Glimmers of Hope in Dark Times
This inductive Bible study is designed for individual, small group, or classroom use. A leader’s guide with full lesson plans and the answers to the Bible study questions is available from Regular Baptist Press. Order RBP1651 online at www.regularbaptistpress.org, e-mail orders@rpbstore.org, call toll free 1-800-727-4440, or contact your distributor.
### The Doctrinal Basis of Our Curriculum

A more detailed statement with references is available upon request.

- The verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures
- Only one true God
- The Trinity of the Godhead
- The Holy Spirit and His ministry
- The personality of Satan
- The Genesis account of creation
- Original sin and the fall of man
- The virgin birth of Christ
- Salvation through faith in the shed blood of Christ
- The bodily resurrection and priesthood of Christ
- Grace and the new birth
- Justification by faith
- Sanctification of the believer
- The security of the believer
- The church
- The ordinances of the local church: baptism by immersion and the Lord’s Supper
- Biblical separation—ecclesiastical and personal
- Obedience to civil government
- The place of Israel
- The pretribulation rapture of the church
- The premillennial return of Christ
- The millennial reign of Christ
- Eternal glory in Heaven for the righteous
- Eternal torment in Hell for the wicked

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**The King James Version is the English translation used in our Sunday School curriculum.**
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Someone wisely observed, “If we fought sin as hard as we do middle age, this world would be a moral paradise.” When it comes to fighting sin, though, too many people in our postmodern world resemble dead fish. They let the current of popular opinion carry them along. Popular opinion claims Biblical values are old-fashioned and out of step with progressive thinking. Popular opinion denies the existence of moral absolutes. It champions the cause of doing your own thing. Its theme song is “I did it my way.” It advocates the questioning of authority, and it crowns self-will as king of decision-making.

Those who let self-will determine their choices and lifestyle may think they are blazing a new trail, but they aren’t. Israel followed that trail many centuries ago, in the times of the judges, when “every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25). The trail led to slavery, not freedom. The Lord allowed the Canaanites to gain the upper hand over the Israelites and oppress them. However, when the Israelites winced under the weight of oppression, acknowledged their waywardness, and turned to the Lord, He sent them deliverers—judges—who wrenched them out of the oppressors’ hands. Then the Lord restored peace to His people.

Unfortunately, the Israelites failed to learn what they should have learned in the school of suffering: doing what is right in one’s own eyes amounts to doing what is wrong in the Lord’s eyes and leads to divine judgment. So the cycle of sin, slavery, supplication, and salvation spins its way through the book of Judges.
We can learn from the book of Judges to do what is right in the Lord’s eyes in spite of what others may do. If they choose to do their own thing, they will suffer the consequences. If we choose to obey God, we will experience His blessings.

It almost seems like obeying God is an easy choice, doesn’t it? It isn’t. But it is the right one. Let the lessons of the book of Judges serve you well. Boldly announce to a cowardly culture, “As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Joshua 24:15).
Lesson 1

Choices and Consequences

Judges 1:1—3:6

“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” (Deuteronomy 11:26–28).

It’s my life. I can do what I want with it!” This assertion is not uncommon among headstrong teens.

“It’s my body. If I decide to have an abortion, it’s nobody’s business but mine.” These selfish words roll from the mouths of defiant women.

A Christian man may tell his wife, “I just don’t love you anymore. I want out of our marriage. I want to find someone I can really love.”

Each of these statements reflects a choice—a bad one—that leads to bitter consequences. The book of Judges doesn’t record any of these choices, but it does record the bad choices Israel made in the land of Canaan and the bitter consequences that followed those choices.

Getting Started

1. Have you known a professing believer who chose to disobey
God and therefore fell into sin? What negative consequences did that person encounter?

2. Why are the choices we make in the Christian life so important?

Searching the Scriptures

The books of Judges and Ruth are located in the Bible between the books of Joshua and 1 Samuel. The book of Joshua records the entrance, conquest, and division of the Promised Land (completed in approximately 1400 BC). The book ends with the death of Joshua. The last judge described by Judges is Samson, who was a contemporary of Samuel, the prophet who anointed Saul as Israel’s first king (1 Samuel 9:27; 10:1). The times recorded in Judges ended around 1050 BC. Overall, nearly 350 years of Israel’s history are documented in the book of Judges. That covers about one-third of Israel’s national history as recorded in the Old Testament.

Upon settling in the Promised Land, the nation of Israel had no central government, so the people paid no taxes. It was a time when God wanted His people to depend totally on Him. Had they obeyed Him and trusted Him as He desired, they would have enjoyed prosperity and protection from their enemies—even without a standing army. Israel would have been a shining example of a nation whose God is the Lord.

But the Israelites didn’t obey the Lord. Instead, since Israel had no king, “every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25). Although the tribes had taken the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua, they coexisted with its pagan inhabitants.

The book of Judges reflects a time much like our own day. Although we have a central government and pay taxes, our day, too, is a day of self-centered people.
3. What ad slogans or catchphrases do you hear today that reflect our self-centered society?

The book of Judges falls into three major divisions. The opening section (1:1—3:6) records Israel’s failure to complete the task begun under Joshua. The next section records the exploits of the various judges (3:7—16:31). This section reflects a general cycle: Israel sinned; God chastised her by allowing a neighboring pagan power to suppress her; Israel cried to God for deliverance; He sent a judge to deliver her. The nation served the Lord until that judge died; then the cycle started all over again.

