

Bible Stories for Adults

Judges Rule Israel

Judges 1 - 9

Opening

Gathering: How has God felt present when you have been faithful, but seemed distant when you have strayed?

Today's Focus: God is just and punishes us for our sin, but He is merciful and forgives us when we repent.

Key Verses: *The Lord is with you, mighty warrior.* Judges 6:12

If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all - how will He also, along with Him, graciously give us all things? Romans 8:31-32

Opening Prayer

Lesson

Rated R for Violence (*Romans 1:18-32*)

What did God command of Israel before they crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land?

Numbers 33:50-53 = Drive out all inhabitants ... take the land

How were the Israelites to *drive out all the inhabitants of the land*? = God delivered them over

Deuteronomy 2:24-25, 32-34 = They fought and killed them, including all civilians

How could a loving God condone and even command such violence? = God is just and punishes sin

Romans 1:18, 21, 28-32 = God gives us freedom to reject Him, we suffer the consequences

What had God told Abraham that touches on why the inhabitants of Canaan were treated so harshly?

Genesis 15:16 = The sins of the Amorites will have reached their full measure

What types of sins could draw out such wrath from God? = Elsewhere: idolatry, religious prostitution...

Deuteronomy 18:9-12 = Pagan worship involving child sacrifice, divination, witchcraft ...

Was it really punishment for sins, or was it God's excuse to give the land to His chosen people?

Leviticus 18:24-30 = Punishment. God warned Israelites of same fate if they did the same

A Separate People (*Joshua 23*)

Why was it important for Israel to *drive out all the inhabitants of the land*? = temptations to sin

Numbers 33:55-56 = They will be barbs in eyes and thorns in your side

Were the Israelites able to conquer the entire territory under Joshua's leadership?

Joshua 13:1 = No, there were still large areas to be taken

What did Joshua tell the Israelites about these unconquered peoples before he died?

Joshua 23:7-13 = Stay faithful & God will drive them out, make allies & they'll be traps

Half-Hearted Janitors (*Judges 1*)

Did the Israelites continue to work to *drive out all the inhabitants of the land*?

Judges 1:1-4, 17 (1-26) = Tribes worked together, but not Israel as a whole

Did Israel heed Joshua's warning and continue to drive out the remaining peoples?

Judges 1:19, 27-28 (27-36) = The Israelites *never drove them out completely*

How did this set the stage for the stories of the Judges?

Judges 2:1-5 = God punished Israel by leaving the peoples to be snares

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Faithfulness (*Judges 2:7-13*)

What were Joshua's last words to the Israelites before sending them home?

Joshua 24:14-15 = Choose today whom you will serve, me & my house will serve Lord

How did the Israelites respond to Joshua's call?

Joshua 24:24 = *We will serve the Lord our God and obey Him.*

How faithful did the Israelites remain? = Had sex to encourage gods to bring fertility to the land

Judges 2:6-7, 10-13 = They forgot God after a generation, served Baal

Baal = Various male gods for places or purposes, Son of Canaanite chief god *El*

Ashtoreth & Asherah = Female consorts of *Baal & El*, respectively

Also called *Ishtar* - Babylon, *Ashtarte & Aphrodite* - Greek, *Venus* - Roman

Why did the Israelites continue to fall from God?

Judges 3:5-6 = Lived among other nations & intermarried & served their gods

Judges (*Judges 2*)

How did God handle this?

Judges 2:14-15 = He punished with raiders & let enemies defeat them

How did God respond to Israel's cries of distress? = *Shophet* - director, leader, governor, savior, judge

Judges 2:16, 18 = He raised up judges to save them

Did the judges have a lasting effect on Israel's faithfulness?

Judges 2:19 = After the judge died, they returned to evil & became more corrupt

What did God decide as a result of this response?

Judges 2:20-22 = Allow other nations to remain to test Israel

The Cycle of the Book of Judges

Sin - Judgment - Grace Cycle = Like Israel in wilderness & Genesis 4-11

Alphabet Cycle:

Apostasy = Unbelief, Rebellion

Battered = Beat upon by enemies

Cry Out = Called to God

Deliverer = God raised a judge

Emancipate = Judge freed Israel from oppression

Forget = Israel forgot what God did & returned to Apostasy

Leadership (*Judges 21:25*)

What kind of leadership did Israel have after Joshua?

Judges 21:25 = *In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit*

What was the Israelites' opinion of a king?

Judges 8:22-23 = God is our king, no man can be king

How tight was the confederacy between tribes?

Judges 6:35 (1:3; 1:17; 20:1) = Banded together to fight enemies

Judges 20:35 (5:17; 8:1; 12:1) = Fought with each other

Who were Israel's enemies? = Small powers of the immediate locale

Judges 3:8, 12, 31; 4:2; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1 = Mesopotamia, Moab, Canaan, Midian, Ammon, Philistia

Who were the judges? = Local heroes raised by God for specific needs, leadership not inherited

Exodus 18 = Judges instituted as leaders under Moses (Don't Read)

Hebrews 11:32-34 = *Through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice ...*

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Othniel (*Judges 1:11-15, 3:7-11*)

- Who was Othniel and where was his first victory? = Caleb's nephew
- Judges 1:12-13 = Captured Kiriath-Sepher (Debir) to become Caleb's son-in-law
- Who did Othniel defeat when God called him as a judge?
- Judges 3:9-11 = Cushan-Rishathaim, king of Aram (Mesopotamia)

Ehud (*Judges 3*)

