

Sunday School Member Quarterly

Summer 2022

Joshua, Judges

Costly Compromise

Sunday School Lessons for Adults and Youth
Written by John O. Yates



Morningside

B A P T I S T C H U R C H

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Sunday School – 9:00 each Sunday Morning

Sunday School Lessons

June through August 2022

Joshua, Judges *Costly Compromise*

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Daily Bible Reading Guide

Read the following scripture passages each day and complete the learning activities in this book each week. This will prepare you for Sunday School class, and God will bless you as you read, study, and memorize His Word.

Week of May 30 – June 4

Mon: Numbers 20:2-13; **Tues:** Deuteronomy 31;

Wed: Deuteronomy 32;

Thurs: Memorize Deuteronomy 31:12; **Fri:** Deuteronomy 33;

Sat: Deuteronomy 34

Week of June 6 – 11

Mon: Joshua 1; **Tues:** Joshua 2; **Wed:** Deuteronomy 3:21-29;

Thurs: Memorize Joshua 1:8; **Fri:** Joshua 1; **Sat:** Joshua 2

Week of June 13 – 18

Mon: Joshua 3; **Tues:** Joshua 4; **Wed:** Joshua 5;

Thurs: Memorize Joshua 3:9; **Fri:** Deuteronomy 10;

Sat: Micah 6

Week of June 20 – 25

Mon: Joshua 6; **Tues:** Joshua 7; **Wed:** Joshua 8;

Thurs: Joshua 9; **Fri:** 1 Corinthians 15:50-58; **Sat:** 1 John 5

Week of June 27 – July 2

Mon: Joshua 10; **Tues:** Joshua 11; **Wed:** Joshua 12;

Thurs: 1 John 3; **Fri:** Hebrews 10; **Sat:** Ephesians 4

Week of July 4 – 9

Mon: Joshua 13 – 14; **Tues:** Joshua 15 – 16;

Wed: Joshua 17 – 18; **Thurs:** Memorize Joshua 21:45;

Fri: Joshua 19 – 20; **Sat:** Joshua 21

Week of July 11 – 16

Mon: Joshua 22; **Tues:** Joshua 23; **Wed:** Philippians 1;
Thurs: Memorize Joshua 23:11; **Fri:** Ephesians 2;
Sat: Psalm 103

Week of July 18 – 23

Mon: Joshua 24; **Tues:** 1 John 2; **Wed:** 1 Kings 18;
Thurs: Memorize Joshua 24:15; **Fri:** Acts 7; **Sat:** Joshua 24

Week of July 25 – 30

Mon: Judges 1; **Tues:** Judges 2; **Wed:** Judges 3;
Thurs: Memorize Judges 2:10; **Fri:** Judges 2; **Sat:** Judges 3

Week of August 1 – 6

Mon: Judges 4 – 5; **Tues:** Judges 6; **Wed:** Judges 7;
Thurs: Judges 8; **Fri:** Judges 9; **Sat:** Hebrews 11

Week of August 8 – 13

Mon: Judges 10; **Tues:** Judges 11; **Wed:** Judges 12;
Thurs: Memorize Proverbs 3:5-6; **Fri:** Judges 11;
Sat: Judges 12

Week of August 15 – 20

Mon: Judges 13; **Tues:** Numbers 6; **Wed:** Judges 14;
Thurs: Judges 15; **Fri:** Judges 16; **Sat:** Proverbs 7

Week of August 22 – 27

Mon: Judges 17; **Tues:** Judges 18; **Wed:** Judges 19;
Thurs: Memorize Judges 17:6; **Fri:** Judges 20; **Sat:** Judges 21

Coming Next Quarter
September – November 2022
Acts, Part 1

Map of the Promised Land



Introduction to Joshua

Author: Joshua

Date: 1405 B.C. to approximately 1375 B.C.

The book of Joshua records the entry of the children of Israel into the Promised Land, their conquest of the land, and the settlement of the various tribes into their inheritances.

Author: Joshua was born into Egyptian slavery and left Egypt during the Exodus. He and Caleb were the only members of the generation of Israelites that left Egypt under Moses' leadership who were allowed to enter the Promised Land (Num. 14:28-30, 38). Joshua served as Moses' "right-hand man," as well as Israel's military commander (Ex. 17:8-13; 24:13). God selected Joshua to succeed Moses (Num. 27:15-23).

Dates: The Israelites crossed the Jordan River and entered the Promised Land on the 10th day of the 1st month of the 41st year of their freedom from Egypt (Josh. 4:19). This was approximately late March of 1405 B.C.). It took about 6 years for the Israelites to subdue the land. Joshua lived to be 110 years of age (Josh. 24:29). If we assume he was about 40 at the time of the Exodus, then he was 80 when he led the children of Israel into the Promised Land. That assumption would mean Joshua lived about 30 years in the Promised Land, dying in approximately 1375 B.C.

The title of this quarter's study is *Costly Compromise*. The word compromise means to accept standards that are lower than desired or prescribed. God gave His people standards for behavior that would yield blessings. Throughout the books of Joshua and Judges, however, we will see that God's people suffered whenever they compromised His standards. The lesson for us is that compromise **always** comes at a high cost.

The Death of Moses

Have you ever given any “final” instructions?

Before leaving on a trip, we often give instructions to family members who are staying at home (“Don’t forget to put out the trash,” “Be sure the doors are locked,” “Don’t forget to set the alarm,” etc.). If you retire or leave one job for another, you might give final instructions to those who will take over your responsibilities. In your will you leave some very important final instructions that are to be carried out after your death.

We generally listen very closely to **final** instructions, because they are usually very **important** instructions.

In this week’s lesson, you will learn about the final instructions Moses gave the Israelites, as well as the final events of his life.

Deut. 31:7 Moses spoke to Joshua in front of all the people. God had already chosen Joshua to be Moses’ successor to lead the people into the Promised Land. What instruction did Moses give Joshua?

Deut. 31:8 Moses assured Joshua that God would be with him. What instruction did he give Joshua?

Deut. 31:9 Moses wrote the Law. What did he do with it?

Deut. 31:10-11 Every seven years Israel was to come together for a giant assembly during the Feast of Tabernacles. What were they to do at that time?

Deut. 31:12 Who were they to gather for this public reading of the Bible?

The purpose of this event was “that they may _____, and that they may _____, and _____ the LORD your God, and _____ to _____ all the words of this Law.”

Deut. 31:13 What would happen if Israel faithfully read and taught the Bible?

Moses’ final instructions to Israel were to **be strong, don’t be afraid, read the Bible, and teach it to their family members and others.** God told Moses to teach Israel a song to help them remember to be faithful to God (chapter 32), and then Moses blessed the twelve tribes of Israel (chapter 33). Chapter 34 tells about the final events of Moses’ life.

Deut. 34:1-3 Where did Moses go?

What did God show him?

Deut. 34:4 What did God tell Moses?

Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land because he had disobeyed God (Num. 20:12). Compromise cost Moses the blessing of leading the people into the beautiful homeland God provided.

Deut. 34:5 What happened to Moses?

Deut. 34:6 Who buried Moses?

Deut. 34:7 How long did Moses live?

Deut. 34:8 How long did Israel mourn for Moses?

Deut. 34:9 Who succeeded Moses as Israel’s leader?

