Cutting off the flesh is not a pleasant picture.

practical applications

1. God can use you regardless of your differences.
2. God can use you regardless of your background.

questions

1. How many judges were there in Israel during the time of the judges?
2. Name the two judges listed in this section of the Book of Judges.
3. Name the enemy in this sin cycle. How did they oppress Israel? How did they oppress them?
4. Who was the judge designated by Israel to head up the delegation to bring tribute to the oppressor? How did this judge view this assignment?
5. What happened with the judge after he killed the king?

answers

1. Anywhere between twelve and fifteen, depending on who is counted. If Barak is counted along with Deborah, if Abimelech (an evil ruler) is counted, and if you don't count Samuel, then there are 15. Remember that some of the judges overlapped in time, and judged in different parts of the land.

2. Ehud and Shamgar

3. Moab. Eighteen years. Requiring them to pay tribute in gold or silver to Moab.

4. Ehud. He saw this occasion as an opportunity to overthrow the ungodly power of King Eglon of Moab.

5. After Ehud killed King Eglon, he escaped to the mountains of Ephraim and rallied the troops of Israel to defeat the Moabites.

discuss / consider

1. Even as Israel was commanded to drive out the enemy in order to enjoy the blessings of the land, so we have to drive out the enemy in order to enjoy our spiritual blessings in Christ. Satan is our enemy and he uses the world, the flesh, and even demonic forces to keep us defeated and to keep us from enjoying the spiritual blessings God has given us. King Eglon was a picture of the flesh not held in check. Do you have a problem in keeping your flesh checked? Do you have a problem in losing ground that has already been conquered?

2. How do you cut off the flesh? By applying the word of God, the two-edged sword of the Scripture to your life. See Hebrews 4:12. Are you cutting off the flesh?

challenge

1. How are you different from other believers? Remember, God can use these differences for His glory.

2. What is your spiritual heritage? Even if you were not raised in a Christian home, you have been given a spiritual parent by the Lord. Whatever your background, God can use you. Make full use of Christian mentors and role models in your life. Then be one.

memorize

"The children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord. So the Lord strengthened the king of Moab against them...But when they cried out to the Lord, He raised up a deliverer...When Moab was subdued under the hand of Israel, the land had rest for eighty years." Judges 3:12, 15, 30

"The word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword..." Hebrews 4:12

Lesson 6

The Defeat of the Canaanites by Deborah and Barak Judges 4:1-24

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. Satan raises up Jabins and Siseras to defeat God's people.
2. God raises up Deborahs and Jaels to help His people

practical application

1. When we do our part, God does His part.

questions

1. Outline the third sin cycle in the Book of Judges, as found in this section. Review the five stages in Lesson 3.
2. Who was Deborah? Who was Barak?
3. Who was Sisera? How was he killed?
4. Who was Jabin? What is the significance of the historical picture here?
5. What is the spiritual picture represented by Jabin and Sisera?

answers

1.
 - 1) Sin\Rebellion- After Ehud died, the children of Israel once again did evil in the sight of the Lord (v.1)
 - 2) Servitude\Retribution- The Lord allowed the Canaanites to oppress His people with military might for twenty years, under the rule of King Jabin (vs.2-3)
 - 3) Supplication\Repentance- Israel cried out to the Lord (v.3)
 - 4) Salvation\Restoration- The Lord raised up Deborah and Barak to restore Israel (vs.4-9)
 - 5) Silence\Rest- Israel had rest for forty years (5:31).
2. Deborah was a woman of God, a judge, a mother in Israel, and a prophetess to whom the Lord revealed the defeat of the Canaanites. Barak was the commander of the army of Israel.
3. Sisera was the commanding general of the Canaanite army. When his army fell, he fled on foot to the tent of Jael, who drove a tent peg into his temple (4:15-21).
4. Jabin was the Canaanite king who reigned in Hazor, a stronghold in the north of Israel. This is the same Hazor which was conquered under Joshua (Joshua 11:10-11), more than 100 years before this time.
5. Jabin and Sisera were Canaanites, enemies of Israel. Hazor was the same area conquered earlier. This illustrates that enemies who have been defeated can rise again. Christians who have experienced victory over certain sins find that these sins may come back more than once.

discuss / consider

1. Satan likes to keep God's people defeated in the land of blessing. Have you experienced victory over certain sins only to find that they return? Check out such sins as doubt, bitterness, uncontrolled anger, pride, jealousy, and sexual sins. As Christians, we must always practice the biblical principles of victory by putting on all of the spiritual armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-17), because we can be sure that Satan will raise up his Jabins and Siseras to try to defeat God's people.
2. When Israel cried out to the Lord, Deborah was there. Jael was not an Israelite, but she was used of God to help His people. Even as God raised up Deborah and Jael to help His people, there are those today whom God can use. Perhaps you have been helped by a Deborah or a Jael, or perhaps you are a Deborah or a Jael to be used of God to help others.

challenge

1. Deborah and Barak planned and prepared for battle, and God brought victory. Are you using the talents and gifts that God has given to you to the best of your ability? When we do our part, God does His part.

memorize

"Deborah said to Barak, 'Has not the Lord God commanded us to prepare for battle?' He replied, 'If you will go with me, then I will go.'" Judges 4:6-8

"Deborah said to Barak, 'Up! For this is the day in which the Lord has delivered the enemy into your hand. Has not the Lord gone out before you?'" Judges 4:14

Lesson 7

The Song of Deborah and Barak Celebrating Victory Over the Canaanites Judges 5:1-31

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. God keeps records of the faithful.
2. God keeps records of the unfaithful.

practical application

1. Don't forget to sing hymns.

questions

1. The Lord raised up Deborah to serve Israel. In what capacities did she serve?
2. Who mustered the troops of Israel together to fight the oppressive army of the Canaanites?
3. What is the style of the song in this chapter? It's more than just a victory song, it is a song of _____.
4. What was the condition in Israel under the oppression of the Canaanites?
5. Describe the "natural" conditions in this battle that led to the defeat of the Canaanites.

answers

1. As prophetess, judge, and motivator
2. Barak, the commander of the army of Israel.
3. Hebrew poetry. Thanksgiving and praise to the Lord, savoring God's victory over His enemy.
4. The highways were deserted and village life ceased
5. The earth trembled, the heavens poured out water, mountains gushed forth, stars fought, torrents of water swept the enemy away - events of nature coordinated by God Himself to defeat the Canaanites.

discuss / consider

1. Review the list of the faithful in Judges 5:13-15, 18. God kept a record of all these who showed faith and courage, going into battle against overwhelming odds. See Malachi 3:16. Who is in God's book of remembrance? Are you? See also Philippians 4:3 and Revelation 21:27.
2. Review the list of the unfaithful in Judges 5:15-17, 23. Why were they cursed by the Lord? They ignored their responsibility to the Lord; they were concerned but not committed; they were interested but not enlisted; they remained at a distance; they wanted to stay in their place of security and comfort. The Israelites had many excuses, and were too content with the status quo. Do you make excuses? Are you too content to step out and serve the Lord?

challenge

1. Does your heart sing spontaneously when you pause to consider the heavens and the earth? Do you break into song (and even tears) when the angels praise Him for the soul of a repentant sinner? See Colossians 3:16.

memorize

"When the people willingly offer themselves, bless the Lord!" Judges 5:2

"Lord, when You marched the earth trembled..." Judges 5:4

"Recount the righteous acts of the Lord..." Judges 5:11

"Those who feared the Lord spoke one to another, and the Lord listened and heard them; a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who meditate on His name. 'They shall be Mine,' says the Lord, 'On the day that I make them My jewels.'" Malachi 3:16-17

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your heart to the Lord." Colossians 3:16

Lesson 8

God's Call to Gideon to Go Out and Defeat the Midianites Judges 6:1-24

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. True faith believes and struggles.
2. True faith believes and worships.

practical application

1. Your worship is not a waste.

questions

1. Who was the Angel of the Lord?
2. What was Gideon doing when the Lord called him? Why was Gideon doing it "differently?"
3. When God called Gideon, what was His implied promise to him?
4. List some of Gideon's questions to the Lord.
5. Did the Lord answer all of Gideon's questions?
6. In this section of Scripture, what sign did God give to Gideon to assure him that it was He who was speaking?

