

# First Bilingual Baptist Church

## 2014 Fall/Winter FLG Leader Guide

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## **Historical Background of Judges**

God promised to give Abraham land and offspring that would become a nation to bless the world. (Gen 12:1-3, 7; 15:7, 13-21; 17:4-8). Abraham's offspring became the nation of Israel. After spending over 400 years in Egypt, God used Moses to redeem Israel from slavery and intended to bring them into the Promised Land. The people rebelled, and God decreed that a future generation would enter the Promised Land. When Moses died, Joshua became the new leader, led Israel into the Promised Land, and conquered its inhabitants.

## **Overview of Judges**

After Joshua died, Israel began to disobey God and stopped conquering the land. They entered into a moral and spiritual decline. Throughout this time, God provided temporary deliverance because of His compassion and His covenant with Abraham (see Psalm 106:34-46). Judges is arranged by theme, not chronologically.

## **The Cycles of Judges**

Israel's downward spiral included the following steps:

Sin	Israel disobeys God
Servitude	God brings judgment through oppression
Supplication	Israel repents and calls out to God
Salvation	God sends a military leader (judge)
Security	God provides temporary deliverance

## **Author and Purpose of Judges**

Jewish tradition teaches that Samuel wrote the book shortly after Saul began to reign. The book was written to show the consequences of disobeying God and to highlight the nation's need for a righteous king who would bring obedience, unity, and peace.

## **Outline of Judges**

- I. The Disobedience & Deterioration of Israel
  - A. Incomplete Conquest (1:1-36)
  - B. Idolatry (2:1-23)
- II. The Deliverances of Israel
  - A. The Lord's Testing (3:1-6)
  - B. Othniel (3:7-11)
  - C. Ehud (Shamgar) (3:12-31)
  - D. Deborah (4:1-5:31)
  - E. Gideon (6:1-8:32)
  - F. Abimelech (8:33-9:57)
  - G. Jephthah (10:1-12:7)
  - H. Samson (13:1-16:31)
- III. The Depravity of Israel
  - A. Idolatry (17:1-18:31)
  - B. Immorality and War (19:1-21:25)

## **Key Passages of Judges**

Judges 2:20-22 — So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he said, “Because this people have transgressed my covenant that I commanded their fathers and have not obeyed my voice, I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died, in order to test Israel by them, whether they will take care to walk in the way of the LORD as their fathers did, or not.”

The Israelites did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. (Judges 2:11; 3:7, 12; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1)

In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes. (Judges 17:6; 21:25; see 18:1; 19:1)

# **Judges 1–3: Disobedience and Deliverance**

Preached on October 19

## **Questions for Personal Study**

- What examples do you see of Israel's success?
- What is being accomplished as Israel conquers the land? See also Gen 15:14-16 and Deut 7:1-6; 9:4-5.
- What examples do you see of Israel's disobedience?
- What changes take place after Joshua died?
- How does God respond to Israel's disobedience?
- How does Israel respond to God's judgment?
- How would you describe the relationship between God and Israel during this time? See also Psalm 106:34-46.
- What are some positive traits about Othniel?
- Are there any negative traits to Ehud?
- What are the similarities and differences between Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar?

## **Summary and Extra Notes**

- Judges 1:1–3:6 has the background and the big picture. Starting in 3:7, we get a closer look at God's work through the individual judges.
- Israel's goals are no longer God's goals. They are willing to allow the Canaanites to live among them. They are more concerned about being comfortable than obeying God.
- God honors His covenant with Israel by disciplining the nation, but their repentance doesn't last long.
- God's choice for a deliverer is not always what the people expect (e.g. being left-handed was seen as a defect).
- Israel's deliverers reflect the spiritual state of the nation. They are going to get progressively worse, but God will still use them to preserve the nation.

## **Sample Discussion Questions**

- How does Israel's "holy war" affect your view of God?
- How would you respond to someone who asked you, "Why did God command the Israelites to kill all those people in the land of Canaan?" What was being accomplished?
- Why do you think Israel decided not to obey God? How have you had similar thoughts that led to disobedience?
- Why do you think the Israelites kept hardening their hearts against God's discipline? Why do people do the same today?
- How can we keep one another from hardening our hearts against God?
- How have you experienced God's discipline when you've strayed from Him?
- How have you seen God deliver you from some kind of danger or difficulty, even if it seemed offensive or incomprehensible?
- What does God require from a person to use him/her for His purposes?

## **Suggestions for Prayer**

- Thank and praise God for His faithfulness to His promises, His sovereignty over human history, and His plan of salvation
- Ask God to help you not judge others based on worldly standards and to protect you from a disobedient heart.
- Ask God to help you boast in Him, not in the things of this world.

