



Judges: A Failure to Launch

Lesson 1: January 13th & 14th

Read Judges: 1:1–2:5

Sermon Reflection Question: What captured your attention from Sunday's sermon?

Observation & Interpretation Questions:

1. Read Joshua 23:3–13. As Israel was stepping into the long-awaited conquest of the promised land, God was preparing both Joshua and the nation by teaching them the importance of courageous and consistent faith. What were God's commands to Israel in this passage?
2. *Partial obedience is disobedience.* What do you learn about God's commands for their obedience and the consequences for their disobedience from Deuteronomy 30:15–20?
3. From Judges 1:1–36, describe Israel's obedience and disobedience to God's commands in the following sections:
 - Verse 2–3:
 - Verse 4–11:
 - Verse 19–21:

Judah would have won victory even against all-powerful iron chariots. Why? Because God was with them. And yet we are told they "could not." Since God had told them that in fact they could, this must be their own verdict, based on common-sense calculations rather than risk-taking faith.

- Verse 22–26:

- Verse 27–36:

4. What do you know about Caleb (Joshua 14:6–15), and why do you think he and his family, including Othniel, are mentioned in this passage?

Reflection & Application:

It is not our lack of strength that prevents us from enjoying God’s blessings or stops us worshiping God wholeheartedly; it is our lack of faith in his promises and his strength. When we rely on ourselves and base our walk with God on our own calculations instead of his promises, we find ourselves making decisions like the men of Judah.

5. Does this describe you in any way at the moment? What would promise-trusting obedience look like for you?

Observation & Interpretation Question:

6. Earlier, when we read that Israel “could not drive out” the Canaanites, we might be inclined to agree. “After all,” we think, “they did their best.” Read Judges 2:1-5. What is God’s verdict on Israel? What shouldn’t Israel have done that they have, and what should they have done that they haven’t?

Reflection & Application:

Essentially, the Israelites said, “We could not.” God answers, “No – you would not.” What Israel thought of as good reasons, God says are flimsy excuses. “God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear” (1 Corinthians 10:13). In obeying God, there is never a real “I can’t” moment.

There may be all sorts of things in our lives which we think we are unable to do, but which actually we are refusing to do. Here are four areas where we find it easy to say “I can’t” when we mean “I won’t.”

1. Forgiveness: *I can’t forgive this/him/her.*

2. Telling the truth: *I can't tell them the truth. It would destroy them/wreck our relationship.*
 3. Sharing the gospel: *I can't talk with them about Jesus. I wouldn't want to push my faith on them.*
 4. Temptation to sin: *I just can't resist, even though I know it's wrong.*
7. Are you saying "can't" which is in fact "won't" in any of these areas? In other areas?
8. How does Judges 2:4-5 show us the right response to being confronted by our "wont's"? When do you need to remember who God is and change your "won't" to "will"?
9. When we rely on ourselves and lack faith in His strength and provisions, we find ourselves making decisions like the tribe of Judah. Is there any area of your life today where you are trying to "help" a situation or you have settled for partial disobedience rather than wholeheartedly trusting God? Write a prayer of praise, repentance, and surrender to God today.
10. Iron sharpens iron. Read James 5:16–20. As the church body, we are called to confess our sins to one another, pray for one another, and to speak in truth. Turn to your neighbor in life group and pray for one another. (Prayer Ideas: Admit to God your "wont's." Thank him for judging them at the cross. Ask him to enable you to remember who he is, so your "wont's" change to "wills.")

Resources: Timothy Keller, "Judges," in *90 Days in Judges, Galatians & Ephesians*, Explore by the Book, 2017.

Fasting Reflection:

RELAX: Take a moment to relax. Close your eyes and breathe deeply - inhaling slowly, then exhaling slowly. Repeat this several times as you imagine yourself coming into God's presence. As you finish and get ready to read, pray something simple like "Lord, speak to me through the words of your gospel. Amen."

READ. Read this story about Jesus two times. Read slowly, pausing at the line breaks:

Luke 4:1-13 (NIV)

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone.'"

The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. If you worship me, it will all be yours." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'"

The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. For it is written: "'He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"

Jesus answered, "It is said: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

REFLECT. After the reading, take some time to reflect in silence on one or more of the following questions:

- What word or words in this passage caught your attention?
- What in this passage comforted you?
- What in this passage challenged you?
- What is God inviting you into?

RESPOND. Read the scripture passage one more time. Bring to the Lord the praise, petition, questions, or thanksgiving that the Word inspires in you.

REST. Soak in the moment, rest in it, don't rush through it. Do you sense anything that Jesus is inviting you to know, see, believe, or do? Pray: Thank you God for meeting with me in this time. Give me courage and faith to follow you this day.