GLIMMERS OF HOPE IN DARK TIMES

Judges and Ruth
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GLIMMERS OF HOPE IN DARK TIMES: JUDGES AND RUTH
Adult Bible Study Leader’s Guide
Vol. 54 • No. 2
© 2005, Regular Baptist Press
www.regularbaptistpress.org • 1-800-727-4440
RBP1651 • ISBN: 1-59402-244-5
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How to Use *Life Design*

LIFE DESIGN: Bible Study Designed for the Life You Live. These Bible study materials are designed to engage adult learners in inductive Bible study and then to apply the truths of that study to their daily lives.

As you prepare to teach these lessons, keep these two factors in mind:

- **The FOCUS of productive adult Bible learning is the learner.** The intent of teaching is not teaching, but learning—the learner's learning.
- **The GOAL of productive adult Bible learning is an appropriate life-response to Biblical truth.** You do not teach simply to impart information; you teach so that the Holy Spirit of God can use the truths of the Word of God to change the child of God into the image of the Son of God.

The Lesson Plan

Each *Life Design* lesson has three distinct parts. **GETTING STARTED** is the attention-getter. The questions and activities “set the table,” as it were, for the Bible study. **SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES** is the heart of the lesson. A series of inductive Bible study questions leads the teacher and learners through the Biblical text. **MAKING IT PERSONAL** applies the truth to life.

As is true of any teaching experience, you can adapt the parts of the lesson to fit your particular class. You may choose to alter the beginning activities or change the focus of the application. You will find more material in the Bible study than you can cover in one class session. Ask God to help you as you tailor the lesson for your learners.

The Study Book

This leader’s guide is designed to accompany the Bible study book. As the teacher, you will want a copy of the Bible study. Commit to working through the questions before you plan your lesson. We encourage you to distribute Bible study books to your learners. Urge them to complete the study before class. The more your learners have studied on their own, the better the class discussions will be. When a question in the leader’s guide is picked up from the Bible study book, you will notice the question number in parentheses. The answers to the questions are usually in the lesson commentary. They are also grouped together in the back of this book.

Other Resources

If you want to use transparencies as you teach, a packet of sixteen full-color transparencies is available. If you prefer to use PowerPoint, the resource CD includes a PowerPoint presentation for each lesson.

Some teachers stay very close to the outline as they teach. If this is true of you, and if you want your learners to capture that outline, reproducible in-class worksheets are included on the CD. The same worksheets may be downloaded from the Web and photocopied for class members. Visit www.regularbaptistpress.org/downloads.

Thank you for choosing *Life Design* teaching materials. May God richly bless you and your learners as you study and apply His Word.
Has the world gone mad? It sure seems like it.

Too many people act as if they are the only ones who matter. They want their own way and are willing to push others out of the way or trample them to reach their goals. As far as they are concerned, the end justifies the means. They think they can do what is right in their own eyes and answer to no one.

This business of doing what is right in one's own eyes has settled like a plague over life. If a wife or husband no longer brings the spouse happiness, the spouse has an affair or gets a divorce—or both. After all, the dissatisfied spouse deserves to be happy. Right? Wrong! An unscrupulous CEO cooks his corporation's books so he will look good when the annual report is distributed to the board of trustees and stockholders. Self-serving sales reps pad their expense accounts. They reason that it is okay to do so because, after all, they are worth more than the salaries they are paid.

Self-centered women abort their unborn babies. They claim that what they do with their bodies is nobody's business but theirs. They scoff at the notion that they are accountable to the God Who commanded, "Thou shalt not kill." Homosexuals scorn the Biblical injunctions against same-sex relationships. Undisciplined teens, thinking they can do what is right in their own eyes, destroy their bodies and throw away their lives by doing drugs.

Students' demands for "personal rights" have teachers running scared or running for new careers. After all, they can't insist that students dress modestly, recite the Pledge of Allegiance, sing the national anthem, or pay attention in class. They can't impose their personal values on their students or teach creation or honor Christian traditions.

We are shocked when a fourteen-year-old boy shoots his bus driver because she objected to his chewing tobacco on the bus. We cringe at reports of a male basketball coach having sexual encounters with female team members. We detest the actions of parents who allow their kids to host keg parties for their friends. And we get angry when we learn that another young mother has abandoned her newborn. We repudiate the actions of a few soldiers who think it is okay to pose nude prisoners of war for lewd purposes.

Yes, the world has gone mad, but it has gone in its own way, just as Israel went her own way in the times of the judges. "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judg. 21:25).

We remind ourselves that "there is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12).