## **Judges 4–5: Deborah and Barak**

Preached on October 26

### **Questions for Personal Study**

- What kind of opposition does Israel face?
- What message did Deborah give to Barak? How did Barak respond?
- Do Deborah and Barak have the same plan?
- What positive qualities are there in Deborah and Barak?
- What negative qualities do you see in them?
- Did Deborah's prophecy (4:9) come true?
- How does it make you feel to read about what Jael did to Sisera?
- How is this story similar or different to the previous judges?
- How does the song of Deborah and Barak describe God?
- Does any part of the song surprise you or seem offensive?
- What are the main messages of the song?

### **Summary and Extra Notes**

- Neither Deborah nor Barak are able to deliver Israel alone. In fact, neither of them brought the victory.
- Barak seems afraid, and God does not give him the glory of the victory.
- God chose to discipline the deliverer. Just like Deborah prophesied, the honor of victory is given to Jael, a woman who is part of a neutral party not connected to Israel.
- God acted in an unexpected way and through an unexpected person to deliver Israel from the Canaanites.
- Ultimately, the credit for deliverance goes to God, not His human agents.

## **Sample Discussion Questions**

- How does the example of Jael challenge the way you view God's attitude toward his enemies?
- What does it mean to love God?
- When you understand that God Himself takes the credit for saving you, what change does that make in your life?
- Like Barak, how are you guilty of a lack of faith and attempts to manipulate God's purposes?
- What courageous steps can you take to obey God and accomplish His purposes?
- In the past, how have you made excuses or put stipulations on God's commands (e.g. "I will only obey if...")?
- What can we do to avoid making the same error as Barak?
- Given all his mistakes, how is it possible that Hebrews 11:32 holds up Barak as an example of faith?

## **Suggestions for Prayer**

- Thank and praise God that He alone is the source of your salvation.
- Ask God for the faith to trust His promises, rather than doubting His word.

## **Judges 6–8: Gideon**

Preached on November 2

### **Questions for Personal Study**

- What was Israel experiencing while they were under Midian's power?
- What message does God give Israel after they cry out to Him?
- What are the difference between how God describes Gideon and how Gideon describes himself?
- How would you describe Gideon's character/personality?
- How does Gideon respond to the first task God gave him?
- How do other people respond to Gideon's actions?
- What does the incident of the fleece tell us about Gideon/ What does it say about God?
- What are some positive qualities about Gideon? Is he a good leader?
- Why did God give Gideon so few men for the battle?
- What are Gideon's goals at different times of his life?

### **Summary and Extra Notes**

- Gideon has some leadership skills, but he is also very hesitant and doubting. Gideon first assignment deals with Israel's idolatry and shows the powerlessness of Baal. The end of Gideon's life shows that Israel was already turning back to idolatry.
- Gideon's battle against Midian demonstrates God's power in weakness. It directs our attention to God as the true deliverer.
- The story of Gideon is a turning point in Judges. From this point on, Israel's judges will demonstrate severe character flaws.



## **Sample Discussion Questions**

- How would you feel if you part of Gideon's small army?
- Have you ever been in a situation where it seemed like you had no chance of victory/survival? How did you feel? What happened?
- In the later years of Gideon, we don't see God involved in his life. It seems Gideon is acting on his own. How have you ever acted out of your own desires instead of being led by God?
- Why do you think Israel is so eager to make Gideon their king? How is this attitude shown today in the world? How is this attitude seen in the church?
- How does your view of Gideon change as the story progresses?
- What are some positive qualities about Gideon?
- What would you say is Gideon's basic problem? How did this problem show itself in his life?
- If you had the same problem as Gideon, how do you think it would show up in your life?
- What steps can you take to guard yourself against following the example of Gideon?
- What can others do to help you stay close to Christ and His commandments?

## **Suggestions for Prayer**

- Thank and praise God that He is sovereign over everything we do, even when we don't acknowledge Him.
- Ask God to protect you from seeing worldly success as evidence of His favor and blessing.

## **Judges 9: Abimelech**

Preached on November 9

### **Questions for Personal Study**

- What is the historical significance to Shechem and Mount Gerizim?
- How did Abimelech rise to power?
- Why do the people accept Abimelech as a leader?
- Where do the people get the money for Abimelech? What does he do with it?
- What is the point of Jotham's story?
- How is Abimelech like the bramble (thornbush)?
- Does Jotham's prophecy/curse (9:20) come true?
- How does Abimelech die?
- What was God doing in the events of Abimelech's life?
- How is the story of Abimelech similar or different to the previous stories in the book of Judges?

