



Institute Bible Study Series

JUDGES

An Inductive Study





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Cover Design: Zach Tinkle
Layout and Lead Content Contributors: Curt Mize and Spencer Haygood

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T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S

1.	Preface to the Institute Bible Studies Series	v
2.	A Brief Overview of Judges	vii
3.	Lesson 1: Introduction and Historical Context.....	1
4.	Lesson 2: The Pattern of Rebellion	9
5.	Lesson 3: Othniel and Ehud: Early Deliverers.....	17
6.	Lesson 4: Deborah and Barak: Real Leadership.....	25
7.	Lesson 5: Gideon's Call and Testing God	33
8.	Lesson 6: Gideon's Victory and Downfall.....	41
9.	Lesson 7: Abimelech's Tyranny.....	49
10.	Lesson 8: Minor Judges and Jephthah's Rise	57
11.	Lesson 9: Jephthah's Victory and Tragic Vow.....	65
12.	Lesson 10: Samson's Birth and Early Exploits	73
13.	Lesson 11: Samson and Delilah: Strength and Weakness	81
14.	Lesson 12: Moral and Spiritual Decline	89
15.	Bibliography	97

בַּיּוֹם הַהִיא אֵין מֶלֶךְ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ כִּי־שָׁר בְּעֵינָיו יַעֲשֶׂה:

“In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”

—*Judges 21:25*

P R E F A C E

TO THE INSTITUTE BIBLE STUDY SERIES

—§—

Purpose

In Ps 16:11 David writes of God, “You make known to me the path of life, in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” This God of whom David speaks has written a book, the Bible, so that we might know him and experience this “fullness of joy” found only in his presence. The purpose of this series of studies is not only to help you behold God in the pages of Scripture, but also to equip you to read, study, and rightly apply the Bible on your own to all of life. Our desire is to make disciples of Jesus Christ who can feed themselves on the rich banquet that is God’s Word.

The Process

Many come to the Bible unsure of where to start. You may feel intimidated by the gap in culture and time between now and when the Bible was written. Maybe you are unsure of your ability to understand what is written. Perhaps you come to the Bible with preconceived ideas of what is in a text or simply to look for a quick point of application to help get you through the day. We have intentionally designed these studies to help you slow down and see what the text actually says. In fact, that is the *first* place to start when you study the Bible. We must first understand what a text *says* before we can understand what it *means*. And only after we have considered what it *means* can we then rightly know how it *applies*. Think of the Bible study process in three phases:

- *Observation*: What does the passage say?
- *Interpretation*: What does the passage mean?
- *Application*: What effect ought this to have?

As you look first to *observe* a passage, you want to slow down enough to notice the actual words that are being used. Are there any key theological ideas in the text? Who is the author? Who is the audience? What connecting words are present? Are certain words or phrases repeated? What arguments are made? What is the flow of the passage?

Once you have observed these textual details then you can start to *interpret* them by putting the different pieces together. What is the relationship between different propositions? How does this passage relate to what is taught in Scripture elsewhere? Where does this passage fit within the grand story of redemption that runs through the Scriptures from beginning to end? What is the author’s main point in the passage?

Only when you have spent time *observing* the details of a passage and then putting those details together to rightly *interpret* the author’s intent can you then *apply* what you have discovered the passage to teach. In light of what you now understand the author’s intended point and meaning to be, you’re in a position to ask how might the passage bear on your faith and practice, in what you believe and how you are to live. What promises are there that you might trust in? What commands are there to obey? How does the truth of the passage lead you to worship?

Also, as you go through this process of studying a text, know that you are not alone. As Christians, we have the Holy Spirit within us helping us come to know his Word and walk in its truth. Paul tells us, “For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person’s thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts

of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God" (1 Cor 2:10–12). In fact, Jesus himself prayed for you that you would not only know the truth of his Word but be transformed by it. We read his prayer in John 17:17, "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth."

How To Use These Studies

These guides are designed to help you walk through a book of the Bible in a faithful and careful way. We have also built into these studies several different components that each serve a distinct purpose. Each week you will have individual homework questions that will help you *observe*, *interpret*, and *apply* the week's passage. Make sure you spend some time working through the assigned passage and these questions before you meet with your study group. If you are not able to answer all the questions or have additional questions as you read the text, that is not a problem. Wrestle with those questions. Don't feel the need to quickly resolve the tension, but diligently work to make sense of what you are reading.

Then, when you gather with your study group, you each will come having already spent some

time individually working through the text which will allow you to use your discussion time to confirm, correct, and sharpen your understanding of the passage. Bible study is best done in community and so this time will allow you see what others have learned from their time in the passage that week. You will also work together as a group to *synthesize* what you have read and studied with the aim of establishing a clear understanding of the point of the text.

Finally, part of the class time will be devoted to *instruction*. A teacher will walk through the passage and help to further clarify any lingering questions, reinforce the main point of the text, and point to faithful ways the text might apply.

The Bible is God's revelation of himself to us. As you begin this study, pray that God would give you grace to look upon him through the pages of Scripture.

"O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you" (Ps 63:1–3).

Josh Price
Series Editor

JUDGES

A Brief Introduction

B. Spencer Haygood

Twice in the book of Judges we read a haunting refrain that perfectly captures the spiritual condition of Israel: “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judg 17:6; 21:25).¹ That’s more than a historical observation; it’s a theological diagnosis. The people had expressly been warned *not* to adopt the practice of “everyone doing whatever is right in his own eyes” (Deut 12:8). That course is and always has been “the way of a fool ...” (Prov 12:15). Yet the people did it, and it’s a telling indictment of where their hearts and loyalties really lay.

This book takes us on a descending path through approximately 340 years of Israel’s history, illustrating the consequences of abandoning God’s reign in favor of self-rule. It unfolds as a dramatic narrative unveiling a repeating cycle of *sin, suffering, supplication, and salvation*. But each cycle also spirals downward, revealing increasingly flawed judges and demonstrating that human “deliverers” alone cannot break the destructive patterns.

This situation eerily mirrors our contemporary culture of expressive individualism, where personal autonomy reigns supreme.² As we study this book, we are confronted with a sobering truth: *when we reject God’s loving authority and appoint ourselves as the final arbiters of right and wrong, the result is not freedom but chaos and bondage*. The message of Judges speaks powerfully, prophetically, and unapologetically to our “do what feels right to you, follow your heart” culture, reminding us that true freedom comes not from *self-rule* but from *submission* to our rightful King. In these pages, we discover that our desperate need is finally not for better human leadership, not for self-realization and self-fulfillment, but for the perfect King to come and establish his righteous rule in our lives.

Historical Context

The Word of God is not *ahistorical*, that is, it was not written in a historical vacuum. “As God’s Word spoken through human words in history, every biblical book was conditioned by the language, culture, and situations of the time—some of which are like those of our age but a lot of which are not.”³ These contextual details are essential

¹ Two additional times we’re told simply, “there was no king in Israel” (Judg 18:1; 19:1).

² “Expressive individualism” in the modern self is “where authenticity is achieved by acting outwardly in accordance with one’s inward feelings.” See Carl R. Trueman, *Strange New World: How Thinkers and Activists Redefined Identity and Sparked the Sexual Revolution*, vol. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022), 23.

³ Jason S. DeRouchie, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology*, vol. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2017), 300.

for good interpretation, as they illuminate the author’s purposes, the original audience’s understanding, and ultimately the text’s enduring theological and practical significance. To ask of any verse or passage, “What does this mean *to me*?” is simply invalid. It’s an improper question. Instead, we must ask, “What does the text mean?”—the answer to which is determined not only by its *literary* but also by its *historical* horizons; not only by where it fits in the unfolding plotline of Scripture but also by where it arises in history. Only after properly establishing its intended meaning can we then ask the right question: “What does its *meaning* mean for me?”

One effective way to explore the literary-historical context of any book of the Bible is to ask the standard questions taught in classical rhetoric as part of the “circumstances” for understanding any situation: *Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?*⁴

1. Who?

Who was the author of the book? *Who* was the intended audience? *Who* are the major figures in the book?

The Author

Scripture itself does not mention an author for the book of Judges. Some traditions ascribe its writing to Samuel,⁵ but there is no evidence to support this claim. While the book is a compilation of “sources, both oral and written,” still “the remarkable unity of the book’s structure precludes any such scheme of compilation” as those advanced by higher criticism’s more radical theories.⁶ The recurring formula of *apostasy-oppression-cry-deliverance*, the strategic arrangement of judge narratives in *descending* moral order, and the unified theological verdict on Israel’s failure all demonstrate intentional composition rather than a fragmented patchwork of contradictory sources and ongoing edits. Instead of viewing Judges as a late, artificial construction assembled from irreconcilable fragments by multiple anonymous editors—each imposing his own theological agenda on the text—we should recognize it as the work of a skilled author-compiler, moved by the Spirit of God (2 Pet 1:20–21; 2 Tim 3:16–17),

⁴ “The Seven Circumstances” (*Septem Circumstantiae*) for fully understanding and discussing any situation were (1) *Quis* (who?), the person or agent involved; (2) *Quid* (what?), the act or thing done; (3) *Ubi* (where?), the place involved; (4) *Quibus auxiliis* (by what means/with whose help?), the instruments or resources used; (5) *Cur* (why?), the motive or purpose; (6) *Quomodo* (how/in what manner?), the method employed; and (7) *Quando* (when?), the time. This classical framework asserts that meaning is inseparable from context.

⁵ For example, one of the tractates (books) of the Talmud (*Bava Batra*) contains a well-known passage discussing the authorship and compilation of biblical books, attributing the book of Judges to Samuel (14b–15a). That particular discussion reflects rabbinic traditions regarding biblical authorship that developed in the early centuries AD.

⁶ Edward J. Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* [Rev. ed.], vol. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975), 170.

who shaped historical materials into a coherent narrative with clear teaching purposes and a consistent theological perspective.