answers

1. It is believed that this was the Lord Himself, the preincarnate Son of God. This is supported in vs. 22-23 where Gideon knew that he had seen the Lord Himself, and thought he was going to die, because he had seen God.
2. Gideon was threshing wheat in a wine press. Normally, wheat is threshed out in the open so the wind can blow the chaff away. Gideon didn't want the Midianites to see him and rob his small amount of grain.
3. *"The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor!"* (v. 12) Actually, there were two promises: 1) the Lord would be with Gideon in his call and 2) the Lord would make of him a mighty man of valor.
4. Why have all these things happened to us? Where are Your miracles of which our fathers spoke? Have You forsaken us and delivered us to the enemy? How can I be called to save Israel when my clan is the weakest, and I'm the least in my father's house?
5. No, but He assured him of victory.
6. When Gideon brought out meat and unleavened bread, laid them on a rock, and poured out the broth, the Angel of the Lord touched them with his staff, and fire rose out of the rock and consumed them.

discuss / consider

1. Gideon had a faith that believed and struggled. He had honest questions about what was going on, even wondering if the Lord had forsaken him; he had doubts and fears. But Gideon did not lose faith, nor did he reject or deny the Lord. Do you have doubts, fears and questions? Do you seek signs from the Lord to affirm His presence and care?
2. Gideon prepared and presented an offering to the Lord. It was an act of worship, and it cost him something. In this time of famine, Gideon gave a very substantial offering, not from surplus, but of survival supplies. It involved real sacrifice. How can you sacrificially worship?

challenge

1. The Angel of the Lord consumed Gideon's sacrificial offering. A disciple called it a waste when Mary anointed the Lord with a costly ointment. Perhaps there are those pointing fingers of accusation at you for "wasting" your life, squandering your money on the underprivileged, or spending time in prayer. Remember, when you give to the Lord, it is never a waste in His eyes.

memorize

"The Angel of the Lord said to Gideon, 'The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor!'" Judges 6:12

"Mary took a pound of very costly oil and anointed the feet of Jesus. And the house was filled with the fragrance. But one of His disciples said, 'Why this waste?'" John 12:3-5

Lesson 9

Gideon Passes a Test of Faith Before He Goes On to Fight the Midianites Judges 6:25-32

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. God tests a believer's faith close to home.
2. God tests a believer's faith close to the heart.

practical application

1. Let's be more than iconoclasts.
2. Let's find a way to obey.

questions

1. Before Gideon could go out and defeat the Midianites in the strength of the Lord, he had to be tested. What was the test, and what was its purpose?
2. Who was Baal? What was he supposed to do?
3. Describe an altar to Baal. Who was Ashteroth?
4. Why did the men of the city want to kill Gideon?
5. What was Gideon's father's response to this act of Gideon's?
6. Define the word, "idol."
7. Define the word, "iconoclast."

answers

1. The test was to tear down the altar of Baal that his father had built, and to replace it with an altar to the Lord. Its purpose was to test Gideon's faith.
2. Baal was the prominent pagan god of the land. He supposedly controlled the weather, and thus the fertility and productivity of the land.
3. The altar was constructed of large stone, sometimes measuring 15 ft. across and 5 ft. high. The wooden image of Ashteroth represented the female counterpart of Baal.
4. Gideon had torn down the altar to Baal, which was used by all the town.
5. He stood up for Gideon, saying, *"If Baal is a god, he can defend himself."*
6. An idol is anything that takes the place of God in a believer's life.
7. An iconoclast is one who destroys religious images or icons.

discuss / consider

1. Before Gideon could go out and prove his faith by fighting, he had to prove his faith at home. This involved being a faithful witness before his own family and before his own community. Was this easy for Gideon? How has your faith been tested close to home? Has it been easy for you?
2. If God is not first in a believer's heart, to a certain extent that believer is involved in idolatry. Is there something ahead of God on your priority list? Every idol must go if the believer is to be successful in spiritual warfare. Baals must be torn down and replaced by an altar to God.

challenge

1. Gideon was more than an iconoclast. He not only tore down the altar to Baal, but he replaced it with an altar to the Lord. Are you only an iconoclast, having rid your life of idols? Or are you building up altars to the Lord, filling your life with the things of God? Try this test: How is 1) your prayer life? 2) your depth of Bible study? 3) your thought life? We are to cast down everything that exalts itself above God.
See 2 Corinthians 10:5, Colossians 3:2, and Romans 12:2.
2. When Gideon realized the improbability of tearing down the altar of Baal in broad daylight, he did it at night. He found a way to obey. Are you finding ways to obey in sharing your faith with others? Are you afraid? Be like Gideon - find a way to obey.

memorize

"Tear down the altar of Baal and build an altar to the Lord." Judges 6:25-26

"Keep yourselves from idols." 1 John 5:21

Lesson 10

Gideon Sets Out the Fleece and Asks God for a Sign Judges 6:33-40

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. Setting out fleeces is evidence of a weak faith.
2. Setting out fleeces comes close to testing God.
3. Setting out fleeces leaves room for many doubts.

practical application

1. Let's not confuse living by fleece with living by faith.

questions

1. Review the fourth sin cycle of Israel here in Judges 6. Take it through the five stages: rebellion, retribution, repentance, restoration, rest.
2. Gideon had passed the test of faith in destroying the altar to Baal and by raising an altar to the Lord. But before Gideon was willing to plunge into battle, he wanted to make sure the Lord would be with him and give him the victory. What was the sign that Gideon proposed to the Lord?
3. How did the Lord respond to Gideon's fleece?
4. Should we make a practice of setting out fleeces like Gideon did?

answers

1. Stage 1) rebellion - Israel once again wandered away from the Lord (6:1), 2) retribution - God allowed the Midianites to come in and plunder the land for seven years (6:1-2), 3) repentance - the Israelites cried out to the Lord because of the oppression (6:7), 4) restoration - the Lord raised up Gideon to deliver the nation from the hands of the Midianites (6:8), and 5) rest - the country was quiet for forty years in the days of Gideon (8:28).

2. First he put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor, saying to the Lord, "If there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on the ground, then I know You will save Israel as you have said." Then he reversed the plan, asking for a dry fleece and a wet ground.

3. He honored Gideon's request for a sign.

4. No, even though God has answered at times. Review the doctrinal points and application in this lesson, and relate them to the discuss / consider / challenge portions.

discuss / consider

1. God had told Gideon that victory over the Midianites was already assured. Gideon asking for signs at this point was evidence of a weak rather than a strong faith. Have you asked for signs from God? Perhaps they were honored, or perhaps not. In any case, a mature Christian who is secure with God's promises, need not ask for signs. Rather, he will simply trust God and take Him at His word.

2. Are you testing God by asking Him to do something on your terms? Are you trying to put God in a box of your own making? This is not a true test of what God will do for you. It leaves room for too many doubts.

challenge

1. Setting out fleeces by definition is asking God to do something miraculous on your terms. This is not the same as asking God to confirm your step of faith on His terms and in His time.

memorize

"The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon." Judges 6:34

"Gideon said to God, 'If it is as You have said, then...I shall know.'" Judges 6:36-37

"We walk by faith, not by sight." 2 Corinthians 5:7

Lesson 11

The Testing of Gideon's Faith, and the Strengthening of Gideon's Faith Judges 7:1-15

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. God tests the strength of a believer's faith.
2. God tolerates the weakness of a believer's faith.

practical application

1. Your actions speak louder than your words.

questions

1. Why did the Lord drastically reduce the size of Gideon's army?
2. Were the Midianites and Amalekites really as numerous as locusts, and their camels without number, as the sand by the seashore? (7:12)
3. How many men did Gideon start out with in his army? How many did he end with?
4. How was the number of men in the army reduced?
5. What was the interpretation of the Midianite's dream? (7:13-14)
6. What was Gideon's reaction when he overheard the telling of the dream?