### **Summary and Extra Notes**

- Shechem had an important role in the life of Israel. It was set apart for Levites; it was a place of refuge (Josh 21:21); and it was where Israel renewed the covenant with God (Josh 24:25). But now, all of that is being undone.
- The nation's desire for security and the current leadership void allowed Gideon's son, Abimelech, to murder his brothers and take control, even though he is completely unqualified.
- Abimelech killed his brothers on a stone, and was himself killed by a stone (9:5, 18, 53). This was part of God's judgment on him (9:23-24, 56-57). God was acting to remove wickedness from Israel.

## **Sample Discussion Questions**

- Like Abimelech, when have you seen someone make a poor choice of friends with severe consequences?
- What do we learn about God from the events of Abimelech's life?
- How should what you learned about God impact your daily life?
- Read Galatians 6:7. How have you seen this principle work itself out in people you know? How have you seen it in your own life?
- How certain is God's judgment on His enemies? How should this affect the way you respond to sinners?

## **Suggestions for Prayer**

- Thank and praise God for being holy, righteous, and just. Thank Him for being merciful with you in Christ Jesus.
- Ask God to give you a fresh awareness of His justice so that your personal holiness and evangelism would change.

## **Judges 10–12: Jephthah**

Preached on November 16

### **Questions for Personal Study**

- What is the spiritual state of Israel in Judges 10:1-9? How is the nation treating God?
- What is Israel's response to their suffering? How does God respond to Israel?
- What was Jephthah's family background like?
- What similarities and differences do you see between Jephthah and previous judges?
- What factors led to Jephthah becoming a leader? What was God's perspective on this?
- How do the elders treat Jephthah?
- What is Jephthah's main message to the King of Ammon?
- Did Israel have a rightful claim to the land?
- How did Jephthah demonstrate his faith?
- How did Jephthah demonstrate his foolishness?

### **Summary and Extra Notes**

- Jephthah was an illegitimate son, and so his brothers kicked him out of the land. But later, when Israel came under attack, they went looking for his help.
- The Ammonites were accusing Israel of unlawfully taking some territory 300 years ago. When Israel took the land, however, it did not belong to the Ammonites. These lands were a gift to Israel from the Lord.
- Even though Jephthah was foolish, God chose to empower him to liberate Israel. Not all of Jephthah's decisions were wise, especially his vow that led to the sacrifice of his daughter.

## **Sample Discussion Questions**

- As the story progresses, how do you feel about Jephthah?
- How would you describe Jephthah's walk with the Lord? What are some positive components? What are some negative components?
- How is your walk with the Lord similar to Jephthah's?
- Do you ever treat God the way Israel treated Him?
- What do you think about Jephthah's vow? How does it make you feel?
- Have you ever been tempted to make an unwise decision because of a severe trial? What happened?
- Have you ever experienced a severe break in your family, just like the dispute between Israel's tribes?
- What false gods are Christians tempted to follow today?
- What would you tell someone who said they were going to sin willfully, and then repent later in the hopes that God would deliver them?
- How did Jephthah sin with his speech? How do you do the same thing today?

## **Suggestions for Prayer**

- Thank and praise God because He never changes. He is our constant source of hope and comfort.
- Ask God to guard you from dangerous allegiances and words. Ask Him to make you a person known for truth rather than deception.

## **Judges 13–16: Samson**

Preached on November 30

### **Questions for Personal Study**

- How does Israel feel about their oppression?
- How is Samson's story different from how God raised up the previous judges?
- What is the angel's message to Manoah's wife? Did she leave anything out when she told her husband? How is this significant?
- How should we feel about Samson's desire to marry a Philistine woman?
- What does Samson's encounter with the lion and the honey tell us about him?
- What does the story about the riddle tell us about Samson?
- Why do you think Samson chose to tell Delilah his secret?
- How is Samson's heart similar to Israel's?

### **Summary and Extra Notes**

- Israel never cries out to God for deliverance, but He chooses to raise up a deliverer. God tells Manoah's wife that her son will be a deliverer and a Nazirite (see Num 6:1-8). The woman, however, only tells her husband about the Nazirite vow, not about the mission of his life.
- Samson is able to accomplish great things in God's strength, but he is also weak in controlling his physical desires (e.g. honey and women).
- Since Samson never seems to understand his mission in life, God uses the man's weaknesses to accomplish deliverance. God develops in Samson a hatred for Philistines and a dependence on God, but ultimately Samson chooses his physical desires over God's plan.