The Intended Audience

The intended audience of the book is, plainly, the covenant people of Israel, likely during the dark interval between conquest and kingdom. Reasons to believe this is the case include:

- The repeated refrain, “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judg 17:6; 21:25, also 18:1; 19:1) suggests that the intended audience now lived under a monarchy and could contrast the chaos of the period of the judges with their current situation.
- The fact that the Jebusites were in Jerusalem (Judg 1:21) indicates that the book was composed *before* David’s conquest of Jerusalem (2 Sam 5:6–9).
- Part of the apologetic and didactic purpose of the book is to explain to Israel why monarchy was necessary (due to covenant unfaithfulness and social chaos) while also warning them against any kingship that’s disconnected from covenant faithfulness.

Major Figures

Although twelve judges appear in the book, only four are major figures: *Deborah*, *Gideon*, *Jephthah*, and *Samson*. See Appendix 1 for an overview of all twelve.

2. What?

What kind of book is this?

The question of *genre* for Judges is easier asked than answered. Leland and Philip Ryken call it “a hybrid” composed of hero stories, biographical material, history, poetry, and tragedy.⁷ Fair enough on one level. Daniel Block points out several more specific “identifiable literary sources.”⁸ But, he asks, “how is the composition as a whole to be classified?” That’s the crucial question. Categorically, the book is found grouped among the “former prophets” (Joshua–Kings) so his suggestion that it is a *prophetic* work makes sense. The author isn’t simply recounting a series of events but rather, using historical material, is attempting to teach and persuade the people in order “to challenge prevailing notions and effect a spiritual and moral transformation” in his readers.⁹

⁷ Leland. Ryken and Philip Graham Ryken, eds. *The Literary Study Bible: ESV* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2007), 326.

⁸ Including conquest annals, paraenetic narrative, theological exposition, short story, etiology, battle narrative, annalistic ruler lists, political speech, and tease/riddle. Daniel I. Block, *Judges, Ruth*, The New American Commentary, (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 1999), 50.

⁹ Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 52.

What interpretive principles help us study this book responsibly?

Of course, our legitimate aim is to read the book of Judges as *Christian Scripture*. It's *not* a mere historical recounting of Israel's early days in the land of promise. *Nor* is it simply a collection of "morality tales" designed "to provide patterns of faith and behavior for us to imitate or, conversely, to avoid."¹⁰ To be sure, there's a great deal of ethical application in the book of Judges that we should bring to bear in our own lives but we have to be very discerning in determining what those lessons are and what they mean for us. Clowney makes the point vividly:

Those who find only collected moral tales in the Bible are constantly embarrassed by the *good* deeds of patriarchs, judges, and kings. Surely we cannot pattern our daily conduct on that of Samuel as he hews Agag to pieces, or Samson as he commits suicide, or Jeremiah as he preaches treason.¹¹

So, first and foremost, reading the book of Judges as *Christian Scripture* means reading it "on the Bible's own terms," that is, according to the interpretive framework Scripture itself provides. This includes:

- **reading it as God's inspired Word** (2 Tim 3:16–17).
- **reading it as part of a unified, whole-Bible story**—the one grand narrative of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation (Luke 24:27). Ask, e.g.:
 - How does Judges connect to the Mosaic covenant and the Deuteronomic warnings in the Pentateuch?
 - How does it fit with Joshua before it and Samuel-Kings after?
 - How does it point toward the monarchy, the prophets, and especially to Christ himself?
- **reading it as theological history.** The author selects, arranges, and evaluates events to reveal God's character and purposes, and to explore God's covenant faithfulness and expectations for his covenant people. This means:
 - we should look for and recognize when the author is offering theological commentary.
 - we must remember that *recording* an event is not the same as *endorsing* it.
 - we should learn to see history as the stage where God's sovereignty, justice, and grace play out for his glory.
 - we should read and study the book to learn the truth about reality,

¹⁰ Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching*, vol. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 2–3.

¹¹ See the extended discussion in Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, vol. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1979), 79–82.

not merely to be informed by its history.

- **reading it Christologically.** All Scripture bears witness to Christ (John 5:39; Luke 24:44–47). In this case, for example:
 - every failed judge points to the need for the perfect Judge-King.
 - the *temporary* deliverances foreshadow *permanent* salvation in Christ.
 - the Spirit's *temporary* empowerment in Judges anticipates the Spirit's *permanent* indwelling under the new covenant.
 - the cycle of sin and rebellion that Israel *cannot* break leads us to see our need for and seek a Savior who breaks sin's power altogether.
 - But be careful of making *illegitimate* gospel connections, where meanings that the text simply doesn't support are read into details (like finding Christ in the number of Gideon's 300 men or spiritualizing Samson's hair as representing the church). *Good grief!*
 - Instead, take note of true *typological* possibilities among the judges pointing to Christ who fulfills them perfectly.¹² For example:
 - *Othniel*: the kinsman-redeemer who delivers his people.
 - *Ehud*: the deliverer who uses unexpected means to defeat the enemy.
 - *Deborah*: the prophet-judge who leads in victory.
 - *Gideon*: the one who defeats overwhelming odds through divine power.
 - *Jephthah*: the rejected son who becomes the deliverer.
 - *Samson*: the Nazirite whose sacrificial death defeats God's enemies.
- **reading it expecting to be transformed.** As Scripture, it's not just written for our instruction, exposing our need and pointing us to Christ, our hope. (Rom 15:4), but is living and active (Heb 4:12), able to make us wise for salvation (2 Tim 3:15), and is profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16). It is God's instrument to convict us of sin, to drive us to Christ, to reorient and stir up our affections, and to shape us to live "worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Phil 1:27).

So, as you work through the book of Judges, be careful to distinguish *description* from *prescription*. Just because something appears in Scripture doesn't mean God

¹² "Typology is God-ordained, author-intended historical correspondence and escalation in significance between people, events, and institutions across the Bible's redemptive-historical story (i.e., in covenantal context)." See James M. Hamilton, *Typology—Understanding the Bible's Promise-Shaped Patterns: How Old Testament Expectations are Fulfilled in Christ*, vol. (Grand Rapids. MI: Zondervan Academic, 2022), 26.

approves of it. Read the various characters, especially the judges, as *flawed*, not as *superheroes*. They aren't moral exemplars to emulate. They're sinners through whom God worked despite their sin and insufficiency. God's grace, thus, shines all the brighter against this dark backdrop of human failure. Note closely the structure and flow of the narrative. Judges teaches through story patterns, not through propositional statements. For example, the book's descent into chaos argues that autonomy produces anarchy. The deteriorating character of the judges demonstrates that human deliverers finally fail. At the same time, all the dysfunction serves to showcase God's all-sufficiency. A good set of standard theological questions will also help along the way:

- *What does this text teach about human nature?*
- *What does this text reveal about God's character?*
- *How does this text point to Christ?*
- *How does the gospel address what I see and learn here?*

What happens in the book?

What is the issue being addressed? Well, a recurring cycle of (1) *rebellion*, (2) *subjugation and suffering*, (3) *distress and remorse*, and then (4) *rescue*. Israel repeatedly abandoned God, suffered under foreign oppressors, cried out in desperation, and was delivered by God through flawed "deliverer-judges." But each cycle also grew darker, revealing a people spiraling into rebellion and anarchy. This repetitive structure emphasizes Israel's moral and spiritual deterioration throughout the period.

Fundamentally, Israel's heart remained unchanged. They cried out from their *pain*, not from *godly sorrow* and *true repentance*. They wanted relief from the consequences, but not restoration of their relationship with God. They learned nothing from their sin and suffering. Hence, the book drives home the great need we have for the true Judge-King, who transforms both hearts and circumstances.

3. When?

The timeframe covered in the book spans from Joshua's death to Samuel's anointing of Saul. Conservative scholars who subscribe to an "early Exodus" date (c. 1446 BC) place "the period of the judges" between approximately 1390 and 1050 BC, totaling about 340 years.¹³ It was a lawless era of tribal disunity, injustice, false worship, moral relativism, and faithlessness before Israel had a king, when God alone was meant to rule, yet the people repeatedly forgot him from one generation to the next.

As for when the book itself was composed or compiled, the consensus among evangelical scholars is that it was written during the early monarchy period, around 1050–950 BC.

¹³ Some evangelical scholars who support a "late Exodus" view (c. 1260 BC) adjust the timeline of the judges to approximately 1220–1050 BC, effectively reducing the duration to about 170 years.

4. Where?

Where did all the action recorded in Judges take place? It unfolded across the fractured tribal territories of Canaan—from Dan in the far north to the Negev in the south, and from the Mediterranean coast to the Jordan Valley. This was a “promised land” that had not been fully captured, where the Israelites dwelt uneasily among unconquered Canaanites, often compromising with their pagan neighbors. Lacking a central capital to unite them and frequently neglecting the tabernacle at Shiloh, each tribe fought its own battles in its own corner, reflecting a geographic fragmentation that mirrored their spiritual apostasy.

5. Why?

Why was the book of Judges written? To serve several related redemptive, theological, and historical purposes:

- ***To demonstrate the consequences of covenant unfaithfulness.***

The book illustrates the recurring cycle of apostasy, oppression, repentance, and deliverance, highlighting the consequences for God’s people of abandoning his covenant. This effectively illustrates the warnings about disobedience found in Deut 28:30.

- ***To show the need for godly leadership.***

The refrain “in those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (17:6; 21:25) emphasizes the chaos of autonomous self-rule and sets the stage for Israel’s monarchy. More broadly, this underscores fallen humanity’s need for righteous authority under God and, ultimately, for God’s own rule in our lives.

- ***To reveal human depravity and God’s grace.***

The increasingly flawed judges demonstrate total depravity—even God’s chosen deliverers are deeply sinful. Yet God graciously continues to save his people despite their unfaithfulness and despite using imperfect instruments. This magnifies God’s sovereignty and covenant faithfulness.

- ***To preserve redemptive history.***

As part of the canonical narrative, Judges bridges the gap between the conquest under Joshua and the monarchy under Saul and David, showing God’s faithfulness to preserve Israel despite their rebellion and to maintain the line through which the Messiah would come.

- ***To warn against syncretism and idolatry.***

The book repeatedly shows how compromise with Canaanite culture and religion led to spiritual and moral collapse. This serves as a perpetual warning to God’s people about the dangers of compromise. We should think deeply about what it means to be in the world but not of the world (John 17:14–16).