answers

1. So that Israel could not claim glory for itself instead of for the Lord, saying, *"My own hand has saved me."* (7:2)
2. No. This is a figure of speech known as hyperbole, purposeful exaggeration for the purpose of emphasis.
3. He started with 32,000, and ended with 300.
4. First, anyone who was afraid could leave, at which point 22,000 departed, leaving 10,000. Gideon was instructed by the Lord to take the 10,000 to the water. Everyone who lapped by putting his hand to his mouth was set apart, and everyone who got down on his knees to drink was set apart. Three hundred men lapped. These were the ones selected to remain in the Lord's army.
5. Gideon was represented by a loaf of barley bread (barley bread was the bread of the poor) tumbling into camp, striking the tent of Midian. Midian was delivered into the hand of Gideon.
6. He worshiped, and returned to the camp of Israel with confidence that the Lord would bring victory. It also showed the humble faith of Gideon.

discuss / consider

1. Gideon had the strength of his faith tested, particularly when the odds against him increased. Have you had your faith tested in overwhelming odds? How did your faith hold up?
2. Gideon did not have a strong faith, but he had a genuine faith. God honored this faith by encouraging Gideon and by strengthening him. How strong is your faith? Have you recognized ways in which the Lord has encouraged you to go on?

challenge

1. The water test was passed by what the soldiers did rather than what they said. God wanted men who were ready to move out and fight the good faith based on their actions. Are you committed to the Lord to the point of action? Are you a member of the 300 Club?

memorize

"The Lord said to Gideon, 'The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.'" Judges 7:2

"I will not give My glory to another." Isaiah 48:11

"By the three hundred men who lapped I will save you." Judges 7:7

"Gideon worshipped." Judges 7:15

Lesson 12

Gideon's Victory Over the Midianites Judges 7:16-25

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. Victory in spiritual warfare demands broken clay jars.
2. Victory in spiritual warfare demands clear sounding trumpets.

practical application

1. Can you say, "Look at me and do likewise?"

questions

1. Gideon had divided his small army of three hundred men into three companies of one hundred men each, and he had sent them out to surround the camp of the Midianites. What did each man carry with him?
2. What was the reason for carrying these items rather than traditional weapons?
3. What made the Midianites believe that they were being attacked by a huge army?
4. Why did the Midianites attack each other?
5. The Midianite army with the Amalekites numbered 135,000, whereas Gideon's army numbered three hundred. How then could Israel defeat the enemy with the odds stacked against them at 450:1? Is this really a true story?
6. This account represents spiritual truths for Christians. What is represented by
 - a) the land of Canaan
 - b) the battle itself
 - c) the Midianites and the Amalekites
 - d) Gideon's weapons?

answers

1. A trumpet, a torch, and an empty clay jar to cover the smoldering torch.
2. So God could show His power to defeat the enemies of Israel, apart from weapons of war. Then Israel would know for sure that it was God who fought for them.
3. In the ancient world of warfare, a trumpet sound meant there was a commander with a number of troops under him, and the lights held high made the Midianites think that a great army was attacking them.
4. When Gideon gave the signal at the beginning of the middle watch, about 10:00 at night, the guards who were going back to their tents were thought to be the invading Israelites by the Midianites who were just waking up to the sound from the trumpets. Thus they began to kill off each other in the confusion.
5. Yes, it is a true story, recounted to let both Israel and the enemy know the power of God.
6.
 - a) the land of blessing for the Christian
 - b) the enemy operating in the land of blessing
 - c) the things of the world and the lusts of the flesh which oppress the Christian in the land of blessing
 - d) God's method of victory in spiritual warfare.

discuss / consider

1. Read 2 Corinthians 4:5-12. The method of victory in spiritual warfare is represented in the weapons used by Gideon. The clay jars are Christians; the treasure within is the life and light of Christ. To reveal Christ, the jars must be broken. We must die to self so Christ may be seen. Is your clay jar broken so that Christ might be revealed in your life?
2. Gideon's trumpets sounded out loud and clear. These trumpets or rams' horns could be heard for miles around, and the purpose was to let the enemy know that the sword of the Lord and of Gideon had arrived. The trumpets represent the clear and certain testimony of believers. What about your Christian testimony? Is it a clear and certain sound?

challenge

1. Gideon said, "*Look at me and do likewise.*" (7:17). Can you say, "Do as I do and follow my example?" Apply this to different areas of your life, and in different situations.

memorize

"Gideon said, 'Look at me and do likewise.'" Judges 7:17

"It is God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us." 2 Corinthians 4:6-7

Lesson 13

Gideon's Pursuit of the Midianites Who Were Trying to Escape after Being Defeated Judges 8:1-21

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. Christian leaders must press on even though there are many disappointments.
2. Christian leaders must discipline others, even though it is not very pleasant.

practical application

1. Remember, a soft answer turns away wrath.

questions

1. Gideon and his army were outnumbered more than 450:1, and without conventional weapons. Yet they overwhelmingly defeated the Midianites. How was this possible?
2. List some of the disappointments that Gideon had along the way while he was doing the Lord's work in pursuing the Midianites.
3. What did Gideon ask of the people of Succoth and Penuel?
4. What did Gideon do about some of these disappointments when the battle was won?

answers

1. Because the Lord was with Gideon, and Gideon followed the Lord's commands. With God all things are possible - then and today.
2. He faced internal bickering when time was of the essence in pursuit of the enemy, he was disappointed because of lack of support, his efforts were mocked by the very people he was trying to save, and he was exhausted.
3. He asked for bread, but they refused to give it to him.
4. He took action against those who were disloyal and had thwarted the battle.

discuss / consider

1. Although Gideon had several disappointments along the way while he was doing the Lord's work, he pressed on. All of us have experienced some disappointments when we've been working for the Lord. Recall a time in your life when this was the case. It's easy to give up and say that it's not worth the effort. But how does this affect the work of the Lord? The right response is to press on.
2. Leadership has its demands, and one of them includes disciplining those who are disobedient and disloyal to the work of the Lord. Gideon saw this as his responsibility and handled it. Have you have been in such a situation? Sometimes it is easier to ignore the problem, but that doesn't solve anything. This is particularly true well in the home. There are parents, even Christian parents, who neglect disciplining their children, but they are neglecting a biblical principle.

challenge

1. *"A soft answer turns away wrath."* (Proverbs 15:1) There are times when harsh discipline is necessary, but there are times when it is more diplomatic and more effective to give a soft answer. When this is done emotional tensions are often avoided. Have you found this to be true?

memorize

"What was I able to do in comparison with you?" Then their anger toward him subsided when he said that." Judges 8:3

"A soft answer turns away wrath." Proverbs 15:1

"Gideon and the men who were with him were exhausted, but still in pursuit." Judges 8:4

"Gideon took the elders of the city...and he taught the men..." Judges 8:16

Lesson 14

The Good News and the Bad News
The Good News: Gideon Resisted the Temptation to Become King
The Bad News: Gideon did not Resist the Temptation to Become Rich
Judges 8:22-35

background notes

1.

2.

3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. Mature believers are not immune to temptation.