As you teach this course on Judges and Ruth, pray, prepare, and plan to help your learners do what is right in the eyes of the Lord. Pleasing Him is the only way to lead a truly joyful, peaceful, and productive life.
Resources for This Course

The transparency packet for this course (RBP1652) includes a transparency that will help you track and review the Glimmers of Hope from Judges and Ruth. Starting with lesson 1, use transparency 1 at the end of each lesson or at the beginning of the next lesson to record the summary statement for each lesson. You may use the suggested statements or ask your learners to suggest summaries.

The Resource CD for this course (RBP1653) includes a PowerPoint presentation for each lesson. All of the transparencies and resources are part of the PowerPoint presentation and are also included as printable PDFs. If you would like to make your own transparencies or PowerPoint slides, the CD includes a background ready for your own text.

To help in your promotion of this course, the CD includes a promotional PowerPoint slide and a flyer. Add your group’s information to both the slide and the flyer.

The CD also provides in-class worksheets. Each in-class worksheet includes a fill-in-the-blank outline that follows the corresponding outline in this leader’s guide.

Other classroom resources on the CD include Bible map transparencies and illustrations. The leader’s guide refers to each of these as a resource.

The CD also offers one supplemental case study for each lesson. Use each case study as an in-class review, as material for a midweek Bible study, or as an e-mail to your learners. E-mailing the case studies to your learners will emphasize living out the truth in daily life. You may want to enlist a learner to handle collecting e-mail addresses and sending e-mails each week.

You will also find supplemental application ideas on the CD. These Glimmer of Hope Ideas can help your learners apply the truths from lessons 6 and 11. Use these Glimmer of Hope Ideas as handouts at the end of the appropriate lessons or as e-mails. Both of the ideas could form the basis for class projects. Read through the Glimmer of Hope Ideas before you begin teaching this course so you can plan ahead of time how you will use them.

In addition, the CD includes printable verse cards for each lesson’s key verse. Blank verse cards are also included so you can enter different or additional verses for your learners to memorize. The verse cards will fit on Avery business cards (#8869). Simply print the cards and pull them apart at the perforations. Or, print the cards on card stock and cut them apart.
LESSON 1

Choices and Consequences

Scripture Focus
Judges 1:1–3:6

Key Verses
“Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day: And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God” (Deut. 11:26–28).

Overview
Israel failed to conquer Canaan completely and decisively. The nation disobeyed the Lord by coexisting with the Canaanites even to the point of marrying Canaanites and joining in their idolatrous practices.

Theme
Choosing not to obey God fully results in personal and spiritual disaster.

Desired Learner Response
The learner will disdain sin, recognizing the sad consequences it brings.

Outline
I. Introduction to the Book of Judges
   A. The book’s title
   B. The book’s setting
   C. The book’s theme
II. Israel’s Failures (Judg. 1:1–3:6)
   A. Incomplete conquest (1:1–36)
   B. Insolent compromise (2:1–3:6)

Getting Started
Use the following activities to help each learner think about choices and consequences.

The Choice Is Yours
Before class, place several small stones in a lunch-size paper bag and hard candy in another. Staple each bag closed. Attach to the bag with the stones a sign that reads, “Choose this one! It’s better!” Place the two paper bags in front of a learner. Tell the learner that you suggest he or she not pay attention to the sign on the paper bag and that the contents of the other bag are actually better. Let the person choose one of the bags and open it. Ask whether the
choice was a good or bad one. Open the other bag and display the contents. Ask: Why did you choose the bag you did? Ask the learner how much trust played into the decision. Explain that this lesson reveals a bad choice Israel made but that the choice was clear and obvious. There were no surprises.

**Discussion**

Have volunteers share their responses to questions 1 and 2 in the Bible study book.

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**Searching the Scriptures**

The exciting days of conquest under Joshua had passed. It was time for Israel to settle in the land God had given her. But instead of experiencing blessing and growth at this stage of her history, Israel wandered from God and experienced spiritual and political chaos.

**I. Introduction to the Book of Judges**

Beginning a study of Judges is similar to engaging in an assessment of the spiritual and moral character of life early in the twenty-first century. We learn that people had little or no regard for authority, because everyone “did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judg. 17:6; 21:25).

**A. The book’s title**

Israel’s twelve tribes formed a loose confederacy around Shiloh and the tabernacle. God ruled the nation and guided her by elders or family heads. Priests interpreted questions of religious law. During this period, God also appointed judges, who comprised a group of leaders in a specific time period (Judg. 2:16; Ruth 1:1; Acts 13:20).

The judges were not elected. Nor did they inherit the position or receive it by human appointment. Rather, God raised them up for specific tasks. Usually their work involved two responsibilities: they delivered the people from foreign oppression, and they provided spiritual leadership (Judg. 2:18, 19).

