God’s Special Forces

Sin, chastening, repentance, forgiveness; sin, chastening, repentance, forgiveness; sin, chastening . . . and the cycle continues! Much like the children of Israel in the book of Judges, we also continue to sin, be chastened, repent, and receive forgiveness. The books of Judges and Ruth show us how to live obedient lives that are pleasing to God.

The Living My Faith Devotional Bible Study is designed to help you dig into God’s Word. Each lesson offers devotions for Monday through Saturday, along with worksheet to be completed during your group study and articles that will help you better understand and apply God’s Word.

Journal: Purchase a journal or notebook to record your personal thoughts and prayers. Bring your journal and student book to class each week so that you can take notes during the lesson or write any special insights you gain from a particular activity. You may also use the journal for sermon notes or for prayer requests.

Bible study tools: In order for you to dig into God’s Word, consider using a Bible dictionary and a concordance. If you are not familiar with these helpful guides, ask your pastor or youth leader for a recommendation. Or visit an online Bible tools Web site, such as www.blueletterbible.org. This site offers commentaries, maps, and many other tools to help you in your Bible study.

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Read Deuteronomy 7:2.

1. What four commands did God give the Israelites concerning their enemies?

2. Read Judges 1:19, 21, and 27–33. Were the Israelites able to do what God commanded? Name two enemy groups that gave them problems.

Sometimes it’s hard to obey God; it’s easier to make excuses. When you talk with God today, be honest with Him about those times you’ve disobeyed Him. First John 1:9 says He is faithful to forgive you and help you if you confess your sin.
Read Judges 2:1–5.

1. What benefits had God given the Israelites (v. 1)?

2. List some benefits God has given you.

3. Because of the Israelites’ disobedience, what did God say He would not do for them?

Remember to thank God for the many gifts He gives you every day.


1. What four sins did this new generation of Israelites commit (v. 12)?

2. What was wrong with this generation of Israelites (v. 10)?

3. Why do you think many teens today don’t choose to follow the Lord?
Thursday

Read Judges 2:14–19.

1. How did God help the Israelites under the leadership of the judges He raised up (vv. 16, 18)?

2. What did the Israelites do after each judge died?

3. What word does God use to describe the Israelites (v. 19)?

Has anyone ever said that about you? It’s easy to disobey when those in authority aren’t around. God wants us to obey all the time. Ask Him to help you do what you know is right, even if no one would see you doing wrong.

Friday

You can learn three important things from the Israelites in Judges 1 and 2. Give a modern-day example of each principle listed below.

1. Partial obedience is not obedience.

2. Obedience brings gain; disobedience brings loss.

3. To enjoy God’s blessing, each individual in every generation must make his or her own decision to follow and obey the Lord.
If you have trusted in Jesus to save you from sin, thank Him for your salvation.

If you have never made your own personal decision to follow Christ, read the following verses in the order in which they are listed, and ask God to help you understand them.

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:13).

“My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments” (Proverbs 3:1).
Habits are hard to break, aren’t they? That guy in algebra who constantly cracks his knuckles may still be cracking knuckles when he’s fifty. By then, his knuckles are likely to be arthritic, crooked, swollen, and painful. Often, bad habits break people unless people break them.

Continually committing a sin will become a habit that can destroy your daily fellowship with the Lord, weaken your testimony, and make you feel defeated and depressed. So, how can you stop committing a sin that has gained control over you?

Have a little talk with yourself.

That’s what King David did when he was feeling down. “Why art thou cast down, O my soul?” he asked (Psalm 42:5). Then he told himself, “Hope thou in God.”

Act like a coach. Tell yourself that you don’t have to experience defeat but can enjoy victory over that nagging sin. Remind yourself that God has provided the resources for winning. God has given us His armor (Ephesians 6:11–17), and He has promised us the victory: “But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:57).

Have a talk with the Lord.

David prayed: “O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee” (Psalm 42:6). Follow David’s lead; talk to the Lord about your problem. Remember that He has never failed you. Count on His help now!

Fuse God’s Word to your thought life.

Your job is to spend time in God’s Word. Think about what you are reading, and make an effort to memorize Scripture. As God’s precepts and promises command your conscious attention, they will control your actions. (See Psalm 119:11 and Ephesians 6:17.)

Avoid the situations that lead to sin.

If your friends are encouraging you to do things you know are wrong, stop hanging out with them. If you face temptation on the Internet, make sure you are not alone when you are on the computer. If you waste time playing video games at home, try to not even turn them on for a week. If you’re easily lured by the messages displayed on the covers of popular magazines, run—don’t walk—past them.
Realize that Jesus may return for the church today.

Remember, the Rapture could take place at any moment; live now the way you want Jesus to find you living when He returns. First John 3:3 states that “every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he [Christ] is pure.”

Of course, it’s not only sinful to keep doing what’s wrong; it’s also sinful to not start doing what’s right. James 4:17 teaches that “to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.”

If you haven’t taken actions God wants you to take, change that scenario right away. Just as the apostle Paul told Timothy to “stir up the gift of God” (2 Timothy 1:6), so you are accountable to activate your spiritual gifts.

Don’t let the fear of failing keep you from doing what you ought to do.

And don’t stall because others criticize you. If you serve the Lord, He will honor you (John 12:26). Don’t shove God’s will aside, preferring worldly things over the benefits of doing His will. Consider this principle of spiritual economics: worldly gain at the cost of disobeying God is loss, but anything lost at the cost of obeying God is eternal gain.

There’s no better time than now to break a sinful habit. And there’s no good reason to wait until tomorrow to do what you ought to do.
Bill’s basketball coach instructs the team to run ten laps around the gym. The gym is hot, and it’s near the end of practice. Bill is exhausted and decides that nine laps will be enough for him. After all, it’s not like Coach will notice that he skipped one lap.

Mark and Dave always sit together at lunch. One day they start talking about religion and eternity. Dave decides he has a good relationship with God because his parents have been taking him to church since he was a baby.

Allison spent five hours cramming for her big test today. But right before the test she doubts she can remember all those facts, so she writes a few of the answers on her hand. Allison cheats during the test and thinks she has it made. However, as Allison is leaving class, her teacher calls Allison to her desk and asks to see her hand. The teacher drops Allison’s test score from a B to an F and promises to call Allison’s parents.

**PRINCIPLE:**

Under each case study, identify the principle to which that case study relates.