2. Mature believers are not immune to failure.

practical applications

1. Beware of golden earrings!

2. Beware of golden ephods.

questions

1. After Gideon's victory over the Midianites, the people asked him to be their king. Why did Gideon refuse?

2. What did Gideon ask the Israelites for?

3. What did Gideon do with this "gift?"

4. Was this appropriate?

5. What was the evidence that Gideon, though refusing the kingship, lived like a king?

answers

1. Because he knew that God's intention was not for the Israelites to have a king like the other nations. God was their King.
2. Part of the plunder that had been taken from the Midianites. He asked for the golden earrings.
3. He made an ephod out of the gold given to him. An ephod was one of the outer garments worn by the high priest under the breast plate.
4. No. Only priests were to be involved with ephods; they were not to be made of gold, and they were to be kept only in the tabernacle.
5. He created a harem for himself with many wives. He named one of his sons Abimelech, which means, "My father, a king."

discuss / consider

1. Gideon had faithfully led God's people against the enemy. He had persevered in the face of disappointments, but he gave in to temptation. This happened after a great victory, as it so often does. Why? After a victory, people are apt to become overconfident, thinking they can do things in their own strength. Have you found this to be true in your life? Have you wondered why you gave in to temptation?
2. Gideon resisted the temptation to be king, but he yielded to other temptations. Notice the areas in which he was tempted, and yielded -money, power, sex. Too many mature believers have fallen in these areas. How do you handle temptations?

challenge

1. Gideon said that he didn't want much, just a little. When we yield just a little, a door opens. Beware of golden earrings, just a little thing.
2. Gideon would have been the last one to believe that his golden ephod would become an idol in Israel and a snare to himself and his household. But it happened. Gideon had departed from the word of God, and in so doing he brought disaster in his community and in his household. Beware of golden ephods in your life. Stay firmly in the word of God.

memorize

"Gideon said, I will not rule over you; the Lord shall rule over you." Judges 8:23

"Gideon said, I would like to make a request of you...your golden earrings." Judges 8:24

"Then Gideon made an ephod and set it up in his city. And all Israel played the harlot with it. It became a snare to Gideon and to his house." Judges 8:27

"Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare." 1 Tim 6:9

Lesson 15

Abimelech's Three-Year Rule Over Israel Judges 9:1-25

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. Bad choices result in bad fall-out.
2. God controls even the evil spirits.

practical application

1. Watch out for smooth talking brambles.

questions

1. The last days of Gideon were not his best days as judge in Israel. Refer back to 8:22-32, what were some the things that Gideon did wrong at this point?
2. Abimelech was such an evil ruler that many do not even consider him as one of the judges of Israel. What did he do that was so wrong?
3. Who was Jotham? What did he do on the top of Mt. Gerizim?
4. Does God control evil spirits? Can you back this up scripturally? Does God control Satan?
5. Does God allow evil? How does He use it?

answers

1. He wrongly set up a golden ephod in his home town and it became an idol and a snare for Israel and Gideon's household. He had departed from God's word and took in many wives and concubines.
2. Abimelech sweet-talked his relatives into campaigning for him to become king. As soon as he became king, he had all of his half-brothers killed - seventy of them.
3. Jotham was the youngest son among the half-brothers of Abimelech, who escaped. He pronounced a curse against Abimelech in the form of a parable.
4. Yes. See Judges 9:23. Yes.
5. Yes. He uses it for His own purposes.

discuss / consider

1. The Israelites made Abimelech their king, and they lived to regret that decision. How many times have you made decisions without first consulting the Lord and making sure that your decision was in His will? As a result, has there been bad fall-out?
2. The Bible teaches that God controls everything. He is sovereign. Yet, so many times we see evil in this world, and wonder. Do you believe that God works all things after the counsel of His will? Believe it, even when things seem otherwise.

challenge

1. When selecting church leaders, look for a proven record, not smooth talk. There are church leaders who, like Abimelech, have sweet-talked their way into positions of leadership to the detriment of the congregation. Watch out for smooth-talking brambles.

memorize

"Jotham stood on Mount Gerizim, and lifted his voice and cried out, 'Listen to me, you men of Shechem that God may listen to you...all the trees said to the bramble, 'Come and reign over us!'" Judges 9:7, 14

"God sent a spirit of ill will between Abimelech and the men of Shechem, and the men dealt treacherously with him." Judges 9:23

"Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap." Galatians 6:7

"In Him we are predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will." Ephesians 1:11

Lesson 16

The Results of Abimelech's Treachery, as Well as His Death Judges 9:26-57

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. God repays the wickedness of men.
2. God allows evil to repay evil.

practical application

1. Remember, your spirituality is not inherited by your children.

questions

1. Who was Abimelech? What position did he fill? Was he a proven leader?
2. Who was Gaal? Who was Zebel? What part did they play in the falling out between Abimelech and the inhabitants of Shechem?
3. What was the result of the confrontation between Abimelech and the inhabitants of Shechem?
4. What was the story about the tower of Shechem?
5. Why did Abimelech sow salt over the city?
6. What was Jotham's parable about?
7. How was Abimelech's evil repaid?

answers

1. He was the son of Gideon. He became a judge and a ruler. No, he did not lead his people well.
2. Gael became a judge, and he challenged Abimelech. Zebel was one of Abimelech's men in the government of Shechem, who informed Abimelech of this challenge.
3. Abimelech attacked and defeated Gaal, then he attacked Shechem and defeated it, killing the people and demolishing the city.
4. One thousand men and women escaped to the tower for safety. Abimelech and his men cut down trees and started a fire, killing all in the tower.
5. It made the ground barren for any would-be rebuilders.
6. It was about the people of Shechem unwisely choosing a "bramble," the least of the trees (Abimelech), to be their ruler.
7. A woman dropped a millstone on his head, then he asked his armor bearer to pierce him with a sword, so it would not be said that a woman killed him.

discuss / consider

1. God repaid the wickedness of Abimelech, and God repaid the wickedness of the men of Shechem. Does it seem to you like evil is going unchecked around you? Never doubt that God will ultimately repay evil for evil. Read Romans 12:19 and Revelation 20:11-15.
2. God allows evil to repay evil. Note the account of Abimelech and the Shechemites. Recount some of the evil kings, both in sacred and secular history, who were brought down by other evil kings. God has designed this moral universe so that evil eventually backfires. This principle can also operate in the state, the church and the home.

challenge

1. Contrast the spirituality and morality of Gideon and Abimelech. Gideon was a spiritual man, a good man. His son, however, was evil. Spiritual gifts are given to individuals as determined by God, but spirituality comes from walking with the Lord. Parents, teachers and Christian leaders are given the charge to raise children in the instruction of the Lord. But the children have the responsibility to obey that instruction.

memorize

"All the evil of the men of Shechem God returned on their own heads." Judges 9:57

"Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord." Romans 12:19

"I saw a great white throne...and I saw the dead standing before God, and books were opened. The dead were judged according to their works." Revelation 20:11-15

Lesson 17

**Two More Judges of Israel: Tola and Jair
The First Half of the Sixth Sin-Cycle in the Book of Judges
Judges 10:1-18**

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. There is a limit to God's patience.
2. There is no limit to God's love.

practical application

1. Don't make God your last resort.

questions

1. Tola was a judge of Israel. From whom or what did he save Israel?
2. Who was Jair? How do we know that he was well-to-do?
3. Outline the sixth sin cycle according to the five stages- rebellion, retribution, repentance, restoration, rest.
4. What triggered God's mercy?

answers

1. Tola likely saved Israel from civil strife that followed Abimelech's terrible kingship.
2. Jair was a Giliadite who judged Israel for twenty two years. He had thirty sons who rode on thirty donkeys, and they also had thirty towns.
3.
 - 1) Israel turned away from the Lord, again doing evil in the sight of the Lord (10:6)
 - 2) The Lord brought in a foreign power; He sold Israel into the hands of the Philistines and the people of Ammon, who harassed and oppressed them (10:7)
 - 3) The people repented and cried out to the Lord, saying, *"We have sinned against You because we have forsaken our God and served the Baals."* (10:10)
 - 4) The Lord raised up Jephthah to deliver them (11:29)
 - 5) The land was at rest under the judge and the people were once again following the Lord until the death of the judge (12:7).
4. The children of Israel acknowledged their sin, put away the foreign gods, and served the Lord.

discuss / consider

1. There are a number of times when God's patience with His people ran out. See Judges 10:14; Genesis 6:3; 1 Peter 3:20; and Luke 13:34. This could be true for the unbeliever, and also for the believer. For the unbeliever, *"Now is the day of salvation"* (2 *Corinthian 6:2*). Don't delay in receiving Christ as your Savior. As for the believer, there are many ways in which the patience of God is tried, mostly by self-centeredness rather than God-centeredness. Are you trying the patience of God?
2. *"God's soul could no longer endure the misery of Israel"* (10:16). O, the mercy and love of God! The children of Israel acknowledged their sin, put away the foreign gods and served the Lord. When people truly repent from their sin, there's no limit to God's love. Remember the story of the prodigal (Luke 15). How are you letting people know about the love and mercy of God?

challenge

1. Don't make God your last resort. People today try every other god and everything else before God. Only when disaster comes, some finally turn to the Lord. Christ is waiting to receive those who repent. See Jeremiah 2:13. What is your source of water?

memorize

"Israel cried out to the Lord, 'We have sinned against You, because we have forsaken our God and served the Baals!'" Judges 10:10

"Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in your time of distress." Judges 10:14

"They put away the foreign gods from among them and served the Lord. And His soul could no longer endure the misery of Israel." Judges 10:16

"My people have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water." Jeremiah 2:13

Lesson 18

The Account of Jephthah, the Next Judge of Israel Judges 11:1-28

background notes

1.