The period of the judges covers nearly one-third of Israel’s history as recorded in the Old Testament. It was preceded by the leadership of two powerful men (Moses and Joshua) and followed by the reign of kings.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Display resource 1, covering the right side. Explain the united spiritual/civil nature of the theocracy. Then uncover the right side as you contrast Israel's original theocracy with her later monarchy.

During the period of the judges, God directly ruled His people. This type of rule is called a theocracy, as compared to a monarchy, where a human king or queen rules. God had given the Israelites His law, which told them how to live. The priests taught and explained the law to them. Taxes, military draft, and government expenses did not exist.
If the people had been obedient, they would not have needed judges, but they sinned. As a result, God allowed Israel’s enemies to oppress her. Thus the people needed judges—deliverers—to lead them both civilly and spiritually.

B. The book’s setting

The period of the judges lasted from Joshua until Samuel, approximately 350 years. In addition to the judges recorded in this book, Eli and Samuel were judges, but they will not be included in this study. The book of Ruth also fits within the time frame of the judges.

The book of Judges does not reveal the lengths of servitude and judgeship for all the judges. It is difficult, therefore, to determine exactly when a particular judge served. Also, there were probably times without a judge and times when more than one served. Most would have been local rather than national judges.

**TRANSPARENCY:** Display transparency 2 and point out the probable location of each judge.

Conditions in Israel were chaotic during the period of the judges. The Lord had commanded the Israelites to destroy the inhabitants of Canaan so they would not contaminate Israel with idolatry. But Israel disobeyed the Lord and became idolatrous and immoral. The moral and spiritual conditions during the period of the judges were similar to the conditions in the world today.

**ASK:** What evidence of idolatry do you see today? What evidence do you see of increasing immorality today? What rays of hope do you see shining in the spiritual darkness of our times? (Questions 4–6)

C. The book’s theme

The theme of Judges may be seen in the book’s key verse: “Every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judg. 21:25). Because Israel sinned, she suffered under the disciplinary hand of God. He allowed foreign nations to oppress her. Time and again she would call on God, and He would compassionately send a judge to deliver her. Israel would enjoy rest until the judge died; then the process would begin again. That cycle would repeat throughout the book: sin-servitude-supplication-salvation.

**DIAGRAM:** Display resource 2 from the resource CD, or draw the diagram shown in the margin on the whiteboard or a blank transparency.

**READ:** Ask a learner to read aloud Judges 2:11–19, which gives a summary statement of this cycle.
ASK: What ad slogans or catchphrases do you hear today that reflect our self-centered society? (Question 3)

II. Israel’s Failures (Judg. 1:1–3:6)

Judges 1:1–3:6, the book’s first section, serves as background for subsequent chapters. It explains the sin that led to servitude, the situation that was ripe for the judges (deliverers).

A. Incomplete conquest (1:1–36)

Under Joshua’s leadership, Israel had entered Canaan, defeated strategically located cities, and gained control of the land. However, Israel allowed her enemies to live in adjoining areas. At times she forced the Canaanites to pay tribute. At other times, though, the Canaanites oppressed Israel. Judges 1 offers examples of how control of the land fluctuated.

1. Judah (1:1–20)

When the Israelites asked the Lord, “Who shall go up for us . . . first?” (v. 1), the Lord answered, “Judah shall go up” (v. 2). However, the men of Judah asked the men of Simeon to go with them (v. 3). Since the tribes shared a boundary, this might seem a reasonable request. However, it appears that Judah was unwilling to trust God completely for the victory and depended on Simeon instead. Verse 19 reports the outcome: defeat. Judah was unable to rout the enemy from the valley (flat lands) because of the Canaanite chariots. However, had the people of Judah fully followed God, they could have been victorious.

2. Benjamin (1:21)

Although Judah had conquered Jerusalem (v. 8), the city fell back into the hands of the Jebusites, who retained control through the period of the judges. The Benjamites unsuccessfully battled the Jebusites and simply lived alongside them until David conquered the city many years later and made it his capital (2 Sam. 5:6, 7).

3. The house of Joseph: Manasseh and Ephraim (1:22–29)

Although initially successful, Manasseh and Ephraim failed to complete their conquest. Instead, they lived alongside their enemy and occasionally used their enemy as forced labor (Judg. 1:27–29).

4. The rest of the tribes (1:30–36)

The other tribes also failed to conquer their land completely. Dan, in particular, was forced into the mountains and eventually sought another portion of land for its inheritance (Judg. 18).

ASK: Do you believe the tragic events of 9/11 were a wakeup call for morally and spiritually compromised Christians to turn to God? Why or why not? What might it take to alert unbelievers in a so-called Christian nation to acknowledge God?
B. Insolent compromise (2:1–3:6)

God’s people should always obey God without questioning His will or looking for a loophole. The Israelites had clear knowledge of what God wanted them to do to the Canaanites, but instead of obeying Him, they insulted Him by striking a compromise with their pagan neighbors.