Deut. 34:10 Was there ever another leader like Moses?

How does this verse describe Moses' relationship to the Lord?

Deut. 34:11-12 What event, more than any other, showed that God's hand was upon Moses?

In his clashes with Pharaoh, God used Moses to do amazing signs and wonders that utterly terrified everyone who saw them.

Concluding Thoughts: God used Moses to give some very important instructions to the Israelites. They were Moses' final instructions. Moses told them to:

- **Be strong,**
- **Don't be afraid,**
- **Read the Bible,** and
- **Teach it to everyone they could.**

Those are good final instructions. The last words of famous people are often remembered long after their death.

Do Moses' final instructions apply to us today? Do we need to be strong, reject fear, read the Bible, and teach it to everyone we can?

Those are definitely good instructions for us, but the real question is this: **will you obey them?**

Moses knew when to issue his final instructions, because God told him when he was going to die. Unlike Moses, we don't know when we will die and leave our loved ones. We'd better get busy obeying God and setting a good example for others now.

Is there something you need to do to obey God? Do it **today!**

Project: Memorize **Deuteronomy 31:12**. It's hard to obey God if you don't know what He wants you to do. If you faithfully come to Sunday School every Sunday, God will bless you by helping you understand and obey His Word.

How to Have Success

Success is something everyone wants but few ever feel they have achieved. Even the most high-profile and powerful people in our society still strive for something more. Humans are hardwired with a drive to succeed. After all, no one wants to be a failure!

Self-help books, seminars, websites, and mobile apps are very popular, largely because people want to succeed. Search the Internet for “how to succeed” and you will discover **2 billion** results!

How can you have success? What is true success? Did God ever tell us what it takes to be successful? If so, wouldn't you like to know what He said we must do to succeed? In this lesson you will discover God's formula for success. You will also learn about a woman who went from being a loser to a winner and what caused that transformation.

Josh. 1:1 What had just happened?

Who did the LORD speak to?

Josh. 1:2 What instruction did God give Joshua?

Josh. 1:3-4 Notice that God said He had **already** given the land to the Israelites. In God's mind, the conquest of the land was a “done deal!”

Josh. 1:5 What promises did God make to Joshua?

Josh. 1:6 “Be _____ and of a good _____.”
What was Joshua to do with the land?

Josh. 1:7 “Only be thou _____ and very _____.” What did God promise if Joshua obeyed His Laws?

Josh. 1:8 Here is **God’s formula for success**; in fact, this is the only time the word success appears in the Bible. What did God say would bring Joshua success?

Josh. 1:9 “Be _____ and of a good _____; be not _____, neither be thou _____: for the LORD thy God is _____ thee whithersoever thou goest.”

Verses 10-15: The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh had previously asked to settle on the east side of the Jordan River, on condition that they help the other tribes conquer Canaan. Joshua reminded these tribes to fulfill their commitment.

Josh. 1:16-18 The people promised to follow and obey Joshua just as they had Moses, on one condition. According to verse 18, what did they require of Joshua?

Joshua 2 tells about an unlikely character who trusted God and helped the Israelites.

Josh. 2:1-7 Joshua sent two spies to learn about the defenses of Jericho. These spies hid in a harlot’s house. Why do you think the men went there?

It was not uncommon in that day for harlots to manage inns.¹ Rahab’s house was a good place to gather information and its location on the city wall (verse 15) made escape possible.

Josh. 2:8-14 What agreement did Rahab and the spies make?

¹ *Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines on the Old Testament*, © 1993 by Victor Books/SP Publications, Inc.

Josh. 2:15-22 What did Rahab put in her window so the invading Israelites would not harm her or her household?

Josh. 2:23-24 What did the spies tell Joshua?

Concluding Thoughts: We can learn several important truths from the story of Rahab. She was a harlot who turned to the LORD in faith and then helped His people. As a result of her trust in God, Rahab and her family were saved from the destruction of Jericho. She and her family lived among the Israelites permanently (Josh. 6:25). As a matter of fact, Rahab appears in the genealogy of King David and of Jesus Christ (Matt. 1:5). Hebrews 11:31 names Rahab as one of the heroes of the faith and James 2:25 names her as an example of one whose faith was evidenced by her works.

Rahab's inclusion in the Bible reminds us that **God can save anyone who turns to Him in faith**, regardless of their sinful background. The fact that God used Rahab to protect the spies tells us that **God can use anyone who turns to Him in faith**. You may feel that your sinful past disqualifies you from serving God, but if you are sincerely repentant and have turned away from your sin, **you can serve God**. The scarlet thread (Josh. 2:21) reminds us of the blood of Jesus Christ, which is the only security in the face of physical and spiritual attack.

We began today's lesson talking about success. In chapter 1 you found God's formula for success. Rahab was a loser who became a success by repenting of her sin and placing her trust in God. Have you ever done those things? If not, you can't hope for real success. Read the verses printed on the back of this book and turn to Jesus now. If you're already saved, obey God and immerse yourself in the Bible. That's how you can have success.

Project: Memorize **Joshua 1:8**. Be sure to do the **Daily Bible Readings** (page 3) each day. You'll learn even more by attending Sunday School. Come to Sunday School this Sunday.

Are You Blessable?

Does it ever seem that other people are being blessed by God, but you're being left out? Why are those people being blessed, but you're not experiencing similar blessing in your life? Does God have certain requirements or prerequisites we must meet if we expect Him to work in our behalf?

Remember that we are talking about a sovereign and all-powerful God who can bless anyone He chooses; but are there things we need to do to be "blessable?" The late evangelist Bill Sturm said God blesses all those that let Him. What must you do to be ready to receive God's blessings? If you are doing something that prevents you from receiving God's blessings, wouldn't you want to know so you can change your behavior? The experiences of the children of Israel at the Jordan River provide us some answers.

Josh. 3:1-4 The Israelites moved from their camp 6 miles east of the Jordan River and camped right beside the river. How would they know when to move on?

Josh. 3:5 What did Joshua tell the people to do?

Why must they do this?

The word **sanctify** means to be clean, holy, and morally pure. God expected His people to sanctify themselves before He blessed them and did wonders in their sight. Perhaps we miss out on God's marvels and blessings because we are polluted and unclean.

Josh. 3:7-8 What was God going to do for Joshua?

Verses 10-11: God promised to drive seven evil nations out of the Promised Land and give the land to the Israelites. The Ark of the Covenant was a gold-covered box that contained the Ten Commandments and other items. It represented God's presence.

Josh. 3:13 When would the Jordan River dry up so the Israelites could cross over?

Josh. 3:14-17 What happened?

Where did the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant stand while the Israelites crossed over the Jordan?

Did you notice the emphasis on the fact that the Israelites crossed over on **dry ground**? If you dammed up a river and stopped the water flow, would the riverbed be dry? No, it would be muddy and slimy and take many days to dry. Remember that there were several million Israelites who had to cross that riverbed. God miraculously stopped the river and dried up the riverbed!

Josh. 4:1-10 God told Joshua to send 12 men (one from each tribe) back into the riverbed. Each man was to bring a large stone up onto the western riverbank. The stones would be a reminder of God's power. Joshua also set up 12 stones in the middle of the riverbed.

Josh. 4:11-18 According to verse 14, how did the people feel about Joshua?

God told Joshua to summon the priests up out of the riverbed. What happened when they reached the riverbank?