2.

3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. Great potential can be lost because of prejudice.
2. God honors the truth, not “spin.”

practical application

1. Do you suffer as a result of someone else’s mistakes?

questions

1. Why did Jephthah flee from Gilead?
2. How is Jephthah a picture of the Ruler to come, the perfect Judge?
3. How do we know from Scripture that Jephthah was a man of great potential?
4. What is the meaning of “spin?”
5. Who was telling the truth and who doing a “spin” on the truth?

answers

1. His brothers drove him out because he was the son of a harlot.
2. Both Jephthah and Jesus were despised and cast out by their own people, even though neither had done anything wrong. Both were accused of an illegitimate birth. As the leaders were humbled, they asked Jephthah to rule over them, so will Israel one day be humbled to the point where they recognize Christ as King. Jephthah was a judge and a ruler, pointing to the Ruler to come, the perfect Judge.
3. It is stated that he was a man of valor. He was a leader, banding together a group of worthless men to go out raiding with him, and he was asked by the elders to come and fight for them. He was diplomatic in the use of his knowledge of history and logic with the Ammonites. Also, he is included in the "Hall of Faith" in Hebrews 11:32.
4. "Spin" means to take the facts and manipulate them to suit yourself and push your own agenda, which is not necessarily the truth.
5. Jephthah was telling the truth. The king of Ammon put a spin on the facts.

discuss / consider

1. Jephthah's potential was nearly lost because of the prejudice of his brothers. Are you aware of Christian men and women whose potential is not being used because of prejudice? Is there something you can do about it?
2. God honored the truth of Jephthah. This is a day of spinmeisters, but they will ultimately answer to the truth. Unfortunately, spin can take place in Christian circles as well as in politics. Again, is there something that you can do when you discern spin?

challenge

1. Jephthah suffered because of another's mistake, and he had to flee and live as an outcast. How did he react? He never took revenge. Furthermore, he honored the Lord and made himself available for the Lord's service. What is your reaction when you suffer as a result of someone else's mistake? Never take revenge, because that belongs to the Lord; He will repay.

memorize

"Jephthah was a mighty man of valor." Judges 11:1

"Jephthah spoke all his words before the Lord." Judges 11:11

"I have not sinned against you, but you wronged me...May the Lord, the Judge, render judgment this day between us." Judges 11:27

"The Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah." Judges 11:29

"Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord." Romans 12:19

Lesson 19

Jephthah's Victory Over the Ammonites and the Record of His Foolish Vow Judges 11:29-40

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. Sometimes God superimposes His strength on great natural strengths.
2. Sometimes God gives victory in spite of grave human mistakes.

practical application

1. Let's not make rash and foolish vows.

questions

1. What foolish vow did Jephthah make?
2. Did Jephthah actually sacrifice his daughter? List arguments for and against.
3. Give two examples of timid believers on which God superimposed His strength.
4. Give two examples of strong believers on which God superimposed His strength.
5. Does the Lord take away natural abilities and strengths and substitute His strength?

answers

1. If he was given the victory in battle, he promised to offer the first thing that came out of the doors of his house when he returned. Sadly, he watched his only child, a daughter, come out to meet him when he returned from victory.

2. Arguments for:

- 1) it's the most normal interpretation of the text as a burnt offering is the same Hebrew word used for blood sacrifices
- 2) when he made the vow, he could have been thinking of an animal coming out
- 3) since he had been living near the border, perhaps he had become desensitized to the pagan practices around him, or he may have been ignorant of the Mosaic law against human sacrifice.

Arguments against:

- 1) verse 31 may be translated to mean that the sacrifice would be dedicated to the Lord, if a person came out
- 2) verses 37-39 seem to indicate that Jephthah's daughter expected to be dedicated to the Lord to a life of celibacy, not sacrifice
- 3) he had made the vow after the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, thus it doesn't seem logical.

3) Gideon and Timothy

4) Jephthah and Paul

5) No, rather He superimposes His strength on believers.

discuss / consider

1. Are you a timid person? God can superimpose His strength on yours. Are you a strong person? God can superimpose His strength on yours. In either case, He can use you mightily in His kingdom. Just dedicate yourself to Him and to His service and great things will be accomplished for His glory.

2. Have you ever made a foolish vow? God in no way condones such a vow, but He can give victory in spite of it. You don't have to be distressed by these foolish mistakes. Just as the Lord gave victory in battle, he can turn your foolishness to victory when you turn the issue over to Him. Then resolve to pray more to avoid making a mistake like that again.

challenge

1. Be committed and dedicated in your life, your abilities, your work and your finances. Walk closely to the Lord to avoid making rash and foolish mistakes.

memorize

"Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah." Judges 11:29

"Jephthah made a vow to the Lord." Judges 11:30

"The Lord gave victory." Judges 11:32

Lesson 20

Jephthah's Defeat of the Ephraimites in Civil War The Next Three Judges in Israel - Ibzan, Elon and Abdon Judges 12:1-15

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. Believers should watch out for the sideline critic attitude.
2. Believers should watch out for the "I've-had-it" attitude.
3. Believers should watch out for the "Say Shibboleth" attitude.

practical application

1. Let's not be part of a circular firing squad.

questions

1. Name the four judges in this section.
2. Who was Samuel?
3. Why were all of the sons and daughters of the judges mentioned?
4. Jephthah made another rash decision in this lesson. What was it?
5. What was the linguistic test?
6. How can we avoid internal strife?

answers

1. Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon and Abdon
2. Hannah's son, who was dedicated to the Lord. He is sometimes called the last judge and the first prophet in Israel.
3. To emphasize their community status and influence as well as their affluence.
4. Jephthah wanted revenge over the Ephraimites who didn't support him during the battle, so he cut off the fords, capturing all who tried to escape. Then he set up a linguistic test, killing everyone who couldn't pass it. 42,000 of his fellow Israelites were killed.
5. The Ephraimite was asked to say, "Shibboleth." If he said, "Sibboleth" he was killed with no mercy.
6. We should guard our attitude toward other Christians.

discuss / consider

1. Ephraim had the sideline critic attitude. They should have come to fight the Ammonites, but they didn't. Then they had the nerve to criticize Jephthah from the sidelines. Avoid this attitude in yourself, in your family and in your church, lest there be internal strife.
2. Ephraim was wrong to criticize Jephthah, but Jephthah was wrong to take the "I've-had-it" attitude. When the line is crossed, gifted people may leave the ministry, husbands may leave their wives, and all kinds of problems result. How much better it is to work it out. Civil war can often be avoided with a soft answer.
3. Some people have been judged as unspiritual because they couldn't say "Shibboleth," or because they do a few things differently in worship. Let's not let our Shibboleths cause internal strife. Don't set up unbiblical tests of spirituality.

challenge

1. When Christians shoot at each other instead of shooting at the enemy, civil war results. Internal strife only damages each other and the work of the Lord. Don't let this happen in your church. Read Galatians 5:15.

memorize

"Why didn't you call us to fight with you? We will burn your house down on you with fire!"

"When I called you, you didn't come. Why are you fighting me?" Judges 12:1-3

"Say 'Shibboleth.'" Judges 12:5-6

"If you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!" Galatians 5:15

Lesson 21

The Birth of Samson Judges 13:1-25

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. The mother of Samson is a godly model for all wives.
2. The father of Samson is a godly model for all husbands.

practical application

1. Let's watch for God's wonders.

questions

1. Outline the first two stages of the seventh and last sin cycle in the Book of Judges.
2. Explain what is meant by the statement, "The seven sin cycles in the Book of Judges appear to spiral downward."
3. How was the birth of Samson announced?
4. What does it mean to be a Nazarite? What were the restrictions?

answers

- 1) Rebellion- The children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord (13:1)
- 2) Retribution- The Lord allowed the Philistines to oppress Israel for forty years (13:1).