- Who was Israel's next oppressor? = City of Palms was at Jericho
- Judges 3:12-14 = Eglon, king of Moab, with Ammonites & Amalekites
- Who did God raise as a judge and what did he do? = Tribute - regular payment to ruling nation
- Judges 3:15, 20-22 = Ehud used hidden sword to kill fat king, left hand unnoticed
- Why did Ehud have so much time to get away?
- Judges 3:24-26 = Servants waited, thinking Eglon was in bathroom
- How did Ehud then conquer 10,000 Moabites? = Moab made subject to Israel
- Judges 3:27-30 = Gathered Ephraimites & killed Moabites trying to cross Jordan
- What judge did God raise during Ehud's time to deal with a different oppressor?
- Judges 3:31 = Shamgar fought against Philistines

Deborah (*Judges 4-5*)

- Who was the oppressor at Deborah's time? = Deborah was a prophetess who judged
- Judges 4:1-4 = Jabin, Canaanite king in Hazor, Sisera commanded army
- How did God use Deborah to respond to the oppression of the Canaanites?
- Judges 4:6-7 = Had her call Barak to attack Sisera
- How did he respond to the call and what was wrong with his response?
- Judges 4:8-9 = He wanted Deborah to go along; He was trusting Deborah, not God
- How did this story turn out? = Sisera escaped and was killed by a woman
- Judges 4:15-17, 21-23 = Israel defeated Canaanite army
- Judges 5 - Song of Deborah = Describes God's & Israel's involvement in victory

Midianites (*Judges 6:1-6*)

- Who was Israel's next oppressor? = Israelites lived in caves to hide from Midianites
- Judges 6:1-2 = Midianites - nomadic people from the east
- What led to the battle 200 years earlier when the Israelites defeated this people?
- Numbers 22:7; 31:1-2, 7 = Midian had teamed with Moab to curse Israel, Israel conquered them
- How did this group of people now oppress the Israelites?
- Judges 6:3-6 = They ravaged the land like locusts, took all the crops & livestock

Gideon (*Judges 6:11-24*)

- Who did God raise up to save Israel and how was His call accepted? = Gideon was hiding
- Judges 6:11, 14-15 = Gideon said he was too weak (like Moses' excuses)
- How did God tell Gideon that he had all the power and might he needed?
- Judges 6:16 = He'd have God's presence and power & would destroy the Midianites
- Did this satisfy Gideon? = Fire from rock consumed sacrifice of meat & bread
- Judges 6:17, 20-21 = No, he wanted a sign
- Did this convince Gideon that this visitor really was from God?
- Judges 6:22-24 = Yes, he was afraid, built an altar

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Jerub-Baal (*Judges 6:25-32*)

- How did God test Gideon's faithfulness to his calling? = Baal worship was political
Judges 6:25-26 = Told Gideon to destroy dad's Baal altar, Build altar & sacrifice to God
- How did the town react when they saw what had happened the next morning?
Judges 6:28-30 = They wanted to lynch Gideon for this horrible attack
- How was Gideon protected and what nickname was he given? = Jerub-Baal - *let Baal contend*
Judges 6:31-32 = Father said that if Baal is a god, he can protect himself

More Signs (*Judges 6:33-40*)

- What did Gideon ask of God when he got nervous before an impending battle? = Ground dry, fleece wet
Judges 6:36-38 = Asked for a sign, God consented and gave the exact sign
- Did this satisfy Gideon that God was with him? = Ground wet, fleece dry
Judges 6:39-40 = No, he asked for another sign to make sure it wasn't just nature

The Right Stuff (*Judges 7:1-8*)

- Why did God reduce Gideon's army from 32,000 to 10,000? = v12 - More Mids than could be counted
Judges 7:2-3 = So Israel would know victory was from God, not by man's powers
- How were the troops further weeded down and to how many?
Judges 7:5, 7 = Seemingly random method cut down to 300 (<1% of original)
- How did God encourage Gideon in the face of 300 versus countless Midianites (v12)?
Judges 7:10-11, 13-14 = Let him hear a Midianites' dream foretelling Israel's victory

The Attack (*Judges 7:16-25*)

- What was Gideon's attack plan? = Weapons were trumpets, jars & torches
Judges 7:16-18 = Divide into 3 groups, surround camps, blow trumpets and shout
- How could just making some noise at midnight result in defeating the Midianites?
Judges 7:20-22a, 23-24a = Midianites were confused & turned on each other, Israel pursued
- How did Gideon reply to the Israelites' request to become their leader?
Judges 8:22-23 = He declined, saying God is Israel's king
- Despite his faithfulness, what did Gideon do that hindered Israel's faithfulness?
Judges 8:27 = Made golden robe out of plunder, Israelites revered it – became a snare
Judges 9 – Abimelech = Gideon's spiritual shallowness led to problems for his family & Israel

Closing Prayer

Response - Consider and meditate on one each day this week

1. When have I judged others without recognizing that I likewise deserve God's punishment?
(*Judges 2:1-3:7; Leviticus 18:24-30; Joshua 23:6-16; 2 Samuel 12:1-13; Matthew 7:1-5; Romans 2*)
2. When have I fallen into sinful behaviors of people around me? How could I have avoided them?
(*Judges 2:10-13, 17; Matthew 16:5-12; 1 Corinthians 5; Galatians 5; James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17*)
3. When have I completed and when have I failed to complete the tasks God gave me?
(*Judges 1:27-2:5; Matt 21:28-32; Acts 20:24; Romans 15:17-33; Col 4:17; Heb 10:36; James 1:4*)
4. How often do I remind myself what God has done for me and how I am to serve Him?
(*Judges 2:10, 19; Deuteronomy 4:9-14; Joshua 24; John 13:12-17; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26*)
5. How has God delivered me from troubles and oppression?
(*Judges 2:18; 2 Samuel 22; 2 Corinthians 1:8-11; 1 Timothy 4:16-18; James 5:15-16*)