Josh. 4:19-20 The Israelites went about 4-5 miles west and camped at **Gilgal** (see the Map of the Promised Land on page 5). This is where Joshua set up the 12 stones.

Josh. 4:21-23 What was the purpose of the 12 stones?

Josh. 4:24 Who did God want to know about His power?

What did He want the Israelites to do?

- Josh. 5:1** How did the inhabitants of the land feel when they heard about Israel's miraculous river crossing?
- Josh. 5:2** What did God tell Joshua to do?
- Josh. 5:4-7** Why did the Israelites need to be circumcised?
- Josh. 5:10** What religious event did they observe in Gilgal?
- Josh. 5:12** What miraculous provision ceased the next day?

In verses 13-15 Joshua had an encounter with an angelic being who identified himself as the **captain of the Lord's host** (army). This was a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ. In next week's lesson you will learn what He said to Joshua.

Concluding Thoughts: God worked miraculously on behalf of the Israelites. God told them some things to do to be ready to receive His blessings. First, they had to **sanctify themselves** (Josh. 3:5). Second, they had to **follow their godly leader** (Josh. 3:7-8; 4:14). Third, they had to **obey God fully** (Josh. 5:2-12). In response to God's blessing, the Israelites were expected to remember His intervention and tell others about it (Josh. 4:20-24).

What about you? Are you living in such a way that God can bless you? Are you sanctified and "blessable?" Are you following your godly leaders? Are you obeying God in all areas of life? If you answered "no" to any of those questions, confess your sin and recommit yourself to God right now.

Project: Memorize **Joshua 3:5**. Tell someone about God's blessings on your life.

Victory and Defeat

There is one crucial requirement for victory in the Christian life – **obedience** to God’s commands. Similarly, there is one thing the Christian can do to ensure defeat and discouragement – **disobey** God’s instructions. Simply put, obedience brings victory, while disobedience and compromise results in defeat and trouble.

These truths are vividly demonstrated in this lesson. The Israelites obeyed God and enjoyed complete victory at Jericho. Later one of the Israelites disobeyed God, which resulted in a humiliating and costly defeat at Ai. Read the following scripture verses and answer the questions to learn about Israel’s experience.

Josh. 6:1-5 What instructions did the Lord give Joshua about Jericho?

What did He promise would happen if they obeyed?

Josh. 6:6-11 Joshua told the Israelites what God had told him.

Josh. 6:12-14 The Israelites marched around Jericho once a day for six days. Did they obey God in doing this?

Josh. 6:15-19 Who were the only residents of Jericho that were to be spared (v. 17)?

What was to happen to the silver, gold, brass, and iron (v. 19)?

Were the Israelites to take any of the spoils of victory for themselves?

Josh. 6:20-27 What happened to the wall of Jericho when the trumpets were blown and the people shouted?

The Israelites utterly destroyed Jericho and killed everyone except Rahab and her family. What does verse 27 say about Joshua?

Josh. 7:1 Why was God angry with the Israelites?

Josh. 7:2-5 What happened when the Israelites attacked Ai?

Josh. 7:6-9 What did Joshua and the elders of Israel do after the terrible defeat at Ai?

Notice in verse 9 that Joshua wanted to protect God's name.

Josh. 7:10-11 God answered Joshua. What sin did He say Israel had committed?

Josh. 7:12 What did God say would happen if Israel failed to destroy the "accursed" from among them?

Josh. 7:13-15 The Israelites were to sanctify themselves (Josh. 3:5) and come before Him the next day.

Josh. 7:16-18 Joshua did exactly as God said. Achan was identified as the one who had disobeyed God.

In verses 19-20 Joshua gave Achan the opportunity to glorify God by confessing his sin. Achan could have confessed his sin before the battle at Ai, after the defeat, when Joshua told the people to sanctify themselves, or before they began going through all the tribes and families. Instead, Achan waited to get caught.

Josh. 7:21 What did Achan do when he saw the forbidden items?

Where did he hide them?

Josh. 7:22-23 The forbidden items were found exactly where Achan said they were.

Josh. 7:24-26 What was done to Achan, his entire family, and all his possessions?

Why did the Israelites do this (Josh 7:15)?

In Joshua 8 the Israelites followed God's instructions and defeated Ai. The irony of Achan's sin was that if he had controlled his greed at Jericho, he would have had all the spoils he could carry at Ai (Josh. 8:2). In Joshua 9 the Israelites were deceived into making a peace treaty with the Gibeonites. God had specifically told them not to make peace or compromise with any of the inhabitants of the land (Ex. 23:32; Deut. 7:2). They made this mistake because they didn't ask God what to do (Josh. 9:14).

Concluding Thoughts: There is much we can learn from this lesson. When the Israelites explicitly obeyed God they were blessed with victory, but when they disobeyed they suffered humiliating and disheartening defeat. The same is true today. If you obey God you will be blessed with victory, but disobedience and compromise always bring defeat. The choice is yours.

Notice something else: when Achan sinned, **everybody** suffered. The world says your sin affects nobody but yourself, but that is simply not true. When you sin your family, your friends, and your church will suffer. **Sin is serious business.**

The theme of this quarter's study is **Costly Compromise**. In this lesson we have found Israel's first compromises and the troubles they caused. Compromise always brings trouble.

Has the Lord brought to your mind some area of sin, disobedience, or compromise in your life? If so, confess it right now. Don't be like Achan and wait to be caught. Confess your sin right now and ask the Lord to enable you to obey Him explicitly.

Project: If there is disobedience in your life take definite steps to correct it. Don't delay!

Victory through Obedience

Experience is a good teacher. When you were young did you ever disobey your parents and then suffer unpleasant consequences? If so, you learned that disobedience carried a price tag. When you later had opportunities to disobey, hopefully you remembered that price tag and chose to obey.

After learning some hard lessons about the price of disobedience and compromise (both in the sin of Achan and their unwise treaty with Gibeon), Joshua and the Israelites tried to obey the Lord fully. They didn't want to continue to pay the price for disobeying.

Five Canaanite kings heard about the treaty the Gibeonites made with the Israelites (Josh. 9:15). Angered by this and fearful of the Israelites, the five kings joined together to attack Gibeon. The Gibeonites sent word to Joshua asking for help.

Josh. 10:8 What did God promise Joshua?

Josh. 10:9-10 Israel went to battle and won a great victory.

Josh. 10:11 How did God supernaturally intervene to help the Israelites?

Josh. 10:12-14 What other miracle did God do to allow Joshua and his army time to utterly defeat their enemies?

Josh. 10:15-27 Because they obeyed God, Israel won a great victory over their enemies. The five kings were publicly executed. According to verse 25, Joshua wanted his leaders to learn an important lesson. "For thus shall the _____ do to all your _____ against whom ye _____."

Verses 28-43 describe the campaign to conquer southern Canaan. Remember that God had already given the land to the Israelites (Josh. 1:13) and He wanted them to utterly exterminate all the residents of the land (Num. 33:50-53).

Josh. 11:1-5 A powerful coalition of northern kings joined together to attack the Israelites.

Josh. 11:6 What did God promise Joshua?

The word **hough** (KJV) means to hamstring the horses, thus making them lame and useless.

Josh. 11:7-9 Did God keep His promise of complete victory?