2. The sins of the people became greater and their response to the Lord was less. In this last cycle (Judges 13-16), we don't read of a response to the Lord. Also, the Philistines are not completely defeated. Samson only begins to deliver Israel out of the hands of the enemy (13:5).

3. His birth was announced to his mother by the Angel of the Lord (13:3).

4. A Nazarite was someone who was separated from the ways of the world and separated unto the Lord. Restrictions: could not drink wine, could not touch anything unclean, including anything dead, and could not cut his hair.

discuss / consider

1. Samson's mother was a godly woman. Scripture indicates this because she submitted to the will of God. There was no complaining or bitterness about her barrenness or about the restrictions that would be placed on her son. She also submitted to her husband, respecting him and sharing everything with him. Read 1 Peter 3:5. If you are a wife, do you submit to your husband? If you are a mother, are you a godly mother?

2. Samson's father was a godly man. Scripture indicates that he, too, submitted to the will of God. When his wife told him of the Lord's visit he prayed for confirmation. He honored his wife by listening to her and by recognizing that God had spoken to her. Read 1 Peter 3:7. If you are a husband, do you honor your wife? If you are a father, are you a godly father?

3. Samson's parents were godly parents, but Samson did not turn out to be the most godly person. He broke all the requirements of his Nazarite vow. His parents must have cried many nights together over many of their son's willful actions. Godly parents, don't blame yourselves if your children are not going straight, even though you have brought them up in the admonition of the Lord. There are other factors.

challenge

1. The Lord did a wondrous thing while Manoah and his wife looked on (13:19-20). That's the way the Lord is. However, we too often miss the wondrous things He does because we are not watching. Be sure to watch for God's wonders, especially watch for His return.

memorize

"The Angel of the Lord appeared to the woman (awesome)...and to Manoah." Judges 13:1, 6, 9, 11

"The Angel of the Lord said, 'Why do you ask My name, seeing it is wonderful?'...He did a wondrous thing." Judges 13:18-20

"His name will be called Wonderful..." Isaiah 9:6

Lesson 22

The Sad Results of Samson Breaking His Nazarite Vow God Uses Samson in Spite of Samson's Shortcomings Judges 14:1-20

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. Compromise can ruin a life of great potential
2. Compromise cannot ruin the law of God's providence.

practical application

1. Don't use the Samson method of finding a spouse.

questions

1. Did Samson reach his full potential as a servant of God?
2. Was Samson a man of faith?
3. When Samson referred to his wife as a heifer, what did that imply?
4. Samson had godly parents who loved and worshipped the Lord, and gave Samson good and godly counsel. Was it their fault that Samson failed to live up to their expectations?
5. How did Samson compromise God's law and his Nazarite vows?
6. What was the riddle that Samson posed to the Philistines?

answers

1. No. For all of his physical strength, he was a morally weak man. He could not control his passions and lusts. He had no self-control, and as a result he broke his Nazarite vows more than once.
2. Yes, Samson was a man of faith in spite of his glaring weakness of self-discipline. He is in the “Hall of Faith” in Hebrews 11.
3. That she was an untamed and stubborn woman who had betrayed him.
4. No. See Lesson 21, Discuss / Consider #3. It was Samson himself who compromised God’s law because he had no self-control, no self-discipline.
5. He compromised God’s law by intermarrying with the Philistines. He compromised his Nazarite vow by drinking wine at the seven-day Philistine wedding; he touched a dead lion; and later he told the secret of his strength, allowing his hair to be cut.
6. It was a riddle based on his experience with the lion and the honey. (See Judges 14:8-9, 14, 18.)

discuss / consider

1. Compromising God’s law can ruin a life of great potential. This was true in the case of Samson because of his wilfulness, and lack of self-control and self-discipline. What he wanted, he wanted, and he wanted it right then. What was true for Samson can be true for us. God blesses His people with gifts and talents, but compromise can cut short a life of potential for God.
2. Regardless of Samson’s irreverent behavior, God used him. Does that mean it’s OK to disobey the Lord and go against God’s will if something good comes out of it? Does that mean that God’s plans will be thwarted? Read Ephesians 1:11.

challenge

1. Do you want a Samson-type marriage, or do you want a Scripture-type marriage? Christians who are considering marriage would do well to take time to build a Christ-honoring relationship.

memorize

“Samson saw a Philistine woman and said to his parents, ‘Get her for me, for she pleases me well.’” Judges 14:1-3

“The Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson.” Judges 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14

Lesson 23

**More Exploits of Samson, and How God Used These Exploits
to Reduce the Power of the Philistines Over Israel
Judges 15:1-20**

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. Ungodly anger and revenge bring about great destruction.
2. Godly faith and courage bring about great victory.

practical application

1. If you have a physical need, pray about it.

questions

1. Samson judged Israel for twenty years. Was this a peaceful time?
2. In Chapters 13 and 14, we read that the Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson. In Chapter 15, when did the Spirit of the Lord not come upon him?
3. How did Israel help Samson overcome the Philistines?
4. Was Samson a good witness for the Lord?
5. How many men did Samson kill with the jawbone of a donkey?

answers

1. No, the Philistines were a very powerful enemy over Israel, and Samson had only begun to deliver Israel from their hand (13:5).
2. When he was acting in anger and with ungodly revenge (15:7).
3. For the most part, Israel was content to live as they were and did not rise up to fight with Samson. The people were apathetic and reluctant to resist the enemy. So, for the most part, Samson fought the Philistines alone.
4. Because of his disobedience to God's laws and to his Nazarite vows, and because of his wilfulness and uncontrolled anger, it is doubtful that he was a good witness for God.
5. One thousand men. (15:15-16)

discuss / consider

1. Samson disobeyed God's law by marrying a pagan Philistine woman. This disobedience resulted in further wrong-doing, uncontrolled anger and revenge. There is always bad fall-out from disobedience. There is always a negative consequence of uncontrolled anger. Have you found this to be true? Samson did many things in the name of Samson, not in the name of the Lord. Are you doing God's work in God's way to bring honor to His name?
2. Samson showed some acts of courage and faith because he knew the deliverance of God. What evidence is there in your life of acting on faith? Is your witness one of anger and ungodly revenge or one of faith and courage?

challenge

1. Samson was extremely thirsty after his battle with the Philistines. When he asked God to meet his physical need, God met it in a most miraculous way. Do you ask God to meet your physical and spiritual needs? Remember, there is difference between physical wants and physical needs.

memorize

"Samson said, 'I will surely taken revenge on you...so he attacked them with a great slaughter... Samson said, 'This time I shall be blameless regarding the Philistines if I harm them!'" Judges 15:3, 7-8

"Samson cried out to the Lord, 'Shall I now die of thirst?'" Judges 15:18

"God split the hollow place...and water came out. Samson drank, and his spirit returned, and he revived." Judges 15:19

Lesson 24

**Samson's Relationship with Delilah, Leading to His Death
Another Victory Over the Philistines in Samson's Death
Judges 16:1-31**

background notes

- 1.

- 2.