1. Rebuke by the Angel of the Lord (2:1–3)

The Angel of the Lord, none other than the Lord Himself, appeared at Bochim (2:1).

READ: Have the learners read Judges 2:1. ASK: What did the Lord communicate to the Israelites about Himself? DISCUSS: Knowing what the Israelites knew about God, how do you explain their partial victories? (Questions 7, 8)

READ: Have the learners read Judges 2:2. ASK: What reason did the Lord give for the Israelites’ partial victories? DISCUSS: Why is partial obedience to the Lord actually total disobedience? (Questions 9, 10)

The Lord reminded Israel of His explicit command to completely destroy the enemies from the land (Deut. 7:1–6). He informed her that because of her disobedience, she would have to coexist with her enemies, who would be thorns in her side and whose gods would be a snare to her.

Baal worship appealed to the Israelites because it seemed to work. Baal was the god of fertility and rain. The Canaanites were well off in the land before Israel’s invasion. Those who remained were still doing well. The Israelites concluded that Baal must be the reason for their prosperity. Not wanting to miss out on bumper crops and wealth, the Israelites added Baal worship to their worship of Jehovah.

In addition to the promise of prosperity, the sensuality and gaiety of Baal worship appealed to the Israelites. The Israelites would time and time again follow their lusts for immorality and succumb to Baal worship, believing the promises of prosperity and enjoyment that Baals’ worshipers made to them.

TRANSPARENCY: Display transparency 4 with the right side covered. DISCUSS: What deceptive promises does the world make to the believer today? Record learners’ answers on the left half of the transparency. ASK: What characteristics of the world are attractive to the believer today? (Questions 11, 12)

The Canaanites also worshiped Ashtoreth, the female consort of Baal. Their worship included animal sacrifice, male and female prostitution, and human sacrifice.
2. Regret by the people of God (2:4, 5)

**READ:** Have the learners read Judges 2:4. **ASK:** How did the people react to the Lord’s message to them? (Question 13)

The Lord’s message should not have surprised the Israelites. He repeatedly warned them about disobedience.

**READ:** Have the learners read Deuteronomy 11:26–32 and 30:9–20. **ASK:** What clear statements did God make about His people’s obedience and disobedience? (Question 14)

The Bible is clear that sin is never a wise choice.

**TRANSPARENCY:** Display transparency 4. Have the learners look up the passages on the transparency. **ASK:** What does each passage have to say about the consequences of sin? (Question 15) Record learners’ answers on the right half of the transparency.

**DISCUSS:** In what areas of life is a Christian tempted to obey the Lord only partially? Why does a believer often think partial obedience is a safe choice? (Questions 16, 17)

Although the Israelites wept and sacrificed in response to God’s rebuke, there was no evidence of a real change of attitude or obedience.

3. Review of the Israelites’ sin cycle (2:6–10)

The people of Joshua’s generation remained true to God, but the new generation (v. 10) turned from Him. Children of each generation must have personal relationships with God. They cannot slide into Heaven on their parents’ coattails.


**READ:** Have the learners read Judges 2:11–20. **DIAGRAM:** Point out the cycle of sin, servitude, supplication, and salvation, using resource 2 from the resource CD. **ASK:** How would building a close relationship with God have helped the Israelites to break out of the sin cycle? (Question 18)

4. Roster of the enemies of Israel (3:1–6)

The Canaanites (a general term used of the various city-state nations in-
habiting Palestine) were left in the land to teach Israel war. Apparently God used war to cause His people to trust Him when faced by an enemy. The subsequent record shows that when they were obedient and trusted God, they were victorious in warfare; but when they disobeyed and did not trust, they failed miserably.

MAP: Display resource 3 to show the locations of Israel’s enemies.

Making It Personal

Use the following activities and questions to help your learners choose to obey God and help their fellow believers avoid the sad consequences of turning from God.

Personal Responses

Have learners silently think about their responses to question 19: Which sins are you tempted to be the most enamored with? Ask: What are some ways believers in general could keep themselves from being enamored with sin? (Question 20)

Consequential Meditation

Review the Bible passages under question 15 that describe the consequences of sin. Challenge the learners to spend time meditating on those passages and to write a prayer to God, asking Him for help in disdaining sin.

Glimmer of Hope Review

Use transparency 1 to review the glimmer of hope for this lesson: Disdain sin and avoid its consequences.

Memory Verses

Distribute copies of the Deuteronomy 11:26–28 verse cards from the resource CD. Encourage learners to memorize the verses.