Verses 10-15 tell us that Israel conquered the northern part of the Promised Land and killed all the inhabitants. Notice from verses 12 and 15 that all this was done in **obedience** to God's commands given through Moses (Num. 33:52-53; Deut. 7:1-2, 20:16-17).

Josh. 11:20 Why did the inhabitants of Canaan choose to fight against the Israelites?

Josh. 11:23 How much of the land did the Israelites take?

Joshua 12 is a roster of the foreign kings defeated by the Israelites. Two kings were defeated under Moses' leadership on the east side of the Jordan River, and thirty-one kings were defeated in Canaan under Joshua's leadership. In chapter 13, however, we will learn that there was still more land God wanted the Israelites to conquer.

Concluding Thoughts: When Joshua and the Israelites disobeyed God or compromised with the enemy, they suffered defeat, humiliation, discouragement, delay, and loss of promised blessings. When they obeyed God fully, however, they enjoyed victory, blessings, confidence, and peace. Obedience brought victory, but please note this: even though God promised victory, the Israelites

still had to fight battles. **The promise of victory doesn't necessarily mean the absence of battle.**

These truths still apply to our lives. When we disobey God we can expect defeat, humiliation, discouragement, delay, and loss of promised blessings. When we obey God, however, we can expect victory, confidence, blessings, and peace. But remember this: there will still be battles to fight even though we obey God. When we obey God we can be confident of ultimate victory, even when facing a powerful enemy.

Are you obeying God fully? You might be happy to obey if you knew what God wanted you to do. What are some things God has specifically told you? Look at the following list and ask yourself if you are obeying God in each area. If you are, you can expect **victory** and blessings, but if you're not, you can expect **defeat**.

- Repent of your sins (Acts 17:30)
- Believe on the name of Jesus Christ for salvation (1 John 3:23)
- Read and study the Bible regularly (2 Tim. 2:15)
- Pray (1 Thess. 5:17)
- Abstain from fornication (1 Thess. 4:3)
- Attend church regularly (Heb. 10:25)
- Tell others about Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8)
- Give 10% of your income to your local church (Mal. 3:10)
- Forgive one another (Eph. 4:32)
- Love your brothers and sisters in Christ (John 13:34)

Confess your sin of disobeying God and ask Him to help you obey Him in all the above areas.

Project: Take definite steps to correct any areas of disobedience this week. Obey God whether it feels good or not!

Claiming Your Inheritance

Have you ever moved from one home to another? If you have, you know there is a lot to be done to get ready for the move – paperwork to be signed, utilities to be turned on, address changes to submit, etc. Then comes the big day when your possessions are moved into the new dwelling. All your furniture, clothes, and boxes of “stuff” are carried into your new home. All the work is over!

But wait a minute – there is still more work to be done. Your stuff may be **in** the new home, but you are not yet **settled in**. There are boxes to unpack, dishes to put away, pictures to hang, and a thousand other things to do before your new dwelling really becomes “home.”

The same was true for the Israelites. Under Joshua’s godly leadership they had conquered and possessed the Promised Land, but none of the tribes were yet settled into their individual inheritances. The Promised Land was not yet “home.”

Today’s lesson covers nine chapters of the book of Joshua. Read the entire nine chapters, but let’s focus on the following passages.

Josh. 13:1 What did God tell Joshua about his age and about the land?

Josh. 13:2-7 These verses describe the unconquered land that was to be divided among the 9½ western tribes.

Josh. 13:8-13 Remember that 2½ of the tribes wanted to settle on the east side of the Jordan. Those tribes would receive no inheritance in Canaan.

Josh. 13:14 The Levites were to serve as the priests and the keepers of the Tabernacle. What was their inheritance?

Josh. 14:5 Whose instructions were the Israelites still obeying?

Josh. 14:6-15 What did Caleb ask for?

Remember that Joshua and Caleb were the only living Israelites who had come out of Egypt with Moses. Caleb was 40 years old at the time he and the other spies searched out the land. Moses had promised to give Caleb the land he surveyed (Deut. 1:36). A total of 45 years had elapsed since that time, 39 years in the wilderness and 6 years conquering the Promised Land. Caleb was now 85.

Chapters 15, 16, and 17 describe the land given to the tribes of Judah, Ephraim, and the western half of Manasseh. Note the following important verses for signs of trouble.

Josh. 15:63 What did the men of Judah fail to do?

Josh. 16:10 What did the men of Ephraim fail to do?

Josh. 17:13 What did the Israelites fail to do?

The Israelites conquered the Promised Land, but they compromised and failed to obey God in driving out all the people.

Josh. 18:1 What did the Israelites set up at Shiloh?

Their portable worship facility finally had a permanent home.

Josh. 21:43 What did the Lord give Israel?

Josh. 21:44 What else did He give them?

What about their enemies?

Josh. 21:45 How many of God's promises came to pass?

Concluding Thoughts: God promised an inheritance to the Israelites. He initially promised it to Abraham several hundred

years earlier, but He repeated the promise many times. The generation of Israelites living during Joshua's time could see the promised inheritance, but they still had to go and claim it.

If you are a Christian, God has promised you many things. What are some of those things? Here are just a few:

- Peace – John 14:27
- Repentance – Romans 2:4
- Forgiveness – 1 John 1:9
- Son-ship – Romans 8:14-16
- All things that you need to live right – 2 Peter 1:3
- Freedom from the corruption of the world – 2 Peter 1:4

These are just a few of the things God has promised you. The Israelites could only claim their promised inheritance by **believing** and **obeying** God. The only way you can claim the things God has promised is to obey Him and trust what He says in the Bible.

Some television preachers say you can “claim” any blessing if you have enough faith: a new car, a new home, physical healing, or \$1,000,000 in the bank. The problem with their mistaken belief is that God never explicitly promised to give you those things.

The things God did promise in His Word, like those listed above, are available to you if you will accept them. If you let the devil fool you into thinking God doesn't care about you and you're not worthy of His blessings, then you won't experience them. Turn your concerns over to God right now.

If you're not a Christian, you're not eligible for **any** of those blessings. **God did promise, however, to save you** if you sincerely call on Him (Rom. 10:13). Read the verses printed on the back of this book. Confess your sins and ask God to save you right now.

Project: Memorize **Joshua 21:45**. Tell someone this week about what God is doing in your life.

Remember the Lord

Memory is a wonderful blessing the Lord has given us. Through your memory you can relive and enjoy happy times of the past. You can recall loved ones who have been dead for many years. Your memory allows you to learn valuable lessons from past mistakes and rejoice in past victories. It is good to remember.

Has God ever done anything special for you? Was there a time when you prayed earnestly for something and then saw a miraculous answer? If so, how do you remember God's past faithfulness? What can you do to recall His blessings and teach your children and grandchildren about how good God has been to you? Do you have any physical reminders of answered prayer? Are there things you can do to help you remember the Lord: your commitment to Him, your need to obey Him, and His faithfulness to you in the past? In this lesson you will learn what one group of Israelites did to remember the Lord and read some of Joshua's admonitions to the people about recalling His past works.

Josh. 22:1-4 The conquest of the Promised Land was complete, so Joshua sent the 2½ eastern tribes home to their families and land east of the Jordan River. They had fought alongside the other Israelites for six years.