- 3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. Loss of separation results in loss of spiritual power.
2. Loss of separation results in loss of spiritual success.

practical application

1. Don't toy with temptation.

questions

1. Give two examples from this section of Scripture that illustrate Samson's great physical strength.
2. Who was Delilah, and how did she betray Samson?
3. Review the spiritual pictures of the following:
 - a) the land of Canaan
 - b) the Philistines
 - c) the Jordan River
 - d) Delilah
4. What is the key to blessing and power in this story?
5. What is God's way of entrance into the land?

answers

1. The Philistines thought they had Samson trapped inside the city of Gaza, but Samson escaped by breaking down the massive gate of the city. Samson was blinded, but his final act was to call on God for strength to push down the pillars which supported the temple.
2. She was a Philistine prostitute who seduced Samson into giving away the secret of his strength.
3.
 - a) the land of spiritual blessing and power for the Christian
 - b) one of Satan's devices for keeping God's people defeated; they represent the worldly, fleshly or carnal principles at work in the land
 - c) a picture of identifying with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection
 - d) the attractive, alluring and seductive appeals of the world.
4. Separation from the ways of the world and separation unto God.
5. To follow the ark through the Jordan River (dead to self, alive unto God)

discuss / consider

1. When Samson broke his Nazarite vow of separation to God, he lost his strength. Satan wants to seduce us into losing our separation unto the Lord. He wants to keep us defeated in the land of spiritual blessing, and when he wins, we lose out on blessing and power. Do you find your walk of faith being tested? Turn your back on the temptations of the world and ask the Lord for help in keeping close to Him.
2. Read Joshua 1:7-8. Samson was strong and courageous, but he did not observe to do all the will of God. Like Samson, you can have a lot going for you, but if you are not a separated Christian, you will never be a spiritually successful Christian. Separate yourself from the values and attitudes of this world system and be separated to the Lord.

challenge

1. Don't toy with temptation. Avoid dabbling in sin, lest you fall.

memorize

"The enemy said, 'Entice him...that we may overpower him.'" Judges 16:5

"She pestered him daily with her words and pressed him, so that his soul was vexed to death." Judges 16:16

"Lord God, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray." Judges 16:28

"Flee sexual immorality. Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit." 1 Corinthians 6:18

"Flee youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness...with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." 2 Timothy 2:22

Lesson 25

A Story Which Illustrates the Low Spiritual Conditions Existing in Israel During the Dark Days of the Judges Judges 17:1-13

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. Spiritual decline opens the door for syncretism.
2. Spiritual decline opens the door for self-seekers.

practical application

1. Beware of idols creeping into the church.

questions

1. The period of the judges lasted about 350 years, from the time of Samuel to the beginning of the monarchy. Why is this period sometimes called “the dark days of the judges?”
2. What does the name Micah mean? Did the Micah in this section live up to his name?
3. Define syncretism.
4. Give an example of syncretism during the time of the judges.
5. What leads to syncretism?
6. Give an example of syncretism today in our country.
7. Was the Levite in this story a God-honoring man?
8. What was the reaction of the people of Israel to Micah’s “service” for the Lord?

answers

1. After Joshua died, the children of Israel went downhill spiritually and morally. There was no moral authority, especially toward the end of this period, and *"Everyone did that which was right in his own eyes."* (v. 6)
2. The name means, "Who is like the Lord." This Micah did not live up to his name because he robbed his mother, then returned the silver when he heard her pronouncing a curse on the thief. Then he set up a shrine for his mother's idols, and consecrated one of his own sons as a priest for the shrine. All of these actions were contrary to the word of the Lord.
3. Syncretism is the fusion of two or more religious systems. It is a melting pot religion.
4. The people would fall away from following the Lord, and begin to serve foreign gods. Micah's mother desired the Lord's blessing on her son, but she made molten silver images. The shrine in this household was a mixture of beliefs and practices, yet they thought it was going to bring the Lord's blessing.
5. Spiritual decline.
6. The celebration of Christmas and the significance of Christ's birth is accompanied, or even outshined by Santa Claus and commercialism. The celebration of Easter and the significance of the cross is accompanied, or even superceded by the Easter bunny and candy eggs.
7. No. He broke God's law because he saw a good deal for himself. For room and board, good clothes, and a salary, he sold himself out and became a priest for Micah. Then he left Micah and become a priest for the tribe of Dan because there were even more benefits for himself.
8. Because of the spiritual decline in Israel, no one found any fault with it. *"Everyone did what was right in his own eyes."*

discuss / consider

1. Syncretism, a melting pot religion, happened many times in Israel's history when the people fell away from following the Lord and served foreign gods. Discuss the syncretism observed in our culture today. Remember that it is the result of spiritual decline. Beware the subtlety of syncretism. Be strong in biblical beliefs and practices.
2. The Levite in this story was a self-seeking opportunist, breaking God's law to benefit himself. There are self-seekers among Christians today. Beware being taken in by these people.

challenge

1. Beware of idols creeping into the church. Beware of worshipping false gods. Even the sanctuary itself can be placed above worship of the Lord.

memorize

"I had wholly dedicated the silver from my hand to the Lord...to make a carved image and a molded image." Judges 17:3

"Everyone did what was right in his own eyes." Judges 17:6

Lesson 26

**The Migration of Part of the Tribe of Dan
to the Far North of the Land of Israel
Judges 18:1-31**

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. Eclectic religion is pleasing to man.
2. Eclectic religion is not pleasing to God.

practical application

1. Have you experienced the futility and emptiness of idolatry?

questions

1. "From Dan to Beersheba" describes what land?
2. Were there exceptions to the darkness of the days of the judges?
3. What is eclectic religion?
4. Did the tribe of Dan have an eclectic religion? Explain.
5. Is eclectic religion in our nation today?

answers

1. All of the land of Israel from the far north to the far south of Israel.
2. Yes, Ruth is a good example. Also, when the people would return to the Lord under the leadership of a godly judge, there would be a time of blessing.
3. Eclectic religion is when you pick and choose doctrines and methods that you think are best from several religions.
4. Yes. They wanted to worship the Lord, but they wanted to do it their way. God's way was to set up no graven images; to have no priest other than the line of Aaron; and to set up no shrines. But the tribe of Dan wanted graven images like the pagans had; they wanted their own priest; and they wanted local shrines.
5. Very much so. For example, people don't want to hear about the doctrine and reality of hell, so they drop it from their statements and teaching. They don't like the thought of role distinction between men and women in the church, so an unbiblical doctrine is adopted.

discuss / consider

1. People pick and choose the doctrines that are pleasing to them. Eclectic religion is pleasing to man, but it is not pleasing to God. Consider some of the eclectic religious practices in the church today.
2. *"There is a way that seems right to man, but its end is the way of death."* (Proverbs 14:12). Such is the way of an eclectic religion - it seems right and it is pleasing to man, but it is not pleasing to God. The false worship by the tribe of Dan paved the way for the further idolatry of Jereboam I, who set up golden calf idols in the northern kingdom. Is eclectic religion creeping into your life in any way?

challenge

1. When the tribe of Dan took away Micah's priest and idols, he said, *"You have taken away...what more do I have?"* Have you made an idol of your home or your work or your "things?" The gods of this life bring futility and emptiness. Have there been times in your life when you have experienced this emptiness? Rid yourself of the idols in your life and live in the fullness and joy of the Lord.

memorize

"There is a way that seems right to man, but its end is the way of death." Proverbs 14:12

"Who brought you here? What are you doing in this place? What do you have here?" Judges 18:3

"Do you know that there are in these houses idols?" Judges 18:14

"You have taken away my gods...now what more do I have?" Judges 18:24

Lesson 27

**The Most Disgusting Chapter in the Bible?
The Gross Immoral Conditions that Existed in the Time of the Judges
Judges 19:1-30**

background notes

- 1.

- 2.

- 3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. God's people can sink to the moral level of unbelievers.

2. Society's moral values are not the same as God's moral standards

practical application

1. Remember, we don't drift into godliness.

questions

1. Why did the Holy Spirit select the sad events toward the end of the Book of Judges to be recorded?

2. Do some of these conditions exist in our nation today?

3. What are some of the indications that the Levite had sunk to a low moral and spiritual level?

4. What was an indication of the low level of the men of Gibeah?

5. Why did the master of the house offer his daughter in place of his guest?

6. In Old Testament times, what was the penalty for adultery?

answers

1. To show how low Israel had sunk spiritually and morally. It is a lesson for us, because it could happen to us today.
2. Unfortunately, yes.
3. The Levite was traveling with a concubine, when he was supposed to be a servant of the Lord and a model for the rest of Israel. Also, he was wandering about the land when he had been assigned to a city by God.
4. The men of Gibeah demanded homosexual relations, and they were God's people. It is more understandable in the days of Lot, for those men were pagans. (Not excusable, but more understandable).
5. In that day, society's values were to protect your guest, no matter what the cost. However, society's values are not the same as God's standards, then or now.
6. It was punishable by death.