- *To point forward to the perfect Judge-King.*

Just as the book begins with the death of Joshua (*Yehoshua*) and Israel's failure to complete the conquest, it points toward the *greater* Joshua (*Jesus, Yeshua*) who will succeed where the first Joshua and all subsequent leaders failed, completely defeating the enemies of God's people and bringing them into the true promised land and rest at last.

In sum, Judges was written to teach God's covenant people about the devastating consequences of forgetting or ignoring him, our desperate need for godly leadership under his rule, his amazing grace and covenant steadfastness in continually delivering unfaithful people, while also turning our eyes to the ultimate Judge-King, fully righteous and fully effective, who delivers his people completely.

6. How?

We can approach the "how" question for the book of Judges from several angles:

The Historical-Narrative "How?"

How did Israel fall into this terrible cycle? Israel's downward spiral began with *incomplete obedience*.¹⁴ They failed to fully drive out the Canaanites as God commanded, choosing compromise over conquest. This halfway obedience led to intermarriage and religious syncretism with their pagan neighbors, corrupting their worship and diluting their covenant identity. Within a single generation, spiritual amnesia set in. We read, "... another generation arose who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel" (Judg 2:10). Compounding these failures was Israel's tribal fragmentation. Without centralized leadership under God, each tribe pursued its own interests, leaving the people vulnerable to both external enemies and internal moral collapse. The cycle of apostasy was not merely *repeated* but *intensified*, with each turn of the wheel dragging Israel ever deeper into chaos and darkness.

How did God deliver his people? Despite Israel's chronic unfaithfulness, God raised up judges/deliverers who responded to the people's desperate cries for help. Yet the Lord's methods were deliberately surprising. He worked through the unlikely and the imperfect—a left-handed assassin, a female prophet, a reluctant farmer with 300 men, a reckless strongman enslaved by lust. These flawed instruments magnified God's sovereignty and proved that deliverance comes not through human strength or virtue but through divine grace alone. Each rescue testified to God's unwavering commitment to

¹⁴ "The Book of Judges presents a picture of Israel which contrasts markedly with that of the Book of Joshua ... The reason for the complete and tragic change was simply sin. The people did not continue to meet God's one requirement of obedience. God had been explicit on what would happen if they came to act in this manner, and He now kept His word." Leon Wood, *Distressing Days of the Judges*, vol. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), 135.

his covenant, even when his people had repeatedly broken faith with him. And the judges' very failures revealed God's all-sufficiency.

The Literary “How?”

How is the book structured/organized? Judges unfolds through a relentless cyclical pattern—(1) sin leads to oppression, (2) oppression leads to desperate cries for help, (3) cries lead to divine deliverance, and (4) deliverance leads to temporary peace, only for the cycle to soon begin again. This “rhythm” structures the book’s three major sections:

- an *introduction* (1:1–3:6) establishing Israel’s incomplete conquest and God’s testing of his people,
- the *main narratives* (3:7–16:31) recounting the individual judges and their deliverances, and ...
- two *disturbing appendices* (17–21) exposing the depths of Israel’s moral and spiritual collapse.

As noted, the cycles don’t merely *repeat*—they *decay*. Each turn sinks Israel deeper into apostasy. The judges become more flawed. The periods of peace grow shorter. And the nation’s spiritual condition worsens. The structure itself mirrors the book’s dark thesis: *without faithful covenant obedience, the people spiral inexorably toward darkness and destruction.*

How does the narrative function literarily? Judges employs a stark and memorable literary style that reinforces its theological message. The unforgettable refrain, “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes,” unsettles the whole narrative. The book unfolds *episodically*, with individual judge stories that *can* stand alone yet *collectively* reveal a desperate pattern. Earlier deliverers like Othniel and Deborah give way to increasingly compromised figures like Gideon, Jephthah, and finally Samson, whose personal corruption mirrors the nation’s decline. The narrative style is unflinchingly vivid, even brutal. There are assassinations, gang rapes, dismembered concubines, and civil war, all recounted with stark realism. This disturbing honesty refuses to sanitize Israel’s sins or romanticize her heroes, and the whole creates a prophetic indictment that’s all the more powerful for its raw, unvarnished portrayal of covenant faithlessness and its consequences.

The Theological “How?”

How does Judges convey its theological lessons? Not through abstract propositions but through the relentless narrative logic of cause and effect. Each cycle of *apostasy, oppression, and deliverance* illustrates that breaking the covenant inevitably leads to divine judgment. The narrative *shows* rather than merely *tells*, allowing us to witness firsthand the catastrophic consequences of disobedience, namely, domination by the enemy, internal chaos, moral disintegration, and divine judgment. Character development also serves as a vehicle for theological commentary on Israel’s condition, as the

judges themselves degrade from initially faithful deliverers to the tragically flawed Samson.¹⁵ Yet against this dark backdrop of human failure, God’s covenant faithfulness shines all the more. He remains committed to his rebellious people, repeatedly delivering them despite their chronic unfaithfulness. This stark juxtaposition reveals the book’s central theological tension, namely, the contrast between humanity’s incurable bent toward sin and God’s inexhaustible grace toward those whom he has chosen.

Major Themes

So, the book of Judges is not simply a collection of disconnected and often dark stories. Rather, it presents a unified and carefully structured theological argument about:

- disobedience and covenant failure (*the root sin*),
- spiritual amnesia (*the underlying reason for repetition*),
- human depravity (*the depth of the problem*),
- moral relativism (*the ideological manifestation*),
- selfish ambition and anarchy (*the societal collapse*),
- and God’s relentless grace (*the only hope*).

This arrangement is deliberately crafted to highlight the catastrophic consequences of sinful autonomy and to point us forward at last to our great need for the perfect Judge-Deliverer-King.

¹⁵ The author employs a technique called “selective characterization” in which he feels little obligation to paint a full picture of the judges but rather reports “only those facets of their characters that suited” his purposes and “with a definite arrangement in mind”—from ideal, through mixed, and then largely negative presentations. The goal is “to demonstrate Israel’s need for a king.” See Richard L. Pratt, *He Gave Us Stories: The Bible Student’s Guide to Interpreting Old Testament Narratives*, vol. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1993), 134–36.

Study Outline

Lesson 1: Introduction and Historical Context (Judges 1:1–2:5)

- The incomplete conquest (1:1–36)
 - Judah's initial successes (1:1–20)
 - Failures to drive out inhabitants (1:21–36)
- The Angel of the Lord's rebuke (2:1–5)
 - God's covenant reminder (2:1–3)
 - Israel's weeping at Bokim (2:4–5)

Lesson 2: The Pattern of Rebellion (Judges 2:6–3:6)

- Joshua's generation passes (2:6–10)
- The cycle begins (2:11–19)
 - Israel serves Baals (2:11–13)
 - God's anger and oppression (2:14–15)
 - Judges raised up (2:16–19)
- God's testing remains (2:20–3:6)

Lesson 3: Othniel and Ehud - Early Deliverers (Judges 3:7–31)

- Othniel the first judge (3:7–11)
 - Cushan-Rishathaim's oppression (3:7–8)
 - Othniel's deliverance (3:9–11)
- Ehud defeats Moab (3:12–30)
 - Eglon's oppression (3:12–14)
 - Ehud's cunning plan (3:15–26)
 - Victory and 80 years of peace (3:27–30)
- Shamgar mentioned (3:31)

Lesson 4: Deborah and Barak - Real Leadership (Judges 4:1–5:31)

- Deborah judges Israel (4:1–10)
 - Jabin's oppression (4:1–3)
 - Deborah calls Barak (4:4–10)
- Victory over Sisera (4:11–24)
 - The battle (4:11–16)
 - Jael kills Sisera (4:17–24)
- The Song of Deborah (5:1–31)

Lesson 5: Gideon's Call and Testing God (Judges 6:1–7:1)

- Midianite oppression (6:1–10)
- Angel calls Gideon (6:11–24)

- The call at the winepress (6:11–16)
- Signs confirming the call (6:17–24)
- Gideon's obedience: Destroying Baal's altar (6:25–32)
- The fleece tests (6:33–40)
- Gathering the army (7:1)

Lesson 6: Gideon's Victory and Downfall (Judges 7:2–8:35)

- God reduces the army (7:2–8)
- The dream and victory (7:9–25)
 - Overheard dream (7:9–15)
 - The attack with trumpets and torches (7:16–25)
- Pursuit and revenge (8:1–21)
- The golden ephod (8:22–28)
- Gideon's death and Israel's apostasy (8:29–35)

Lesson 7: Abimelech's Tyranny (Judges 9:1–57)

- Abimelech's coup (9:1–6)
 - Murder of 70 brothers (9:1–5)
 - Made king at Shechem (9:6)
- Jotham's parable (9:7–21)
- Civil war begins (9:22–29)
- Destruction of Shechem (9:30–49)
- Abimelech's death at Thebez (9:50–57)

Lesson 8: Minor Judges and Jephthah's Rise (Judges 10:1–11:28)

- Tola and Jair (10:1–5)
- Israel's renewed apostasy (10:6–16)
 - Serving foreign gods (10:6–9)
 - Confession and God's response (10:10–16)
- Jephthah's background (10:17–11:3)
- Jephthah's call to leadership (11:4–11)
- Diplomatic negotiations (11:12–28)

Lesson 9: Jephthah's Victory and Tragic Vow (Judges 11:29–12:15)

- The vow and victory (11:29–33)
- The vow's fulfillment (11:34–40)
- War with Ephraim (12:1–7)
 - The Shibboleth test (12:5–6)
- Minor judges: Ibzan, Elon, Abdon (12:8–15)

Lesson 10: Samson's Birth and Early Exploits (Judges 13:1–15:20)

- Angel announces birth (13:1–25)
 - Manoah's wife visited (13:1–7)
 - Confirmation and sacrifice (13:8–25)
- Marriage to Philistine woman (14:1–20)
 - The riddle (14:10–18)
 - Killing thirty men (14:19–20)
- Vengeance with foxes and jawbone (15:1–20)

Lesson 11: Samson and Delilah - Strength and Weakness (Judges 16:1–31)

- Escape from Gaza (16:1–3)
- Delilah's betrayal (16:4–22)
 - Three false answers (16:4–15)
 - The true secret revealed (16:16–22)
- Final victory and death (16:23–31)
 - Imprisonment and mockery (16:23–27)
 - Prayer and final strength (16:28–31)

Lesson 12: Moral and Spiritual Decline (Judges 17:1–21:25)

- Micah's idolatry (17:1–13)
 - Stolen silver and household gods (17:1–6)
 - Hiring a Levite priest (17:7–13)
- Dan's migration and theft (18:1–31)
- The Levite's concubine (19:1–30)
 - Journey to Gibeah (19:1–15)
 - The horrible crime (19:16–30)
- Civil war against Benjamin (20:1–48)
- Wives for Benjamin (21:1–25)
 - The oath problem (21:1–7)
 - Solutions at Jabesh-gilead and Shiloh (21:8–25)
 - Final summary: "Everyone did what was right in his own eyes." (21:25)

APPENDIX A

The Judges of Israel

Twelve Judges¹⁶ functioned in Israel’s history after Joshua’s death (when Israel had settled in the Promised Land; Josh 24:29–30; Judg 2:8–9) until the birth of Samuel (1 Sam 1:1–19), a period of perhaps 300 years (c. 1380–1080 BC).¹⁷ The twelve, in the order of the narrative of Judges, are the following.