Josh. 22:5 “But take diligent _____ to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the LORD charged you, to _____ the LORD your God, and to _____ in all His _____, and to keep His commandments, and to _____ unto Him, and to _____ Him with all your _____ and with all your _____.”

Josh. 22:10 What did the eastern tribes build beside the Jordan River?

Josh. 22:11-17 Leaders of the western tribes went to confront the eastern tribes about the altar. What did they think the eastern tribes were doing?

Josh. 22:18 How did they think this would impact them?

Josh. 22:21-29 The eastern tribes defended themselves in building the new altar. Why did they say they built it?

Josh. 22:30-33 Did this explanation satisfy the western tribes?

Josh. 22:34 What was the purpose of the altar?

The altar served as a witness between the eastern and western tribes that they **all** belonged to the Lord and that He is God.

Josh. 23:1-2 Joshua was very old. He called all Israel together.

Josh. 23:3-5 What did he say the Lord had done for them?

What else would God do for them?

Josh. 23:6 What did Joshua tell the Israelites to do?

Josh. 23:7 What did he warn them not to do?

Josh. 23:9-10 To whom did Joshua give the credit for their great military victories?

Josh. 23:11 “Take good _____ therefore unto _____, that ye _____ the LORD your _____.”

Josh. 23:12-13 Joshua warned them not to compromise. What did he say God would do if they made peace with and intermarried with the Canaanites?

Josh. 23:14 Had God failed to keep any of His promises?

Josh. 23:15 Just as surely as God kept His good promises, what did God promise to do if they compromised with the enemy and turned away from following Him?

Josh. 23:16 What would be the final result of failing to remember the Lord?

Concluding Thoughts: The eastern tribes of the Israelites built an altar on the bank of the Jordan River so future generations would not forget that they, like the western tribes, were God’s people. The altar was a visible reminder of the Lord and their relationship to the tribes on the western side of the Jordan.

Shortly before his death, Joshua reminded the people of God’s blessings and faithfulness to them in the past and urged them to stay true to Him in the future.

Remembering what God has done for you is a lot more than just enjoying fond recollections. **When God’s people remember God’s faithfulness in the past, they are more inclined to faithfully serve Him in the future.** Also, God’s people need to leave “memorials” of some kind to teach younger generations.

What are you doing to remember God’s past faithfulness? Are you doing anything? Why don’t you start this week?

Are you doing anything to pass your faith and experience with God on to a younger generation? Why don’t you do something about it this week?

Project: Memorize **Joshua 23:11**. Start a journal of God’s faithfulness. Take time to right down anything you can remember about how God has worked on your behalf in the past. Keep that journal handy so you can add to it as God does more for you.

Who Will You Serve?

Commitment. What does that word mean to you?

We make commitments throughout our lives. There are big commitments such as marriage vows or the purchase of a home, and there are smaller commitments such as a promise to do something for your child or to meet a friend for lunch. Synonyms for commitment include promise, pledge, vow, and obligation. Those are serious words, but many people today take commitment very lightly. If it is inconvenient to honor their commitment, they just don't. How important is your commitment to God?

The children of Israel were at a crossroads. Their leader, Joshua, was about to die. Would they remain faithful to God after Joshua's death? Joshua challenged the Israelites to choose who they would serve and to make serious, lifelong commitments.

Josh. 24:1 Who did Joshua call to meet with him at Shechem?

Josh. 24:2 Israel's great ancestor, Abraham, was born near the Euphrates River in what is now the country of Iraq. His family worshipped other gods.

Josh. 24:3-4 Who brought Abraham to the land of Canaan and gave him children and grandchildren?

Josh. 24:5-6 Who raised up Moses, plagued the Egyptians, and brought the Israelites out of Egypt?

Josh. 24:7 Who protected Israel and killed the pursuing Egyptians?

Josh. 24:8 Who gave the Israelites victory over their enemies on the east side of the Jordan River?

Josh. 24:9-10 Who protected Israel from being cursed by Balaam?

Josh. 24:11-12 Who defeated Israel's enemies in the Promised Land, sometimes without the Israelites even having to fight?

Josh. 24:13 Who gave the Israelites land, cities, and crops for which they did not have to work?

Joshua reminded Israel of all the wonderful and miraculous things God had done for them. If it weren't for God, the Israelites would have *nothing!* Stop for a moment and think about all the things God has done for you. If you began a journal last week, take a few moments to read over some of the wonderful and miraculous things God has done in your life.

After reminding them about God's provision, protection, and their utter hopelessness without the Lord, Joshua challenged the Israelites to make an important choice.

Josh. 24:14 What did Joshua tell the Israelites to "*put away?*"

Josh. 24:15 What choice did he challenge them to make?

Who did Joshua say he and his family would serve?

Josh. 24:16-18 Who did the people say they would serve?

Why?

Josh. 24:19-20 What did Joshua say would happen if the Israelites committed to serve God, but later forsook Him and turned back to false gods?

Josh. 24:21-24 The Israelites insisted they would serve God faithfully. What promise did they make in verse 24?

Josh. 24:25-28 Joshua made a covenant with the people, wrote these words in a book, and set up a great stone near the sanctuary. What was the purpose of this stone?

Josh. 24:29-33 After these things Joshua died. According to verse 31, how long did the Israelites faithfully serve God?

Concluding Thoughts: The Israelites faced a serious choice: to serve the true and living God who had protected, guided, and provided for them, or to serve false gods. They chose to serve God and were willing to make a public commitment of their choice.

From our perspective their choice seems very simple. You might think, “If I had been standing before Joshua that day, I would certainly have chosen to serve God.” That was long ago, but **what about right now?** You are not standing before Joshua, but you are standing before a holy God. **You have a choice to make.** Will you serve Him wholeheartedly or will you serve false gods?

If you have never trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior, what are you waiting for? Read the verses printed on the back of this book. Repent of (turn away from) your sins and commit your life to Jesus. Call your Sunday School teacher or some other Christian friend and make your commitment public.

If you are already a Christian you have a choice, too. Will you faithfully serve God, or will you serve yourself and the attractions of the world? “*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*” (1 John 2:15). Do you love the Lord, or do you love the world? Recommit your life to Jesus Christ right now.

Project: Memorize **Joshua 24:15**. Demonstrate your commitment to God by attending Sunday School and worship this Sunday.

Introduction to Judges

Authors: Unknown

Date: 11th century B.C.

The book of Judges records the activities of thirteen leaders (judges) whom God used to deliver Israel from foreign oppression during the 300-year era period from the death of Joshua (approximately 1375 B.C.) to the beginning of Samuel's ministry (about 1075 B.C.). It also gives us a glimpse of the religious and moral conditions in Israel during that time.

Author: The book does not name its author, but Jewish tradition identifies Samuel (for whom the books of 1 and 2 Samuel are named) as the author.

Theme: The theme of the book is found in Judges 17:6 – *“In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.”* The book of Judges reminds us that our sin nature causes humans to regress into rebellion, sin, and idolatry. This has been true since the Garden of Eden and is still true today.

Cycle: The book of Judges displays a repeated cycle in the life of the people of Israel. This cycle is described in Judges 2:16-19 and may be summarized as follows:

- Israel **sinned** against God
- God allowed foreigners to **oppress** Israel
- Israel **cried** out to God for help
- God raised up a **judge** who delivered Israel from her oppressors
- Israel had **rest** and peace

Sadly, that cycle of sin, oppression, and crying out to God is still repeated in the lives of many people today.