## **Sample Discussion Questions**

- How does it glorify God to act in a way that seems slow to us? Do you think you are patient enough to wait on God's timing?
- Is it possible for human decisions to hinder God's will? If so, how have you seen it happen?
- Why do you think Samson finally told Delilah the secret to his strength? What was he most concerned about?
- Do you think Samson knew what his purpose was in life? If not, was it his own fault?
- What unexpected turns did you see in the story?
- What sins in your life have the potential to distract you from God's purpose for your life?
- How does it feel to know that God can accomplish His purposes even through sinful people? Does that mean that it's okay to remain sinful?
- What does the story of Samson teach you about the nature of faith?

## **Suggestions for Prayer**

- Thank and praise God for sending Jesus as our perfect Deliverer. He perfectly understood God's plan for His life and accomplished it in God's perfect timing.
- Ask God to keep you from being tempted to be like the world. Ask Him to give you the desire to be holy for God's glory.

## **Judges 17–18: Israel’s Idolatry**

Preached on December 7

### **Questions for Personal Study**

- What are your impressions of Micah? Is there anything wrong with his religion?
- What do you think of Micah’s mother?
- What do you think about the Levite?
- Why are the people of Dan travelling?
- Why does the Levite go with the group of men?
- Will the Levite be a blessing to the men from Dan? Why or why not?
- What do we know about the Levite’s family background?

### **Summary and Extra Notes**

- Micah means “Who is like the LORD?” By this time in Judges the answer seems to be “nobody!” Micah is a thief and an idolater.
- A wandering Levite could indicate that Israel had stopped taking care of the tribe of priests or that the Levite did not want to live in one of the assigned cities.
- The tribe of Dan was travelling because they had never fully conquered the Promised Land. They steal the Levite from Micah’s home thinking he will bring them a blessing.
- The idolatry of Israel even affected the descendants of Moses, and it lasted for many years afterward.



## **Sample Discussion Questions**

- How do you feel about Micah at different points of the story?
- What does this story teach you about why people fall into idolatry?
- What does this story tell you about the character of God?
- Are there any external rituals or ceremonies that Christians today might be tempted to believe will bring them God's blessing?
- Is it possible for a Christian today to guarantee God's blessing? How? What kind of blessing is guaranteed?
- What kinds of idolatry are you in danger of falling into?

## **Suggestions for Prayer**

- Thank and praise God for being the true and living God and giving us access to Him through Jesus Christ.
- Ask God to keep you from being tempted to trust in external rituals as the source of His grace and salvation. Ask Him to keep you from idolatry and superstition.

# Judges 19–21: Israel’s Immorality and War

Preached on December 14

## Questions for Personal Study

- What is a Levite?
- What is the Levite’s intention in getting his wife back?
- How does the woman’s father treat the Levite?
- How do the people of Gibeah treat the Levite and his concubine?
- Who gave the Levite somewhere to spend the night? What do we know about this man?
- Do the events of chapter 19 remind you of another story in Israel’s history?
- What is the author trying to show through this story?
- How is the Levite’s account of what happened different from what actually happened?
- How does Israel respond to the Levite’s story? What’s the result?
- What factors led to the civil war in Israel?
- What is God’s role during the civil war and the events afterward? How is God’s deliverance demonstrated?

## Summary and Extra Notes

- The final 3 chapters of Judges highlight how far the nation has fallen into wickedness.
- The story of the Levite and his concubine shows the rampant immorality.
- God had called Israel to fight against the Canaanites, but because of Israel’s sin, they end up fighting against themselves. This was part of God’s judgment.
- God shows Israel mercy by preserving all the tribes, but what the nation really needs is a righteous king.

## **Sample Discussion Questions**

- Why do you think the Levite's father-in-law was so hospitable?
- How did your opinion of the Levite change as the story progressed?
- How has the book of Judges changed your understanding of God?
- How has the book of Judges changed your understanding of mankind?
- Think back on the different judges and periods in Israel's history. When are you tempted to act like Israel?
- What steps can you or others take to prevent you from slowly drifting away from God?
- What's the significance of the last verse of Judges?
- In 1-3 sentences how would you summarize the point of the book of Judges?
- How has your understanding of Jesus Christ changed as a result of studying Judges?

## **Suggestions for Prayer**

- Thank and praise God for giving us the story of Judges to remind us of our sin and His judgment. Thank Him for sending Jesus as the true King to save His people from their sin.
- Ask God for the strength to fight any temptation that would lead you to do evil in His sight. Ask Him for opportunities to tell people about King Jesus.

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