Othniel (וָתְנֵיאֵל, *otniel*; Judg 3:7–11)

Othniel was Israel’s first judge. He was the son of Kenaz and the nephew of Caleb, having captured Kiriath-sepher, an ancient Canaanite city located in the hill country of Judah. The city’s name means “city of books” or “city of scribes” in Hebrew.¹⁸ As a reward for its capture, Othniel was given Achsah, the daughter of Caleb, as a wife (Josh 15:16–17; Judg 1:12–13). He also delivered Israel from King Cushan-rishathaim of Aram and provided the land with rest for forty years (3:10–11).

Ehud (אֵהָד, *ehud*; Judg 3:12–30)

Othniel died, and we read that “the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD” (3:12). As a result, “the Lord strengthened Eglon, the king of Moab,” against them. Allied with “the Ammonites and the Amalekites,” he defeated Israel and took possession of Jericho (Deut 34:3). And the Israelites served him for eighteen years (Judg 3:12–14). At last, they “cried out to the LORD,” and he raised Israel’s second judge, “a deliverer, Ehud, the son of Gera, the Benjaminite, a left-handed man” (3:15). Seizing an opportunity, Ehud devised a clever and clandestine plan to arrange a private meeting with King Eglon. At this encounter, he said, “I have a message from God for you,” and produced an eighteen-inch double-edged sword he had concealed, which he plunged into Eglon’s stomach. After escaping through the porch, he returned to Israel and led the people against the Moabites. “They struck down about ten thousand Moabites, all stout and able-bodied men,” and subjected Moab that day. “And the land had peace for eighty years” (3:15–30).

Shamgar (שָׁמְגָר, *shamgar*; Judg 3:31; 5:6)

Shamgar was Israel’s third judge. The son of Anath, he killed 600 Philistines with

¹⁶ This number draws *only* from the book of Judges. If, instead, one considers the use of the verb “judge, govern” (*šāpat*) to describe the work of individuals in leading Israel, then two more should be added to the list, viz., *Eli* (1 Sam 4:18) and *Samuel* (1 Sam 7:15–17).

¹⁷ It could, however, be as little as 250 years (c. 1350–1100 BC). The book of Judges itself gives specific times for many judges’ reigns, which when added together with periods of oppression, total about 410 years. But many scholars believe some of these judgeships overlapped geographically rather than occurring in strict sequence, since Israel was organized tribally across different regions.

¹⁸ The significance of its name—relating to *books* or *writing*—is particularly intriguing given the early period it represents, suggesting that the Canaanites established centers of literacy and documentation well before the Israelite settlement.

an ox goad, delivering Israel in a time of need. This may represent one of the earliest confrontations between Israel and the Philistines. According to Judges 5:6, during Shamgar's day, "the highways were abandoned, and travelers kept to the byways." It was a period marked by oppression from the Canaanites, a collapse of centralized authority and security, and widespread economic and social disruption. In other words, these were days characterized by lawlessness and fear.

Deborah (דְּבָרָה, *dəbōrā*; Judg 4–5)

Deborah was Israel's fourth judge and the only woman to hold this position. She stands out as one of ancient Israel's most remarkable leaders—not only as a judge but also as a prophetess and military strategist. From her court beneath a palm tree in the hill country of Ephraim, she dispensed justice and wisdom to all of Israel. However, when the Canaanite commander Sisera and his 900 iron chariots terrorized the land for twenty years, she became something more—a "mother in Israel" (or "motherly protector," 5:7). She summoned the warrior Barak and commanded him, in God's name, to gather ten thousand men for battle. When Barak refused to go without her, she agreed to accompany him but prophesied that the glory of victory would go to a woman. Thus, while Deborah's divinely inspired strategy routed Sisera's forces at Mount Tabor, it was Jael who delivered the final blow. Deborah's triumphant song in Judges 5, one of the Bible's oldest texts, reveals not just a military victor but also a poet-prophetess who saw herself as God's instrument. She arose when villages stood empty and when Israel needed someone with both the spiritual authority to speak for God and the courage to march to war.

Gideon (גִּידֹּן, *gid'ōn*; Judg 6–8; also mentioned in Heb 11:32)

Gideon was Israel's fifth judge and is referred to as "Jerubbaal" thirteen times in the book (6:32; 7:1; 8:29, 35; 9:1–2; 5, 16, 19, 24, 28, 57). The name "Jerubbaal" was given to Gideon after he destroyed his father's altar to Baal and the Asherah pole beside it (6:32). The name means "Let Baal contend" or "Let Baal plead his case," highlighting the challenge that if Baal were truly a god, he should defend himself against Gideon's actions. Following Deborah's and Barak's victory over the Canaanites under Sisera, "the land had peace for forty years" (5:31). But the Israelites eventually fell back into idolatry and evil in the sight of the Lord, which led to seven years of oppression by the Midianites, along with the Amalekites and other "people of the east" (6:1–3). Israel was reduced to hiding in dens and caves in the mountains, and their agricultural economy was completely disrupted, as the Midianites destroyed their crops and livestock, leaving them with nothing for sustenance. They were essentially living as refugees in their own land. In their desperation, they cried out to the Lord for help. God responded by sending a prophet to remind them of their unfaithfulness to the covenant (6:7–10) and then called Gideon as their deliverer and judge. With only 300 men armed with unconventional weapons—trumpets, jars, and torches instead of swords—Gideon defeated a massive army of 120,000 Midianite soldiers, demonstrating decisively that victory and salvation belong to the Lord alone. As a result, "the land had rest forty years in the days of Gideon" (8:28), and "Gideon the son of Joash died in a

good old age and was buried in the tomb of Joash his father” (8:32).

Tola תּוֹלָא, *tôlā'*; Judg 10:1–2)

Tola was the sixth judge of Israel, described as “the son of Puah, son of Dodo, a man of Issachar.” He lived in Shamir, located in the hill country of Ephraim, and judged Israel for twenty-three years. After his death, he was buried at Shamir. Little else is known about him or his contributions.

Jair יָרֵא, *yā'rā'*; Judg 10:3–5)

Jair was the seventh judge of Israel, a Gileadite who had thirty sons who rode on thirty donkeys. They possessed thirty towns in Gilead, still referred to as Jair’s Villages today. When Jair died, he was buried in Kamon. Little else is known about him or his accomplishments.

Jephthah יְפָתָח, *yiphṭāh*; Judg 11–12)

Jephthah was a mighty warrior and the eighth judge of Israel. His story reveals both God’s faithfulness in delivering His people and the tragic consequences of rash vows. Born to a prostitute and rejected by his half-brothers (11:1–3), Jephthah became a skilled military leader in exile. Ironically, when the Ammonites “made war against Israel” (11:4), the very Gileadite elders who had cast him out desperately called him back to lead their defense (11:5–6). He eventually accepted their offer and first attempted diplomacy with the Ammonites, recounting Israel’s historical right to the disputed territory (11:17–22). This shows that Jephthah was a thoughtful leader, trying to resolve the conflict peacefully through historical and legal reasoning before resorting to battle. However, his efforts failed, leaving him with no alternative but to fight. At this point, we read, “Then the Spirit of the LORD was upon Jephthah” (11:29),¹⁹ signifying both divine approval for his actions and the promise of success in the effort. In his zeal, he vowed to sacrifice as a burnt offering whatever first emerged from his house upon his victorious return (11:30–31). Tragically, it was his beloved only daughter who came out dancing to celebrate his triumph (11:34). The text suggests that Jephthah fulfilled his vow, stating that he “did with her according to his vow that he had made” (11:39). His story demonstrates that while God can powerfully use even the broken and rejected to deliver his people, still our words before the Lord carry profound weight. “Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then Jephthah the Gileadite died and was buried in his city in Gilead” (12:7).

Ibzan יְבָנָן, *'ibṣān*; Judg 12:8–10)

Ibzan, from Bethlehem,²⁰ was the ninth judge of Israel, serving for seven years. He appears to have been a man of considerable wealth, prominence, and political acumen. Having sixty children (30 sons and 30 daughters) and arranging extensive marriage

¹⁹ A distinction previously noted only for Othniel (3:10) and Gideon (6:34).

²⁰ There is some debate as to whether this was Bethlehem in Judah or Bethlehem in Zebulun.

alliances “outside his clan” suggests significant social status. Moreover, these marriage arrangements likely aimed to create political alliances between tribes or clans, indicating his diplomatic skill. Such policies may have helped strengthen inter-tribal relationships within Israel, and as far as we know, his reign seems to have been a period of relative stability.

Elon (אֵלָן, *’ēlōn*; Judg 12:11–12)

Elon, from Zebulun, was the tenth judge of Israel, serving for ten years. Upon his death, he “was buried at Aijalon in the land of Zebulun.” Little else is known about him or his contributions.

Abdon (אַבְדּוֹן, *’abdōn*; Judg 12:13–15)

Abdon, the son of Hillel from Pirathon, was the last of the minor judges and the eleventh judge of Israel, serving for eight years. The mention that “he had forty sons and thirty grandsons, who rode on seventy donkeys” likely reflects Abdon’s wealth and status. Little else is known about him or his contributions.