The Cost of Compromise

Can you remember a time in your life when you were in desperate trouble and cried out to God for help? You probably asked your friends to pray for the Lord to work in your life. Then your prayer was answered – God did something to deliver you from your troubles. Hallelujah!

How did you react to that wonderful answer to prayer? Did you rejoice and thank God? Did you rush to tell your friends about God's goodness? What else did you do in response to God's answer to prayer? Did God's provision and blessing upon you cause you to make a new or deeper commitment to God? Did you commit to serve God even more than you had before?

Here's the key question: **Are you still serving God the way you did after being delivered from your troubles?** Are you still living up to whatever commitment you made to the Lord, or have you backed up on that commitment? If you have regressed from your previous commitment, you're a lot like the Israelites you will study about over the next few weeks.

Read Judges 1, but don't get bogged down by all the unusual names. Here's what you need to notice: **all** the tribes living in the Promised Land (Canaan – the territory west of the Jordan River) **failed to obey God** in driving out the Canaanites who lived in their lands.

Judg. 2:1 What had God done for Israel in the past?

Judg. 2:2 In what ways had the Israelites disobeyed God?

Judg. 2:3 What had God promised if they did not drive out all the Canaanites (see also Josh. 23:12-16)?

- Judg. 2:4-5** How did the Israelites respond to this message from God?
- Judg. 2:6-9** These verses tell us again about the death of Joshua. According to verse 7, how long did the Israelites faithfully serve the Lord?
- Judg. 2:10** What does the Bible say about the new generation that arose after Joshua's death?

The Israelites forsook Almighty God who had done so many things for them, and served the false gods of the Canaanites (v. 11-13). The worship of these false gods involved wicked practices such as prostitution and human sacrifice.

- Judg. 2:14-15** What did God do in response to the Israelites' rebellion and idolatry?
- Judg. 2:16-18** What kind and gracious thing did God do for the sinful Israelites?
- Did the Israelites always follow the judge God provided for them?
- Judg. 2:19** What did the Israelites do after each judge died?
- What does this verse say about the spiritual condition of each successive generation?
- Judg. 2:20** How did God feel about this?

Because of Israel's sin, God refused to drive out the remaining inhabitants of the land, who caused trouble for the Israelites for centuries. As a matter of fact, there is still unrest in that region **today** because the Israelites failed to obey God way back then!

- Judg. 3:1-4** Why did God leave heathen nations in the land?

Judg. 3:6-7 How far did the Israelites go in disobediently intermixing with the Canaanites?

Judg. 3:8-11 **Othniel** was the first judge. God raised up Othniel to deliver Israel from 8 years of oppression by the Mesopotamians (modern Iraq). How long did Israel have peace after Othniel defeated them?

Judg. 3:12-30 **Ehud** was the second judge. He killed the king of Moab and delivered Israel from 18 years of bondage to Moab. How long did Israel then have peace?

Judg. 3:31 The third judge was named _____.

Concluding Thoughts: The ancient Israelites compromised by accepting idolatry and the evil people they were supposed to drive out of their land. They failed to destroy their idols and places of wicked worship. They even intermarried with idol worshippers. As a result, they faced oppression at the hands of their enemies.

God graciously raised up judges to deliver the Israelites, but they repeatedly returned to their sin. Rebellion and sin are human nature. Unfortunately, that is still our nature – even if we belong to Christ.

Have you compromised your commitment to God, returning to your old sinful ways? Are you dabbling with the entertainment, lifestyle, and vocabulary of the world? Are you less committed than you once were? Such compromises will cost you dearly.

If you answered “yes” to any of those questions, you need to repent and return to faithfully serving God. If you don’t, you can plan on facing oppression and bondage. Turn back to God today.

Project: Memorize **Judges 2:10**. Return to your old faithful ways. Read your Bible daily, pray daily, and come to Sunday School and Worship each week.

Trust and Obey

The chorus of the familiar old hymn says:

*Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.*

Those words are so simple, but they communicate a very important truth: the only way to experience true joy and blessing is to trust God completely and obey Him explicitly.

In this lesson you will learn about three more of Israel's judges. When they trusted and obeyed God, they enjoyed His blessings and things turned out good. When they didn't fully trust and obey God, however, trouble inevitably followed. Read on to learn more.

Judg. 4:1-3 What happened after Israel's last judge died?

Do you recall the cycle described in the **Introduction to Judges** on page 31? Israel repeatedly **sinned**, fell under **oppression** from a foreign enemy, and **cried** out to God for help. God then raised up a **judge** who delivered Israel from her oppressors, after which the nation enjoyed a period of **peace** and rest. After each judge died, however, the people went right back into sin, starting the cycle all over again. You will see this cycle throughout the book of Judges.

Judg. 4:4-5 Who judged Israel at that time?

Deborah lived just north of Jerusalem, in the territory belonging to the tribe of Ephraim.

Judg. 4:6-7 **Barak** lived in the region of Naphtali near the Sea of Galilee (about 70 miles north of Deborah). Deborah called for Barak and gave him a message from God. What was that message?

Judg. 4:8 What did Barak require before he would do as God said and go to war?

Judg. 4:9 What did Deborah say would be the result if she went with Barak?

Judg. 4:14 What assurance did Deborah give Barak as he went to war?

Judg. 4:15-16 The defeat was so devastating that **Sisera** (the enemy commander) ran away and his soldiers committed suicide.

Judg. 4:17-20 Sisera thought he had found a safe haven in Jael's tent, because there was peace between his people and her people (she was not an Israelite).

Judg. 4:21-24 What did Jael do to Sisera?

According to verse 23, who subdued the enemy?

Because of Barak's lack of faith (v. 8) Deborah told him a woman would gain credit for the victory (v. 9). We should trust and obey God by faith without putting conditions on our obedience.

Chapter 5 contains Deborah's song of rejoicing and praise to God for the great victory. The Israelites enjoyed peace for forty years (Judg. 5:31). Chapters 6 – 8 tell about the next judge, **Gideon**.

Judg. 6:1 What did Israel do to cause the LORD to deliver them into oppression by Midian?

Judg. 6:6-10 Israel cried out to God for help. According to verse 10, what had the Israelites disobeyed?

Judg. 6:11-12 Who appeared to Gideon?

This was actually a pre-incarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ (see v. 14).

What did he tell Gideon?

Judg. 6:13 What did Gideon ask God?

Judg. 6:14 What did the LORD tell Gideon?

Judg. 6:15-24 Gideon asked God for a sign; the Lord gave him a sign that confirmed His call upon Gideon.

Judg. 6:25-32 God told Gideon to destroy a pagan altar and build an altar for the Lord. Did he obey God?

Judg. 6:33-40 Enemies gathered and Gideon prepared for battle. His faith was weak, though, so he asked God for two more signs. What were those signs?

Judg. 7:2 Why did God want Gideon's army to be **smaller** before he fought the battle?

Judg. 7:3 How many of Gideon's soldiers left?

How many remained with Gideon?

Judg. 7:4-8 God said this was still too many. How many soldiers did He let Gideon keep?

Gideon divided his force into three companies, equipping each man with a trumpet and a torch hidden in a clay pitcher.