discuss / consider

1. Do you think that God's people cannot sink to the moral level of unbelievers? In our society today, Bible-toting men in high office justify immoral acts by saying they are not really immoral, and they are backed by a nation. We must be very careful to adhere to God's level of morality in our lives.
2. Society's moral values are not the same as God's moral standards. Let's not be brainwashed with society's values. Let's be sure that we get our moral standards from the Bible.

challenge

1. Remember, we may drift into godlessness, but we don't drift into godliness. In the time of the judges, people turned away from the Lord and His laws and they went step by step downhill into ungodliness. The same can happen today in a society that cuts itself off from biblical standards. On the other hand, godliness must be maintained by a steady diet of reading God's word, lots of prayer, and fellowship with God's people.

memorize

"No such deed has been done or seen from the day that the children of Israel came up from the land of Egypt until this day. Consider it, confer, and speak up!" Judges 19:30

"Whatever things were written before, were written for our learning." Romans 15:4

"Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God...and do not be conformed to this world...prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Romans 12:1-2

Lesson 28

Israel Gathered together to God to War Against the Tribe of Benjamin Because of Gibeah's Outrageous Moral Behavior Judges 20:1-28

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. Moral laxity results from a low view of the holiness of God.
2. Moral outrage should lead to correction by discipline.

practical application

1. Take heed lest you fall.

questions

1. Why did God include these terrible events in His word?
2. The Lord spoke to the tribes of Israel, telling them to go up to battle against the tribe of Benjamin. How did He speak to them?
3. What were the Urim and Thummim?
4. How could Israel have sunk to the low spiritual and moral level that we read about in Judges chapters 17-21?
5. Why did Israel turn away from the Lord?
6. How many times is the ark of God mentioned in the Book of Judges?
7. Why was the ark outside the tabernacle (contrary to God's word)?

answers

1. To show us all the sad things that really happen when people turn away from God's word and God's laws.
2. Perhaps God spoke through a priest or a prophet, or it may have been through the Urim and Thummim.
3. We don't know exactly, but from references in the law they were some kind of item, perhaps precious stones, that were put in the breastplate of the high priest, and they could be used by him to determine God's will when some major decision was called for.
4. Because they turned away from the Lord and His laws.
5. Because they had a low view of the holiness of God.
6. Only once.
7. It's likely that the Israelites viewed the ark as a good luck charm.

discuss / consider

1. The Israelites had a low view of the holiness of God, evidenced by the things they did that were contrary to His law. Moral laxity soon followed. If you have a low view of the holiness of God it will show in the things you pursue. Check out your selection of reading materials and the TV programs you watch, for example. If you have a high view of the holiness of God, you will not have a problem of moral laxity in your life.
2. Drastic measures were taken before Israel woke up to their moral laxity and depravity. Only then was there moral outrage. When there is moral outrage, it should lead to correction by discipline. Do you see this in our country? The Lord will step in only when moral outrage, humility, confession and true repentance occur. Then there will be correction by discipline, and healing can follow.

challenge

1. Read 1 Corinthians 10:11-12. "These things" refer to Old Testament events, but they are written for us through the ages. We should take heed to learn from them.

memorize

"Tell us, how did this wicked deed happen?" Judges 20:3

"What is this wickedness that has occurred among you?" Judges 20:12

"Then all the people went up and came to the house of God and wept. They sat there before the Lord and fasted that day until evening; and they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord. So they inquired of the Lord." Judges 20:26-27

"These things were written for our admonition and correction. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." 1 Corinthians 10:11-12

Lesson 29

The Third Phase of Civil War Between Israel and the Tribe of Benjamin Israel is Finally Successful and Benjamin is Defeated, as the Lord Predicted Judges 20:29-48

background notes

1.

2.

3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. God's assistance is not necessarily a sign of God's approval.
2. God can suddenly change the course of events.

practical application

1. Can we say, "Better dead than depraved?"

questions

1. Why was there civil war between Israel and the tribe of Benjamin?
2. What did the Levite do when his concubine was violated?
3. Because of this act, how did Israel respond?
4. How was the story of Lot and Sodom and Gomorrah comparable to this story? What was different?
5. Were the tribes of Israel right in disciplining Benjamin?
6. Was Israel faultless in this incident?
7. Why did the Lord allow Israel to be defeated twice before the victory?
8. Benjamin thought they were getting away with their defiant attitude. What happened to make them realize they weren't getting away with it?

answers

1. Because of the events recorded in Judges 19.
2. He cut her body into twelve pieces and sent a piece to each of the tribes in Israel.
3. Israel was outraged when they heard the story, so that they went to war in order to discipline Benjamin for allowing such events to happen.
4. Both involved the sin of homosexuality. The difference was that the men of Sodom and Gomorrah were not God's people, whereas the men of Gibeah were God's people.
5. Yes.
6. No, because it took such horrendous deeds to finally cause moral outrage in Israel.
7. To make Israel realize that they had to get right before the Lord before they could have victory.
8. God intervened and changed the course of events.

discuss / consider

1. God assisted Israel in winning the war over Benjamin, but He certainly did not approve of all that they did. Can you recall cases where Christians and even churches seem to have a measure of success, but where God would not approve of their practices and ethics? The Israelites were harsh to the extreme in disciplining Benjamin, almost to the point of annihilation. Church leaders need to be sensitive to the kind of discipline they use in dealing with wrong-doing. Can discipline be carried too far in a Christian home?
2. The tribe of Benjamin thought they were getting away with their defiant attitude defending the sinful city of Gibeah. But God suddenly changed the course of events. Could this be true in our country today? God could bring another awakening to our land, but we must humble ourselves and pray.

challenge

1. During the time of the judges everyone was doing what was right in their own eyes. But from God's point of view, there was gross moral sin and depravity. The tribe of Benjamin was desensitized to sin, perhaps thinking of homosexuality as simply sexual preference. Does this sound familiar? What will it take to awaken people to God's holiness?
2. Beware of viewing success as a sign of God's blessing.

memorize

"If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and and heal their land." 2 Chronicles 7:14

"The Lord defeated Benjamin before Israel." Judges 20:35

Lesson 30

Israel Obtains Wives for the Tribe of Benjamin, So the Tribe of Benjamin would Not Be Lost from the Twelve Tribes of Israel Judges 21:1-25

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. Just because it's a vow before God, doesn't make it right.
2. Just because it works, doesn't make it right.

practical application

1. Let's not blame God for our problems.

questions

1. What happens when there is no central authority, as in the time of the judges?
2. The six hundred Benjamite men who survived the civil war had no wives. How did Israel "fix" this situation so the tribe wouldn't die out?
3. What were the two foolish vows made by the men of Israel?
4. Were these vows well thought out?
5. What did the Israelites do to get around their vows?
6. Israel's plan to get wives for the six hundred Benjamite men worked. But was it right?

answers

1. Everyone does their own thing, and as a result there is spiritual and moral anarchy.
2. They massacred the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead, sparing four hundred virgins. The other two hundred were obtained when the Israelites decided to let the wifeless Benjaminites catch their wives when the young maidens came out to dance at the annual feast held at Shiloh.
3. They vowed not to give any of their daughters to a Benjamite, and they vowed that whoever did not come up with them to the assembly of the Lord would be put to death.
4. No, they were made in the emotion of the moment.
5. They tried to find legal loopholes, making the vows seem even more ridiculous.
6. No. Although the tribe of Benjamin was preserved, it was done in ways that could hardly be justified.

discuss / consider

1. The men of Israel made some foolish vows, and had to go through all kinds of legal loopholes to get out of them. Have foolish vows been made within your Christian ministries or churches? How could such situations be avoided?
2. Plans work, but it may be because God picked up the pieces. Christians must come before the Lord and wait for His direction. Are you prone to move on with your own plan apart from God's guidance? Wait on Him.

challenge

1. When the tribe of Benjamin was almost wiped out, Israel wondered, "Why has this come to pass?" They failed to see their own wrong-doing in going outside the will of the Lord. Does this sound familiar? Many of our problems are of our own making, but the good news is that if we wait on God He will help us. He can pick up the pieces.

memorize

"Then the people came to the house of God, and remained there before God till evening. They lifted up their voices and wept bitterly." Judges 21:2

"O Lord God, why has this come to pass?" Judges 21:3

"In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes." Judges 21:25