Samson (שִׁמְשׁוֹן, *šimšōn*; Judg 13–16; also mentioned in Heb 11:32)

Samson was the twelfth judge of Israel, who “judged Israel twenty years” (16:31). At that time, as judgment for the nation’s “evil,” Israel had been handed over to the Philistines for forty years (13:1). But “the angel of the Lord” appeared to the barren wife of Manoah with the promise of a son who would “be a Nazirite²¹ to God from the womb” and “begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines” (13:2–5).

But Samson’s life is, in many ways, a train wreck. He demanded to marry a Philistine woman from Timnah, ignoring God’s command against intermarriage with Canaanite nations (Judges 14:1–3). He violated ceremonial purity by touching a lion’s carcass and eating honey from it, breaking his Nazirite vow, which prohibited contact with dead bodies (Judges 14:8–9). He deceptively posed a riddle at his wedding feast, knowing the answer came from his secret encounter with the lion carcass (Judges 14:12–14). Then, after losing the riddle bet, he vengefully murdered thirty men in Ashkelon to take their clothes as payment (Judges 14:19). In fact, he sought revenge repeatedly, burning Philistine crops with foxes and then killing more Philistines after they murdered his wife (Judges 15:4–8). He went to Gaza and spent the night with a prostitute there (Judges 16:1). He pursued Delilah despite her clear collusion with his enemies, ignoring three obvious betrayals (Judges 16:4–14). He revealed to Delilah the true source of his strength, treating his sacred dedication as a bargaining chip (Judges 16:15–17). And he presumed on God’s presence and power, thinking that after his hair was cut, he could still shake himself free as before, not realizing that God’s Spirit had departed from him (Judges 16:20).

²¹ A “Nazirite” was someone who took a special vow of dedication to God, as outlined primarily in Num 6:1–21. Note that *Nazarites* should not be confused with *Nazarenes*, who were people from the town of Nazareth (like Jesus). These are completely different terms in Hebrew and Greek.

At the root of it all lay his self-absorption and a stubborn refusal to submit his appetites to God's Lordship. Time and again, his choices mirror those of Eve in the Garden: "When the woman saw that the tree produced fruit that was good for food, was attractive to the eye, and was desirable for making one wise, she took some of its fruit and ate it" (Gen 3:6). She *saw*, was *attracted*, *wanted*, and *took!* That's Samson. He functioned as his own god, deciding for himself what was good and desirable. It's the core recipe for disaster.

Yes, God still used him to accomplish his purposes for his people. And, yes, his own sacrificial death defeated God's enemies. "The dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he had killed during his life" (Judg 16:30). In this way, he foreshadows Christ, the true Deliverer-King. But his life also warns believers that God's calling and gifts don't automatically produce godly character. Sanctification requires daily death to self and submission to Christ (Matt 16:24), not just possession of spiritual gifts.

The judge who could tear apart lions with his bare hands couldn't master his own desires. His life stands as a sobering reminder that our fiercest battles rage against the idols lurking within our own hearts.

1

INTRODUCTION AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Judges 1:1–2:5

Main Themes: Read the passage through slowly and aloud. Make a list of up to 3 “themes” you see show up in the passage (ex. discipleship, suffering, trust, joy, peace, etc.). Noticing these at the start of your study will prepare you to formulate a clear main point after you’ve worked through the passage using the questions.

- _____
- _____
- _____

Preliminary Main Point: Write a preliminary, **one-sentence main point** based on your reading of the passage and the themes you have seen in it. This main idea will be revised after working through the discussion questions.

Work Through The Passage: Develop a deeper understanding of the passage by working through it again and answering the following questions. These questions are simply tools to help you slow down and process what the passage is saying.

1. Read the introduction to the book of Judges at the beginning of this book. When do the events of the book occur? What are some of its main themes?

2. Read Exodus 1:1-5. Who are the 12 tribes of Israel? Read Genesis 48:1-20, who are Manasseh and Ephraim? How do their tribes relate to the 12 tribes of Israel?

3. Read the Lord's general command about the Promised Land in Deuteronomy 7:1-5. What command does the Lord give in Judges 1? Describe the obedience or disobedience of the tribes of Israel to this command in the passage.

4. What phrase do you find repeated in 1:21, 29, 30, 32, and 33? Given what you read in the introduction and the command in Deuteronomy 7:1–4, what danger do the people of Israel face by allowing this to happen?

Judges 1:1–2:5

5. In 2:1-5, what does the angel of the Lord say that Israel has done wrong? What is the consequence the angel announces?

6. Imagine you have a friend who thinks it was excessively harsh for God to command his people to eradicate other nations from the land in which they lived in the Old Testament. Given what you have seen in this passage, why did the Lord give this command?

7. 1:19 gives the excuse Judah gives for not completing the task the Lord assigned to them. In 2:2 the Lord diagnoses the reason. Based on what you see in these verses, what is the real reason Israel does not drive out the people of the land?

8. 2:2 tells us that God will not fail to give to his people all that he has promised. But 2:3 tells us that God will not bless a disobedient people. This tension runs all the way through the book of Judges, and the entire Old Testament. Thinking about what we see in the Bible as a whole—Old and New Testaments—what is the solution to this tension?

9. How does this section of Judges point us to Christ? To answer this:

- a. Think about different aspects of who Jesus is (*our redeemer, deliverer, faithful covenant husband, defender, etc.*), and what he did and does (*obeyed God perfectly, atoned for sin, intercedes for us, sets us free from sin, etc.*).
- b. Then, think about what this passage teaches about all that is good, bad, incomplete, and insufficient in both Israel and their judges.
- c. Finally, think about how Jesus succeeds where this passage points out failures, how he is sufficient where this passage reveals insufficiency, and how he is perfect where this passage highlights imperfections.

Revised Main Point: Review the main themes, your preliminary main point, and what you discovered through the questions and write a *revised one sentence main point* of the passage. If a friend were to ask you, “What is that passage about?” this sentence should be general and short enough to answer that question.

Put the Truth to Work. Considering this week's passage:

1. What am I/are we to know and believe? (about God, about myself, or about the world?)

2. What am I/are we to love and pursue? (What should our hearts long for?)

3. What am I/are we to do and sacrifice for?

Judges 1:1–2:5

Notes From The Group Discussion Time:

“Your very sins move him to pity more than to anger . . . even as the heart of a father is to a child that hath some loathsome disease.”

—Thomas Goodwin

2

THE PATTERN OF REBELLION

Judges 2:6–3:6

Main Themes: Read the passage through slowly and aloud. Make a list of up to 3 “themes” you see show up in the passage (ex. discipleship, suffering, trust, joy, peace, etc.). Noticing these at the start of your study will prepare you to formulate a clear main point after you’ve worked through the passage using the questions.

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- _____

Preliminary Main Point: Write a preliminary, **one-sentence main point** based on your reading of the passage and the themes you have seen in it. This main idea will be revised after working through the discussion questions.

Work Through The Passage: Develop a deeper understanding of the passage by working through it again and answering the following questions. These questions are simply tools to help you slow down and process what the passage is saying.

1. **2:6 begins a “second introduction” to the book. While 1:1 mentions Joshua’s death and the events that followed, 2:6 returns to that point and recaps the theological significance of the previous section. According to 2:6–10, what is significant about the passing of Joshua and the previous generation of Israelites?**

Judges 2:6–3:6

2. Many of the accounts in the book of Judges begin with a statement similar to 2:11: "And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord." What evil did they do in vv. 11-13?

3. How does the Lord respond to their actions?

4. Read 2:16-23. Who are “the judges”? Why are they raised up? What are they supposed to do?

Judges 2:6–3:6

5. What reason does v. 17 give for why Israel experiences affliction and oppression? Given the language used, why is idolatry so serious? What is idolatry?

6. According to 2:18, why does God appoint judges? What does this teach us about God?

Judges 2:6–3:6

7. What happens when a judge dies?

8. What reasons do you find in this passage for the Lord allowing foreign nations to remain in the Land of Israel?

9. From this “second introduction,” summarize the pattern we should expect to see throughout the book of Judges?

Judges 2:6–3:6

10. Given what this passage teaches about who the judges are, how they are raised up, and how they do what they do, answer this question: Who saves Israel?

11. How does this section of Judges point us to Christ? To answer this:

- a.** Think about different aspects of who Jesus is (*our redeemer, deliverer, faithful covenant husband, defender, etc.*), and what he did and does (*obeyed God perfectly, atoned for sin, intercedes for us, sets us free from sin, etc.*).
- b.** Then, think about what this passage teaches about all that is good, bad, incomplete, and insufficient in both Israel and their judges.
- c.** Finally, think about how Jesus succeeds where this passage points out failures, how he is sufficient where this passage reveals insufficiency, and how he is perfect where this passage highlights imperfections.

Judges 2:6–3:6

Revised Main Point: Review the main themes, your preliminary main point, and what you discovered through the questions and write a *revised one sentence main point* of the passage. If a friend were to ask you, “What is that passage about?” this sentence should be general and short enough to answer that question.

Judges 2:6–3:6

Put the Truth to Work. Considering this week's passage:

1. What am I/are we to know and believe? (about God, about myself, or about the world?)

2. What am I/are we to love and pursue? (What should our hearts long for?)

3. What am I/are we to do and sacrifice for?

Judges 2:6–3:6

Notes From The Group Discussion Time:

3

O T H N I E L A N D E H U D : E A R L Y D E L I V E R E R S

Judges 3:7–31

Main Themes: Read the passage through slowly and aloud. Make a list of up to 3 “themes” you see show up in the passage (ex. discipleship, suffering, trust, joy, peace, etc.). Noticing these at the start of your study will prepare you to formulate a clear main point after you’ve worked through the passage using the questions.

- _____
- _____
- _____

Preliminary Main Point: Write a preliminary, **one-sentence main point** based on your reading of the passage and the themes you have seen in it. This main idea will be revised after working through the discussion questions.

Work Through The Passage: Develop a deeper understanding of the passage by working through it again and answering the following questions. These questions are simply tools to help you slow down and process what the passage is saying.

1. **Review 2:10–19.** Summarize in a few steps the “cycle” we see in the life of Israel.

Judges 3:7–31

2. Map out the structure of this passage by identifying how the cycle you described above occurs twice: first with Othniel and then with Ehud.