Judg. 7:20-22 Gideon's men surrounded and completely surprised the Midianite army. What does verse 22 say the Midianite soldiers did to one another?

In chapter 8 Gideon's men pursued and killed the fleeing enemy.

Judg. 8:22 What did the men of Israel want Gideon to do?

Judg. 8:23 Who did Gideon say should rule over Israel?

Judg. 8:28 How long did Israel have peace?

When Barak and Gideon trusted and obeyed God, they experienced victory. Both men, however, had times of weak faith when they doubted God. In Gideon's later years he compromised by getting involved in polygamy and immorality. As soon as he died the Israelites forgot God and returned to their sinful ways (Judg. 8:34). Chapter 9 tells us that one of Gideon's illegitimate sons killed his half-brothers and claimed to be the king of Israel. This was not God's will and resulted in more sin and death.

Concluding Thoughts: Trusting God completely and obeying His instructions are the **only** ways we can have happy, successful lives. When Israel's judges trusted and obeyed God, things went well for them and for their nation. When Israel sinned by trusting false gods and disobeying the Lord, they always ended up in trouble.

The same principle is true for you today. If you will take your problems to God, listen to God, obey God, and trust God, things will go well for you. If you ignore God and try to do things your own way, you are certainly headed for trouble.

Perhaps you are already in trouble because you haven't been doing things God's way. If so, admit your mistakes to God. Cry out to Him and ask for His help. Turn from your sin of idolatry (doing things your way rather than God's way) and begin obeying God right now. Obey God in the things you already know to do and then commit to obey Him in other things He will show you in the future. Admit your utter dependence on the Lord. Turn to Him now.

Project: Obey God in every way this week. Attend Sunday School and Worship so you can learn more about God's will for your life.

Bargaining with God

Turn back to the **Introduction to Judges** on page 31 and review the cycle repeated throughout the book of Judges. Over and over, Israel **sinned**, fell under foreign **oppression**, and **cried** out to God for deliverance. In response, the Lord raised up a **judge** to lead Israel and deliver them from oppression; after which they enjoyed a period of peace and **rest**. When Israel had a good leader, they were faithful to God, but as soon as that leader died Israel reverted to their old sinful ways.

Because of this repeated cycle, Israel was constantly in and out of trouble. They worshipped idols and there were even civil wars between the various tribes. The spiritual climate in Israel was poor, much like it is in modern-day America. When people experience troubles and are weak spiritually, they often try to “bargain” or “make deals” with God. They beg for God’s help and promise to do things for Him if He will rescue them from trouble or give them victory.

Have you ever tried to bargain with God? In today’s lesson you will learn about a man who did, and the awful price he paid.

Judges 10:1-5 tell about two more judges, **Tola**, and **Jair**.

Judg. 10:6 What did the Israelites do?

Judg. 10:7 How did God feel about this?

What did He do to them?

Judg. 10:8 How long were they oppressed?

Judg. 10:10 What did the children of Israel do?

God initially ignored their cries for help (v. 11-14), but when the Israelites turned from their idolatry, He felt pity for them (v. 16).

Judg. 11:1 The next judge was **Jephthah**. What two facts does this verse tell us about him?

Judg. 11:2-3 What did his half-brothers do to him?

Judg. 11:4-6 What did the elders of Gilead want Jephthah to do?

Verses 12-28: Jephthah sent word to the king of Ammon, asking why he was coming to fight against Israel. The king falsely accused Israel of taking his land. In fact, God gave the land to Israel 300 years earlier when they defeated another nation, not the Ammonites.

Judg. 11:29 “Then the _____ of the _____ came upon Jephthah.” He led his people into battle.

Judg. 11:30-31 Jephthah made a vow to God. What did He promise?

Vows such as this were common among pagan kings and generals. Jephthah was bargaining with God: “If you do _____ for me then I will do _____ for you in return.” Here’s the key question: Did **God** tell Jephthah to make such a vow?

Judg. 11:32-33 Jephthah’s army won a great victory: “...and the _____ delivered them into his hands.”

Judg. 11:34 Who was first to greet Jephthah when he returned home?

Judg. 11:35 Why was Jephthah upset?

Judg. 11:39 What did Jephthah do to his daughter?

God has **never** sanctioned or approved human sacrifice. Jephthah was a man whose values were shaped by his ungodly culture. In the face of battle, he tried to bargain with God and he made a foolish vow. The Lord used Jephthah to win a victory, but Jephthah never asked Him for help or direction. God never told him to make that vow or to sacrifice his daughter. In fact, Leviticus 27 tells how Israelites were to redeem (with a money gift) those pledged to God in a vow. Jephthah sacrificed his daughter because he was influenced by the paganism and false religion so prominent in Israel. He thought he was being **spiritual** by keeping his vow, but in reality, he was just being **foolish**.

Chapter 12 tells about civil war in Israel and identifies three more judges: **Ibzan**, **Elon**, and **Abdon**.

Concluding Thoughts: We can fall into the same error as Jephthah. When we get into trouble or come under oppression we usually panic, and when we panic we might try to bargain with God. Because we live in an ungodly, man-centered culture, it is easy for us to do things God never told us to do, all the time thinking we are being spiritual.

If you faithfully read and study God’s Word, you will not be fooled by the world’s so-called “spirituality.” You will know what is right (by God’s standard: the Bible) so you will not bargain with God or make foolish promises. If, on the other hand, you **don’t** take time to put God’s Word in your mind and heart, you will certainly fall prey to the world’s deceptions and make foolish and hurtful decisions like Jephthah did.

The choice is yours. Which course will you follow?

Project: Spend time in God’s Word this week. Use the **Daily Bible Reading Guide** every day. Memorize **Proverbs 3:5-6**. God promises to give you guidance when you seek it from Him and not from the world.

Self-centered, Irresponsible Living

Few people really care about God. Godly standards of behavior have nearly vanished from society. Immorality is common, even among leaders. Truth and honor are virtually nonexistent. Regional and partisan conflicts sap the strength of the nation.

Does that sound like modern-day America? Yes, it does; but those phrases also describe Israel during the time of the judges. The next judge we will study is **Samson**. He was chosen by God to bring judgment upon Israel's enemies and oppressors, the Philistines. Samson was also a man shaped by his sinful culture. He made poor choices based upon his self-centered and irresponsible desires. Learn the result of Samson's choices and behavior by studying the following verses.

Judg. 13:1 What did the children of Israel do again?

What happened as a result of this?

Judg. 13:2-5 Manoah and his wife had no children. The angel of the LORD (a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus) came and told her she would have a child. What instructions did He give her?

Samson was to be a **Nazarite**. Read Numbers 6:1-8 to discover three things Nazarites were not permitted to do.

Judg. 13:24-25 The Lord kept His promise. His Spirit came upon Samson at times.

Judges 14 Samson married a Philistine woman. This was disobedience, but God used it as an occasion for Samson to fight against the Philistines (v. 4). Samson killed 30 Philistines (v. 19).