The final division of the book (17:1—21:25) gives two examples of gross sin—one involves idolatry, and the other involves immorality. These sins reflect the spiritual and moral condition of the people.

4. What evidence of idolatry do you see today?

5. What evidence do you see of increasing immorality today?

Throughout the book of Judges, God gave rays of hope. His judges shined in the midst of dark times, leading His people back to Him. The book of Ruth reflects the hope of godly people during that time.

6. What rays of hope do you see shining in the spiritual darkness of our times?
According to the opening verse of Judges, Israel’s military leader Joshua was dead, and the nation wondered who would succeed him (v. 1). The war against the inhabitants of the land was by no means over. God identified Judah as the first tribe to claim its inheritance, which lay in the southern portion of Palestine, west of the Dead Sea. He stated, “I have delivered the land into his hand” (v. 2). Since Simeon’s lot was close to Judah’s (Joshua 19:1), the army of Judah asked the men of Simeon to go with them to war. The men of Simeon honored the request (Judges 1:3).

The rest of Judges 1 reads much like the book of Joshua. It tells of the fighting involved in the conquest of Canaan. But it also records Israel’s failure to take full advantage of God’s power. It speaks of victories but admits defeats. The defeats came as a result of failing to obey God fully (2:2). Although the Israelites had established themselves in the land, they failed to drive out the pagans who inhabited it.

Further failures are tersely recorded, as all of the tribes on the west side of Jordan (with the possible exception of Issachar) failed to gain control of their inheritance.

 Judges 2 shows that Israel did not fail to drive out her enemies because of their military superiority, even though it had iron chariots. The Angel of the Lord made a special appearance to the Children of Israel to deliver His message about the Israelites’ failures.

7. Read Judges 2:1. What did the Lord communicate to the Israelites about Himself?

8. Knowing what the Israelites knew about God, how do you explain their partial victories?
9. What reason did the Lord give for the Israelites’ partial victories (v. 2)?

10. Why is partial obedience to the Lord actually total disobedience?

The Lord told the Israelites that He would not drive out the inhabitants of the land. They would be thorns in the Israelites’ sides, and their gods would be snares to the Children of Israel (v. 3). The Canaanites worshiped Baal. They believed Baal was responsible for prosperity, so they thought that appeasing Baal would mean bumper crops and subsequent riches. As the Israelites looked at the Canaanites worshiping Baal around them, they wrongly concluded that Baal was responsible for the Canaanites’ fertile ground and riches. It appeared as if Baal worship worked. The sensuality and gaiety of Baal worship, along with the promise of prosperity, was a constant temptation for the Israelites.

11. What deceptive promises does the world make to the believer today?

12. What characteristics of the world are attractive to the believer today?

13. Read Judges 2:4. How did the people react to the Lord’s message to them?
The Israelites shouldn’t have been surprised by the Lord’s message. He repeatedly warned them about disobedience.


15. Read the following passages and record what they have to say about the consequences of sin.

   a. Psalm 32:3, 4, 10

   b. Psalm 38:4–8

   c. Proverbs 14:12

   d. Proverbs 22:8

   e. Romans 6:16

   f. James 1:14, 15
16. In what areas of life is a Christian tempted to obey the Lord only partially?

17. Why does a believer often think partial obedience is a safe choice?

Although the people wept when they heard the Lord denounce their sin, there is no evidence that they permanently changed their ways as a nation. In fact, after providing a brief comment on Joshua’s death (Judges 2:6–9), the writer summarized the main section of the book. He described the sinful cycle that occurred twelve times in chapters 3 through 16 (see 2:11–20). A generation of Israelites who did not witness the acts of God in bringing them to the Promised Land arose (2:10). That generation started the recurring sinful cycle. The cycle was one of sin, followed by divine judgment, followed by repentance, followed by deliverance, followed by backsliding, followed by divine judgment. We could label the cycle “sin,” “servitude,” “supplication,” and “salvation.”

Unfortunately, Israel’s recurring cycle often characterizes a careless believer’s experience. When everything seems to be going smoothly, the believer relaxes his or her guard and drifts away from a close relationship with the Lord. When the Lord chastens the believer, the person confesses his or her sins and seeks to be restored to the Lord’s favor. Before long, however, he or she settles into lethargy and apathy, eliciting chastening once again.

18. How would building a close relationship with God have helped the Israelites to break out of the sin cycle?
Judges 2:19—3:6 expounds on the Lord’s word to the Israelites in 2:3. The passage explains why the Lord allowed certain nations to remain in Canaan. The people of Israel had violated the covenant God had given to their forefathers. Through Joshua, the Lord had exhorted Israel to love and obey Him and to separate themselves from the Canaanites. The Canaanites would provide an ever-present opportunity for the Israelites to prove their love for their Lord (2:22).

**Making It Personal**

Every day Christians face opportunities to prove their love for the Lord. Believing what God says about the sad consequences of disobedience helps to keep believers from spiraling into sin.

19. Which sins are you tempted to be the most enamored with?

20. How can you keep yourself from being enamored with sin?

21. Spend some time meditating on passages that describe the true consequences of sin (see question 15).

22. Write a prayer to God, asking Him to help you disdain any sins with which you may be struggling.