3. In the accounts of both Othniel and Ehud, who oppresses God's people? How did these oppressors gain authority over Israel? What comfort does this provide for you as a Christian?

4. Frequently, we read that Israel “did evil in the sight of the Lord,” or “forgot the Lord.” The Othniel account is meant to be a paradigm by which we read the rest of the book of Judges. What evil did Israel commit? How did they forget the Lord?

Judges 3:7–31

5. Read Deuteronomy 8:11–20. What should Israel have remembered here in Judges 3? Read 2 Peter 1:1–9. What are we in danger of forgetting as New Testament Christians? What happens if we forget these things?

6. What details in Ehud's story point to Ehud as an unlikely deliverer? What does this teach us about God?

7. In vv. 9 and 15, we see the beginnings of Israel's deliverance. What prompts God's actions? Does the writer describe his response to his people's sufferings as slow or fast? What does this teach us about God?

8. Shamgar's account is short, yet full of interesting detail. What is significant about it?

9. Thinking about this passage as a whole, who is responsible for Israel's suffering? Who is responsible for their rescue? What in the passage makes you give the answer you give?

10. How does this section of Judges point us to Christ? To answer this:

- a. Think about different aspects of who Jesus is (*our redeemer, deliverer, faithful covenant husband, defender, etc.*), and what he did and does (*obeyed God perfectly, atoned for sin, intercedes for us, sets us free from sin, etc.*).
- b. Then, think about what this passage teaches about all that is good, bad, incomplete, and insufficient in both Israel and their judges.
- c. Finally, think about how Jesus succeeds where this passage points out failures, how he is sufficient where this passage reveals insufficiency, and how he is perfect where this passage highlights imperfections.

Judges 3:7–31

Revised Main Point: Review the main themes, your preliminary main point, and what you discovered through the questions and write a *revised one sentence main point* of the passage. If a friend were to ask you, “What is that passage about?” this sentence should be general and short enough to answer that question.

Judges 3:7–31

Put the Truth to Work. Considering this week's passage:

1. What am I/are we to know and believe? (about God, about myself, or about the world?)

2. What am I/are we to love and pursue? (What should our hearts long for?)

3. What am I/are we to do and sacrifice for?

Judges 3:7-31

Notes From The Group Discussion Time:

4

DEBORAH AND BARAK: REAL LEADERSHIP

Judges 4:1–5:31

Main Themes: Read the passage through slowly and aloud. Make a list of up to 3 “themes” you see show up in the passage (ex. discipleship, suffering, trust, joy, peace, etc.). Noticing these at the start of your study will prepare you to formulate a clear main point after you’ve worked through the passage using the questions.

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Preliminary Main Point: Write a preliminary, **one-sentence main point** based on your reading of the passage and the themes you have seen in it. This main idea will be revised after working through the discussion questions

Work Through The Passage: Develop a deeper understanding of the passage by working through it again and answering the following questions. These questions are simply tools to help you slow down and process what the passage is saying.

1. Compare the details of chapter 4 with their retelling in song form in chapter 5. What similarities and differences do you notice? What mistakes might someone make if they don’t understand that chapter 5 is a song recounting the events of chapter 4?

2. Hebrews 11:32–33 commends Barak for “conquering nations by faith,” yet his words in 4:8 seem at first glance to be hesitant. Consider Deborah’s role as a prophetess—someone none who speaks for God—and as a judge—whom God raised up to rule by his power. What is Barak really saying in 4:8? How do his words reflect faith, rather than denial?

3. In this passage, the Lord, through his prophet and judge Deborah, appoints a warrior (Barak) to wage war against the oppressors of his people. Barak is successful in this endeavor. But who is truly responsible for the victory?

Judges 4:1–5:31

4. Who crushes the head of the Canaanite army? Why does the passage say this is significant?

5. The song in chapter 5 uses the language of flood (5:4–5, 21) and head crushing (5:26). While this language is a blend of literal and figurative expressions, every bit of it is written with intention. What other Old Testament judgments and deliverances does this language bring to mind that the original audience would have remembered?

6. **Read Exodus 14–15. What similarities do you notice to the events of our passage?**

7. This passage can create confusion among believers who are commanded by Jesus to love and do good to our enemies (Luke 6:27-29). Why would it be a wrong application of this passage to take a hammer and tent peg in hand and knock on the door of the nearest politician you believe to be an enemy of God (or anyone else you think is an enemy of God)?

8. How does this section of Judges point us to Christ? To answer this:

- a. Think about different aspects of who Jesus is (*our redeemer, deliverer, faithful covenant husband, defender, etc.*), and what he did and does (*obeyed God perfectly, atoned for sin, intercedes for us, sets us free from sin, etc.*).
- b. Then, think about what this passage teaches about all that is good, bad, incomplete, and insufficient in both Israel and their judges.
- c. Finally, think about how Jesus succeeds where this passage points out failures, how he is sufficient where this passage reveals insufficiency, and how he is perfect where this passage highlights imperfections.

Judges 4:1–5:31

Revised Main Point: Review the main themes, your preliminary main point, and what you discovered through the questions and write a *revised one sentence main point* of the passage. If a friend were to ask you, “What is that passage about?” this sentence should be general and short enough to answer that question.

Judges 4:1–5:31

Put the Truth to Work. Considering this week's passage:

1. What am I/are we to know and believe? (about God, about myself, or about the world?)

2. What am I/are we to love and pursue? (What should our hearts long for?)

3. What am I/are we to do and sacrifice for?

Judges 4:1-5:31

Notes From The Group Discussion Time:

“God will deliver Israel out of the oppression of Midian through a weak, human vessel, just as he rescued his people from Egypt.”

—John Currid

5

GIDEON'S CALL AND TESTING GOD

Judges 6:1–7:1

Main Themes: Read the passage through slowly and aloud. Make a list of up to 3 “themes” you see show up in the passage (ex. discipleship, suffering, trust, joy, peace, etc.). Noticing these at the start of your study will prepare you to formulate a clear main point after you’ve worked through the passage using the questions.

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Preliminary Main Point: Write a preliminary, **one-sentence main point** based on your reading of the passage and the themes you have seen in it. This main idea will be revised after working through the discussion questions

Work Through The Passage: Develop a deeper understanding of the passage by working through it again and answering the following questions. These questions are simply tools to help you slow down and process what the passage is saying.

1. **What is Israel’s first response to oppression? What is their second?**

Judges 6:1-7:1

2. What is different in this account from earlier accounts when Israel cries out to the Lord in their oppression? Why do you think that is?

3. Why do the angel's words in v. 12 seem ironic? As you read vv. 11-18, what do you think the "might" the angel refers to is? (Hint: Read Matthew 28:19-20)

4. What does Gideon ask for in vv. 17–18? What does it confirm for him? Why is he afraid in v. 22?

Judges 6:1-7:1

5. What does the Lord command Gideon to do in vv. 25-27? Is Gideon's fear a barrier to his obedience?

6. Why do you think the Lord commands Gideon to destroy the idols in his father's house before sending him to destroy the Midianites, Amalekites, and others?

7. The fleece signs in vv. 36–40 have provoked much discussion. Some think Gideon's request shows a lack of faith, while others view his actions as an example of the importance of "setting out a fleece" to discern whether God wants us to take a particular action in a given situation. Think about the context of vv. 36–40 and develop your own opinion. Below are some questions to help you think about the context:

- Who is with Gideon? (Read the verses before and after this section.)
- What is the sign verifying?
- Has Gideon asked for any other signs in this account? How is this one different?
- Does the text portray Gideon as doing anything sinful here?
- How does God respond to his requests?
- Some commentators have noted parallels between this passage and Exodus 4:1–8. Read that passage. How might it inform your understanding in what is going on here?

8. How does this section of Judges point us to Christ? To answer this:

- a. Think about different aspects of who Jesus is (*our redeemer, deliverer, faithful covenant husband, defender, etc.*), and what he did and does (*obeyed God perfectly, atoned for sin, intercedes for us, sets us free from sin, etc.*).
- b. Then, think about what this passage teaches about all that is good, bad, incomplete, and insufficient in both Israel and their judges.
- c. Finally, think about how Jesus succeeds where this passage points out failures, how he is sufficient where this passage reveals insufficiency, and how he is perfect where this passage highlights imperfections.

Revised Main Point: Review the main themes, your preliminary main point, and what you discovered through the questions and write a *revised one sentence main point* of the passage. If a friend were to ask you, “What is that passage about?” this sentence should be general and short enough to answer that question.

Judges 6:1-7:1

Judges 6:1-7:1

Put the Truth to Work. Considering this week's passage:

1. What am I/are we to know and believe? (about God, about myself, or about the world?)

2. What am I/are we to love and pursue? (What should our hearts long for?)

3. What am I/are we to do and sacrifice for?

Judges 6:1–7:1

Notes From The Group Discussion Time:

6

GIDEON'S VICTORY AND DOWNFALL

Judges 7:2–8:35

Main Themes: Read the passage through slowly and aloud. Make a list of up to 3 “themes” you see show up in the passage (ex. discipleship, suffering, trust, joy, peace, etc.). Noticing these at the start of your study will prepare you to formulate a clear main point after you’ve worked through the passage using the questions.

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Preliminary Main Point: Write a preliminary, **one-sentence main point** based on your reading of the passage and the themes you have seen in it. This main idea will be revised after working through the discussion questions.

Work Through The Passage: Develop a deeper understanding of the passage by working through it again and answering the following questions. These questions are simply tools to help you slow down and process what the passage is saying.

1. Why does the Lord command Gideon to reduce his troop numbers? What size does he start with? What number does he end with?

Judges 7:2–8:35

2. Where do you see the kindness and care of the Lord for Gideon in 7:9-14? How does Gideon respond?

3. How do Gideon and his men fight in 7:19–22? Who is the main warrior?

4. Who are the men of Ephraim? Who are the men of Succoth and Penuel? Are these a part of the Israelites or enemies of Israel?

Judges 7:2–8:35

5. What is each group in 8:1–9 upset about? Why is the judgment of Succoth and Penuel so severe?

6. What is wrong with the request the men of Israel make of Gideon in 8:22?

Judges 7:2–8:35

7. Read 8:24–27. Now read Exodus 32:1–4. What is the result of each? Based on this text, what seems to be the sin of the hearts of the people of Israel after God delivers them?