- Judges 15** Samson’s father-in-law gave his wife to another man. Samson retaliated by destroying the crops of the Philistines. This gave him occasion to kill more than 1,000 Philistines (verses 8 and 16).
- Judg. 16:1** What irresponsible choice did Samson make?
- Judg. 16:2-3** The Philistines hoped to kill Samson. What did he do that demonstrated his great strength?
- Judg. 16:4-5** Samson fell for another woman. Poor moral choices continually got Samson in trouble. What did the Philistine leaders offer to do for Delilah if she discovered the key to Samson’s strength?
- Judg. 16:6-15** Three times Delilah asked Samson about the source of his strength, and each time he lied to her. Do you think they truly loved each other?
- Judg. 16:16-17** Rather than recognize Delilah as his enemy, Samson was ruled by his selfish lust and remained with her “*daily.*” She finally nagged and pestered him enough that he “*told her all his heart.*” Samson’s strength came from God: his long hair was merely the outward sign of his special calling as a Nazarite. “*When Delilah became more important to him than God, his strength was removed.*”²
- Judg. 16:18-19** What did Delilah do?
- Judg. 16:20** What did Samson not realize?
- Judg. 16:21** Lust and irresponsible living cost Samson to lose everything. Proverbs 7:22-27 reveal that this is the natural result of immorality.

² John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Dallas: Word Publishing) 1997.

Judg. 16:23-27 The leaders of the Philistines gathered at their pagan temple to celebrate their victory over Samson. He was tied between the pillars that supported the building. How many Philistines were present?

Judg. 16:28 What did Samson ask God, and why?

Judg. 16:29-30 What did Samson do?

Samson was a man called by God but polluted by the wicked culture in which he lived. God used Samson to strike several strong blows against the Philistines, in spite of his sinfulness. He was a man of great promise, who threw away his birthright because of his unbridled lust. Samson killed a lot of Philistines, but he provided **no** moral leadership or example to his people.

Concluding Thoughts: Our world is much like Samson's. Sexual immorality and other sins are rampant. Our world is no longer shocked or disappointed when prominent people live irresponsibly.

Let's bring this closer to home. Is your behavior self-centered, irresponsible, and sinful like Samson's? Have you thrown away your opportunity to set a good example for others simply because you choose to fulfill your selfish lusts? Like Samson, God may still use you at times, but if you live irresponsibly your behavior will ultimately destroy you. Compromise is always costly.

It is not too late to confess your sin, turn away from it, and start obeying God. Confess your sin right now and turn to Jesus Christ. He can forgive you and cleanse you (1 John 1:9).

Project: As you read the news or follow social media this week, notice the many examples of irresponsible living. Spend time in God's Word, and run away from sin (1 Cor. 6:18; 1 Thess. 4:3-7). Don't miss Sunday School and Worship this week.

Doing Your Own Thing

“I don’t want anyone telling me how I should live my life. My behavior is totally my choice. As long as I’m not hurting anyone else, I can do as I please. I don’t want anyone trying to impose their beliefs on me. I’m not subject to a bunch of out-dated rules. I can make up my own mind about what I think is right and wrong!”

Have you ever heard anyone make statements such as those? They are very common these days. In modern America, “doing your own thing” is widely accepted and even hailed as a virtue. You will see the same attitude in today’s lesson. This is our last lesson from the book of Judges. These closing chapters present a collage of events that show how far Israel had fallen into sin and disobedience toward God. At the time of Joshua’s death Israel was following God (Judg. 2:7), but by the end of the era of the judges (about 300 years later) Israel was “doing their own thing.”

Judg. 17:5 A man who lived in Ephraim made idols and set up a place of worship. There was only one place that God had told the Israelites to worship – the tabernacle. Who did this man appoint as his priest?

According to God’s clear commands, only Levites who were descended from Aaron could legitimately serve as priests.

Judg. 17:6 “In those days there was no _____ in Israel, but every man did that which was _____ in his own _____.”

This is a key verse. You will find this thought repeated three more times in today’s lesson. What was the standard of behavior in Israel at that time?

Judg. 17:7-13 A young Levite traveling through the area agreed to serve as Micah’s household priest. This was disobedience and rebellion toward God.

Judg. 18:1 Here is that key thought again. There was no king to lead the people to follow and obey God.

The tribe of Dan disobeyed God by not driving out the inhabitants of their appointed land. The rest of chapter 18 tells us that the tribe of Dan conquered another territory far to the north. They took the Levite and the idols mentioned in chapter 17 and set them up in their new homeland. The sin of idolatry was a foundational building block of the territory of Dan.

Judg. 19:1 What problem still existed in Israel?

Having a **concubine** (a slave/secondary wife) was **culturally** acceptable in ancient times, but it was **never** approved by God.

Judg. 19:22 This strange story demonstrates the sinfulness of Israel. The Levite and his concubine were traveling and spent the night in the town of Gibeah in the territory of Benjamin. Why did the men of that town beat on the door?

What did they want?

Judg. 19:23-24 What bizarre and sinful thing did the host offer to try to protect his guest?

Judg. 19:25 What bizarre and sinful thing did the Levite do to protect himself?

Judg. 19:26-28 The concubine died from sexual abuse. The Levite took her body and went home.

Judg. 19:29-30 The Levite cut the woman's body into 12 pieces and sent them to the 12 tribes of Israel. He blamed everyone for her death but himself! All Israel was shocked at this atrocity, leading to a civil war.

Judges 20 An army of 400,000 Israelite soldiers gathered to take revenge upon the tribe of Benjamin. The Israelite army lost 40,000 soldiers before defeating Benjamin. Over 25,000 men of Benjamin were killed. The Israelites burned many cities and killed many more people in Benjamin.

Judges 21 The men of Israel had sworn not to give their daughters to any of the surviving men of Benjamin, so they devised two bizarre schemes to supply wives for them.

Judg. 21:25 There was still no king in Israel. What standard of behavior did the people follow?

These chapters describe a sin-sick nation that compromised with the world by turning from God and His Word. They willingly allowed sinful behavior, but then were shocked when that sinful behavior produced its natural, ugly, deadly result.

The same is true today. Our sin-sick nation allows and promotes sinful behavior. We glorify and pay huge sums of money to movie and TV studios and musical groups that promote violence and sex. We encourage everyone to do what is right in his or her own eyes. Sin is big business in this country, but when sin produces its natural result (school shootings, violent street gangs, dysfunctional families, sexually transmitted diseases, and serial killers) we express shock and disbelief. Like the ancient Israelites, we are merely reaping the natural reward of turning away from God.

Concluding Thoughts: You can't change society as a whole, but you can have a dramatic influence on your own life and those close to you. Quit "doing your own thing" and begin doing things **God's way**. Confess your sin and beg God for mercy.

Much of the sin described in today's lesson involved immorality. Since sin begins in the mind, you must be very careful to guard your mind. The sin you ponder in your mind will eventually find a way

to be lived out in the flesh. Remember that sin will take you **farther** than you want to go, keep you **longer** than you want to stay, and **cost you more** than you want to pay. Sin will ultimately ruin your life.

Spend time in God's Word every day and attend Sunday School and Worship every week. Tell God you will obey everything you know He has told you, and then start doing it. If you do these things you can guard yourself from some of the terrible consequences of sin.

Project: Memorize **Judges 17:6**. Be sure to pick up a *Sunday School Member Quarterly* for the fall quarter and begin the **Daily Bible Reading Guide** on Monday.

Do you have questions about how to avoid immorality, or some other sin? The Bible has answers and help for whatever situation you might face. Seek some good counsel and help this week. Talk to your Sunday School teacher. He or she wants to help you live in obedience toward God.