8. Read 8:29–35. Why do you think the phrase “whored after” is used to describe the worship of false gods in Judges?

9. How does this section of Judges point us to Christ? To answer this:

- a. Think about different aspects of who Jesus is (*our redeemer, deliverer, faithful covenant husband, defender, etc.*), and what he did and does (*obeyed God perfectly, atoned for sin, intercedes for us, sets us free from sin, etc.*).
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Revised Main Point: Review the main themes, your preliminary main point, and what you discovered through the questions and write a *revised one sentence main point* of the passage. If a friend were to ask you, “What is that passage about?” this sentence should be general and short enough to answer that question.

Judges 7:2–8:35

Judges 7:2–8:35

Put the Truth to Work. Considering this week's passage:

1. What am I/are we to know and believe? (about God, about myself, or about the world?)

2. What am I/are we to love and pursue? (What should our hearts long for?)

3. What am I/are we to do and sacrifice for?

Judges 7:2-8:35

Notes From The Group Discussion Time:

7

A B I M E L E C H ' S T Y R A N N Y

Judges 9:1–57

Main Themes: Read the passage through slowly and aloud. Make a list of up to 3 “themes” you see show up in the passage (ex. discipleship, suffering, trust, joy, peace, etc.). Noticing these at the start of your study will prepare you to formulate a clear main point after you’ve worked through the passage using the questions.

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Preliminary Main Point: Write a preliminary, **one-sentence main point** based on your reading of the passage and the themes you have seen in it. This main idea will be revised after working through the discussion questions

Work Through The Passage: Develop a deeper understanding of the passage by working through it again and answering the following questions. These questions are simply tools to help you slow down and process what the passage is saying.

1. Scholars have described Abimelech as an “anti-judge,” meaning that rather than delivering Israel from oppression, he oppresses Israel from within. Does the text merit this assessment? Why or why not?

Judges 9:1–57

2. It can be tricky to keep track of all the names in historical narratives. Write a one sentence description of each of the following people and places, which are described from Judges 8:29 to Judges 9:57: Jerubbaal/Gideon, Abimelech, Jotham, Gaal, Baal-berith, Shechem, Ophrah.

3. Where does Abimelech get the manpower for the murder of his brothers? What do you think we are supposed to see from this detail?

Judges 9:1–57

4. Read Deuteronomy 11:29, 27:12; and Joshua 8:33. Now Read Judges 9:7-21. What is the significance of the place where Jotham speaks?

5. Summarize Jotham's parable in a few sentences. Who are depicted by the various kinds of trees? Where else have "brambles/thorn bushes" been mentioned in the book of Judges?

Judges 9:1–57

6. Read 9:22–57. How would you describe God's working in these verses? What means is he using to bring about his purposes? What does the text say God's purposes were?

7. Read 9:46–49. “El” was the name of the father of Baal in the Canaanite pantheon of gods. The “house of El-berith” was the fortified temple where wooden likenesses of Canaanite gods were worshiped. Why is the manner of death suffered by the worshippers of these gods ironic and an expression of divine judgment?

8. How does Abimelech die? What similarities do you see to the death of Sisera in Judges 4:21? What might God want us to see by orchestrating these manners of death? (Read Genesis 3:15)

9. Think broadly about this passage and the overall message of the book of Judges thus far. What point is God emphasizing to his people about worship of idols?

10. How does this section of Judges point us to Christ? To answer this:

- Think about different aspects of who Jesus is (*our redeemer, deliverer, faithful covenant husband, defender, etc.*), and what he did and does (*obeyed God perfectly, atoned for sin, intercedes for us, sets us free from sin, etc.*).

Judges 9:1–57

- b. Then, think about what this passage teaches about all that is good, bad, incomplete, and insufficient in both Israel and their judges.
- c. Finally, think about how Jesus succeeds where this passage points out failures, how he is sufficient where this passage reveals insufficiency, and how he is perfect where this passage highlights imperfections.

Revised Main Point: Review the main themes, your preliminary main point, and what you discovered through the questions and write a *revised one sentence main point* of the passage. If a friend were to ask you, “What is that passage about?” this sentence should be general and short enough to answer that question.

Judges 9:1-57

Put the Truth to Work. Considering this week's passage:

1. What am I/are we to know and believe? (about God, about myself, or about the world?)

2. What am I/are we to love and pursue? (What should our hearts long for?)

3. What am I/are we to do and sacrifice for?

Judges 9:1-57

Notes From The Group Discussion Time:

8

MINOR JUDGES AND JEPHTHAH'S RISE

Judges 10:1–11:28

Main Themes: Read the passage through slowly and aloud. Make a list of up to 3 “themes” you see show up in the passage (ex. discipleship, suffering, trust, joy, peace, etc.). Noticing these at the start of your study will prepare you to formulate a clear main point after you’ve worked through the passage using the questions.

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Preliminary Main Point: Write a preliminary, **one-sentence main point** based on your reading of the passage and the themes you have seen in it. This main idea will be revised after working through the discussion questions.

Work Through The Passage: Develop a deeper understanding of the passage by working through it again and answering the following questions. These questions are simply tools to help you slow down and process what the passage is saying.

1. The two minor judges that appear at the beginning of the passage serve to focus our attention on the longer account of Jephthah. After two seemingly stable tenures of Tola and Jair, what is significant about 10:6? How would you describe the state of idol worship at this point?

2. Read 10:7–16. Rather than responding with immediate deliverance to the Israelites' pleas in 10:10, the Lord responds differently? What effect does this have?

3. You may be familiar with the figure of speech known as “anthropomorphism,” where a non-human creature is described with human physical attributes. For example, one might say, “the trees clapped their hands” or “the eyes of God looked down.” Similarly, “anthropopathism” is a figure of speech that attributes human emotions to non-human beings. In this case, a writer assigns a human emotion to a non-human being.

- There is an anthropopathism in Judges 10:16. What is it, and what does it teach us about God's relationship to his people?

Judges 10:1-11:28

4. Read 11:1-11. Who is Jephthah? Is he a likely or unlikely deliverer of Israel? Are there any other people in Scripture that the Lord uses to lead and deliver his people that have similar backgrounds to Jephthah?

5. Read 11:12–28 in the ESV, NASB, or KJV. Read it a second time in the CSB, NIV, or NLT. What does the king of the Ammonites accuse Israel of? What does Jephthah say actually happened?

Judges 10:1-11:28

6. Though it may seem long and technical, Jephthah's rehearsal of Israel's diplomatic relations with the region's powers is significant because it shows us the *means* that God used to have the Israelites take possession of the land. From a human/diplomatic perspective, why did Israel go to war and dispossess the Amorites?

7. What theological point does Jephthah make to the king of the Ammonites in 11:24?

Judges 10:1-11:28

8. Is the king of the Ammonites responsible in any way for their coming downfall (in next week's passage)? Why or why not?

9. What relationship between God's will and human actions do we see in this passage?

10. How does this section of Judges point us to Christ? To answer this:

a. Think about different aspects of who Jesus is (*our redeemer, deliverer, faithful covenant husband, defender, etc.*), and what he did and does (*obeyed God perfectly, atoned for sin, intercedes for us, sets us free from sin, etc.*).

Judges 10:1-11:28

- b. Then, think about what this passage teaches about all that is good, bad, incomplete, and insufficient in both Israel and their judges.
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Judges 10:1-11:28

Put the Truth to Work. Considering this week's passage:

1. What am I/are we to know and believe? (about God, about myself, or about the world?)

2. What am I/are we to love and pursue? (What should our hearts long for?)

3. What am I/are we to do and sacrifice for?

Judges 10:1-11:28

Notes From The Group Discussion Time:

9

J E P H T H A H ' S V I C T O R Y A N D T R A G I C V O W

Judges 11:29–12:15

Main Themes: Read the passage through slowly and aloud. Make a list of up to 3 “themes” you see show up in the passage (ex. discipleship, suffering, trust, joy, peace, etc.). Noticing these at the start of your study will prepare you to formulate a clear main point after you’ve worked through the passage using the questions.

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Preliminary Main Point: Write a preliminary, **one-sentence main point** based on your reading of the passage and the themes you have seen in it. This main idea will be revised after working through the discussion questions.

Work Through The Passage: Develop a deeper understanding of the passage by working through it again and answering the following questions. These questions are simply tools to help you slow down and process what the passage is saying.

1. **Most scholars agree that Jephthah’s intention is to offer a person as a sacrifice to the Lord, not an animal. Given what you know about Canaanite gods, why would Jephthah make this vow if he already knew the Lord was with him?**

Judges 11:29–12:15

2. Related to this, if Jephthah is intending on sacrificing a person, why is he so dismayed when his daughter is the first one to come out of his house?

3. Jephthah's vow to the Lord is based on several profound misunderstandings about who God is and why God acts. What does he not understand about the Lord?

4. The writer of Judges is not just writing a chronology—a bare recitation of historical facts—he is writing a historical narrative that is meant to be instructive. There is intentionality in the way the story is told. What aspects of this story increase your horror at the terrible nature

Judges 11:29–12:15

of Jephthah's vow? In other words, what elements of the story heighten the drama and shock so that you not only know, but *feel* the awfulness of these events?

5. Given that Jephthah had vowed a sinful thing, was he right to keep his vow? Why or why not?

6. Who are the men of Ephraim? How do they respond to the Lord's deliverance of Israel in Judges 12?

Judges 11:29–12:15

7. What does 12:1-6 reveal about the unity of God's people at this point in their history?

8. The three judges described after Jephthah give the impression of peaceful reigns. It may be tempting to ignore this section of the passage due to the absence of detail. Why are sections like 12:8-13 important in Scripture?

Judges 11:29–12:15

9. How does this section of Judges point us to Christ? To answer this:

- Think about different aspects of who Jesus is (*our redeemer, deliverer, faithful covenant husband, defender, etc.*), and what he did and does (*obeyed God perfectly, atoned for sin, intercedes for us, sets us free from sin, etc.*).
- Then, think about what this passage teaches about all that is good, bad, incomplete, and insufficient in both Israel and their judges.
- Finally, think about how Jesus succeeds where this passage points out failures, how he is sufficient where this passage reveals insufficiency, and how he is perfect where this passage highlights imperfections.

Revised Main Point: Review the main themes, your preliminary main point, and what you discovered through the questions and write a *revised one sentence main point* of the passage. If a friend were to ask you, “What is that passage about?” this sentence should be general and short enough to answer that question.

Judges 11:29–12:15

Put the Truth to Work. Considering this week's passage:

1. What am I/are we to know and believe? (about God, about myself, or about the world?)

2. What am I/are we to love and pursue? (What should our hearts long for?)

3. What am I/are we to do and sacrifice for?

Judges 11:29–12:15

Notes From The Group Discussion Time:

“It was not the fashioning of Samson's body that made him strong; it was not the arm, or the fist with which he smote the Philistines; it was a miracle that dwelt within him, a continued going forth of the omnipotence of God, which made him mightier than thousands of his enemies.”

—C. H. Spurgeon

10

S A M S O N ' S B I R T H A N D E A R L Y E X P L O I T S

Judges 13:1–15:20

Main Themes: Read the passage through slowly and aloud. Make a list of up to 3 “themes” you see show up in the passage (ex. discipleship, suffering, trust, joy, peace, etc.). Noticing these at the start of your study will prepare you to formulate a clear main point after you’ve worked through the passage using the questions.

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Preliminary Main Point: Write a preliminary, **one-sentence main point** based on your reading of the passage and the themes you have seen in it. This main idea will be revised after working through the discussion questions.

Work Through The Passage: Develop a deeper understanding of the passage by working through it again and answering the following questions. These questions are simply tools to help you slow down and process what the passage is saying.

1. The forty years of oppression that Israel suffered at the hands of the Philistines is the longest recorded in Judges. Comparing the beginning of Samson’s account in 13:1–2, what common element of the “Judges cycle” is missing? Why do you think that is?

2. Samson's birth narrative is unique among the Judges. What can we learn about his future from 13:1-25? Setting aside anything else you may know about the outcome of Samson's life, what kind of man would you expect him to become based on the words and actions of the angel and his parents?

3. In 13:7, the angel declares that Samson is to “be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death.” The purpose of taking a Nazirite vow was to ask for God’s special help in a crucial time. The stipulations of this vow are outlined in Numbers 6:1–21. Read that passage. In Judges 13–15, where do you see Samson respecting or disregarding this special consecration of his life?

Judges 13:1-15:20

4. Samson is perhaps most famous for his strength. Where is his strength mentioned in this passage? What detail always accompanies accounts of his strength? Why is that significant?

5. The passage tells us in 13:5 that the Lord raised Samson up to deliver Israel from the Philistines. What means does the text tell us Lord uses to start this deliverance?

6. Read Exodus 34:11–16. In light of this, and what the Lord told his parents Samson would do, why is Samson's request for a wife so shocking?

7. Who is it that hands Samson over to the Philistines in Judges 15? Remembering what is missing from the beginning of the Samson account (see question 1), why is this—especially 15:11—so tragic? Can you think of any other deliverers of God’s people who were betrayed, bound, and given into the hands of their enemies by the very people they were going to save?

8. Look back at your answer to question 2. Based on what you've read about Samson's life so far, write a brief description of his character. Does it align with the expectations set by his birth narrative at the beginning of this passage? What insights can we draw from this?

9. How does this section of Judges point us to Christ? To answer this:

- a. Think about different aspects of who Jesus is (*our redeemer, deliverer, faithful covenant husband, defender, etc.*), and what he did and does (*obeyed God perfectly, atoned for sin, intercedes for us, sets us free from sin, etc.*).
- b. Then, think about what this passage teaches about all that is good, bad, incomplete, and insufficient in both Israel and their judges.
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Revised Main Point: Review the main themes, your preliminary main point, and what you discovered through the questions and write a *revised one sentence main point* of the passage. If a friend were to ask you, “What is that passage about?” this sentence should be general and short enough to answer that question.

Judges 13:1–15:20

Put the Truth to Work. Considering this week's passage:

1. What am I/are we to know and believe? (about God, about myself, or about the world?)

2. What am I/are we to love and pursue? (What should our hearts long for?)

3. What am I/are we to do and sacrifice for?

Judges 13:1-15:20

Notes From The Group Discussion Time:

*“Do not lose lying in Abraham’s bosom for now
lying in Delilah’s lap.”*

—Christopher Love

11

S A M S O N A N D D E L I L A H : S T R E N G T H A N D W E A K N E S S

Judges 16:1–31

Main Themes: Read the passage through slowly and aloud. Make a list of up to 3 “themes” you see show up in the passage (ex. discipleship, suffering, trust, joy, peace, etc.). Noticing these at the start of your study will prepare you to formulate a clear main point after you’ve worked through the passage using the questions.

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Preliminary Main Point: Write a preliminary, **one-sentence main point** based on your reading of the passage and the themes you have seen in it. This main idea will be revised after working through the discussion questions

Work Through The Passage: Develop a deeper understanding of the passage by working through it again and answering the following questions. These questions are simply tools to help you slow down and process what the passage is saying.

1. Read Amos 1:5, Lamentations 2:9, and Jeremiah 51:30. Why are a city’s gates and bars important? What do they signify?

Judges 16:1–31

2. There are many ways that Samson and all the judges foreshadow aspects of Christ’s work. Read the prophecy God makes about Jesus in Genesis 22:17. How are Samson’s Spirit-empowered actions in 16:3 a reminder of God’s faithfulness to his people?

3. Outline the times Delilah seeks to learn the secret of Samson’s strength, and the things Samson tells her in response.

Judges 16:1-31

4. Why was Samson ultimately captured by the Philistines?

5. If you were to ask Samson why he ended up chained, blinded, and humiliated in the temple of Dagon, what reason do you think he would give? What reason would the lords of the Philistines give? What reason does the writer of Judges want us to see that the Lord would give?

6. At almost every moment of Samson's life, we see a mixture of extreme sin and the Lord's sovereign purposes using sin to bring about his will. Where do we see this in v. 28? (Hint: think about why Samson desires to bring down the temple, and why God desires to bring down the temple.)

7. How does this section of Judges point us to Christ? To answer this:

- a. Think about different aspects of who Jesus is (*our redeemer, deliverer, faithful covenant husband, defender, etc.*), and what he did and does (*obeyed God perfectly, atoned for sin, intercedes for us, sets us free from sin, etc.*).
- b. Then, think about what this passage teaches about all that is good, bad, incomplete, and insufficient in both Israel and their judges.
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Revised Main Point: Review the main themes, your preliminary main point, and what you discovered through the questions and write a *revised one sentence main point* of the passage. If a friend were to ask you, “What is that passage about?” this sentence should be general and short enough to answer that question.

Judges 16:1-31

Judges 16:1-31

Put the Truth to Work. Considering this week's passage:

1. What am I/are we to know and believe? (about God, about myself, or about the world?)

2. What am I/are we to love and pursue? (What should our hearts long for?)

3. What am I/are we to do and sacrifice for?

Judges 16:1-31

Notes From The Group Discussion Time:

*“It were far easier to write a book of apostates in
this age than a book of martyrs.”*

—John Trapp

12

M O R A L A N D S P I R I T U A L D E C L I N E

Judges 17:1–21:25

Main Themes: Read the passage through slowly and aloud. Make a list of up to 3 “themes” you see show up in the passage (ex. discipleship, suffering, trust, joy, peace, etc.). Noticing these at the start of your study will prepare you to formulate a clear main point after you’ve worked through the passage using the questions.

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Preliminary Main Point: Write a preliminary, **one-sentence main point** based on your reading of the passage and the themes you have seen in it. This main idea will be revised after working through the discussion questions

Work Through The Passage: Develop a deeper understanding of the passage by working through it again and answering the following questions. These questions are simply tools to help you slow down and process what the passage is saying.

1. 17:6 is repeated in full one time in these final chapters and repeated partially twice more. Identify each time. What does the writer intend for us to learn by repeating this verse?

Judges 17:1–21:25

2. Identify the flaw in Micah's thinking in 17:13. Does this thief and maker of "homemade religion" truly worship the One True God? Why or why not?

3. What is it that motivates the Levite "priest" throughout chapters 17 and 18?

4. From 18:30–31, describe the spiritual state of Israel during this period.

Judges 17:1–21:25

5. Compare Judges 19:22-26 with Genesis 19:1-11. The account is horrifying. What does this tell us about the people from the tribe of Benjamin who live in Gibeah? Now Read Deuteronomy 29:16-28. What conclusions does the writer of Judges want us to draw from this account?

6. The Levite's actions are horrifying and his words are deceptive. Keeping in mind that the Levite willingly allowed his lover to be handed over to the men, read his account of what happened in 20:4-7 and identify each untruth in it.

Judges 17:1–21:25

7. In Judges 1:1, who are the Israelites inquiring of the Lord about fighting against? In Judges 20:18, who are the Israelites inquiring of the Lord about fighting against? What's the significance of this difference?

8. Throughout Judges, God has fought for Israel against their enemies. What should we make of the statement in Judges 20:35 about who the Lord is fighting? (Hint: think again about Deuteronomy 29:16-28)

Judges 17:1–21:25

9. After the complete extermination of the tribe of Benjamin in chapter 20, there are only 600 men from the tribe who escape. What crisis does this introduce in Chapter 21, and how do the people of Israel attempt to solve this crisis?

10. There may be no more fitting final sentence for this dismal chapter in the history of the people of God than 21:25. Reflect on the trajectory of the entire book. How does the book of Judges point us to Christ?

Revised Main Point: Review the main themes, your preliminary main point, and what you discovered through the questions and write a *revised one sentence main point* of the passage. If a friend were to ask you, “What is that passage about?” this sentence should be general and short enough to answer that question.

Judges 17:1–21:25

Judges 17:1–21:25

Put the Truth to Work. Considering this week's passage:

1. What am I/are we to know and believe? (about God, about myself, or about the world?)

2. What am I/are we to love and pursue? (What should our hearts long for?)

3. What am I/are we to do and sacrifice for?

Judges 17:1-21:25

Notes From The Group Discussion Time:

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