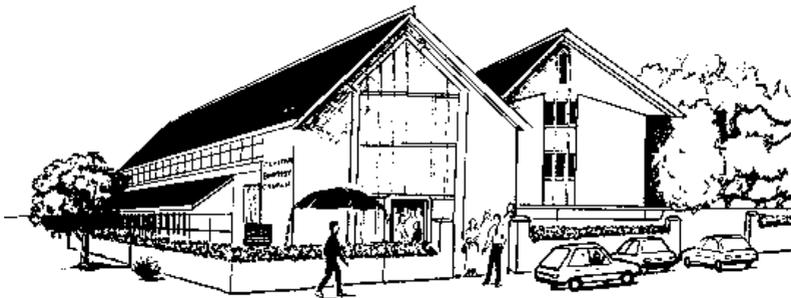


Central Baptist Church Harare



Home Group Ministry 1ST & 2ND Term 2018

Studies in the Book of Judges

PREFACE

Having been studying and being challenged through the Book of Judges in our Sunday evening services at Central Baptist Church, Harare, for the greater part of the second half of the year 2017, the church leadership felt the need to spread wide the challenge of this Book. This need arose because, the evening services are usually attended by a small fraction of the CBC congregation.

The Book of Judges is about challenging Christians to possess and experience their spiritual inheritance in Christ Jesus. Those who attend the evening services have been greatly challenged and encouraged, and are mobilized for both spiritual warfare and service. To attain church unity of purpose and direction, the church leadership thought it prudent for the wide church to also hear the same message from God.

It is the church leadership's hope that the use of the church Home Groups infrastructure will make significant inroads in achieving this goal. The pursuance of this goal resulted in the development of this Bible Study guide on Judges, as part of the Home group ministry of Central Baptist Church, Harare, Zimbabwe.

To achieve more from the studies, home group members are encouraged to read the Biblical text and answer the questions prior to the group study day. This would enrich your group study through wide and varied perspectives. Again, prepared members are great encouragement and help to the Bible study leader. So please prepare!

Outline	Page
Introduction	1
I. Deterioration – Living with the Enemies (Judges 1-2)	5
A. Partial Obedience (Judges 1)	5
B. Judgment for Partial Obedience (Judges 2)	7
II. Deliverance – Living under the Enemies (Judges 3-16).	9
A. Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar (Judges 3)	10
B. Deborah (Judges 4-5)	12
C. Gideon (Judges 6-8)	15
D. Abimelech (Judges 9)	19
E. Tola, Jair (Judges 10)	21
F. Jephthah (Judges 11)	22
G. Ibzan, Elon, Abdon (Judge 12)	24
H. Samson (Judges 13-16)	25
III. Depravity - Living like the Enemies (Judges 17-21).	29
A. Idolatry – Micah and a Levite’s idolatry (17)	30
-- Dan’s tribal idolatry (18)	32
B. Immorality –Group rape of Jewish concubine in Jebus (19)	33
C. Infighting – Civil war between Benjamin and other tribes (20)	35
-- Kidnapping of dancing virgins of Shiloh (21)	36
 CONCLUSION	 38

Introduction

The book of Judges narrates Israel's battles with her enemies, namely the Canaanites, Amorites, Ammonites, Arameans, Midianites, and Philistines. The book also tells of some battles and events amongst the Israelites themselves.

Jewish tradition claims that Samuel or one of his disciple wrote the book of Judges (1 Sam. 10:5), round about 1390-1090 B. C, which is the time of Samuel (Judges 1:21; 2:7; 11:26; 17:6; 18:1,31; 19:1; 20:27; 21:25). This was the time when Israel had a king (after 1065 B.C.), probably before David captured Jerusalem (around 1022 B.C.).

The events recorded in Judges cover a period of about 300 years (11:26) and are written to Israel in the land of Canaan under a united monarchy, with a view to reminding Israel of her immediate past idolatry and apostasy.

“Judges” (Heb. shophetim) means a ruler who is a “deliverer” or “savior” (2:16). Thus, the book is named after the many judges or chiefs who rose up as temporary leaders in Israel. The four most known judges among these are Deborah (chapters 4 and 5), Gideon (chapters 6-8), Jephthah (10:6—12:7), and Samson (chapters 13-16). Also it must be noted that, Samuel and Eli are the last two judges. Their records are in the Book of 1 Samuel.

The Book of Judges is a dark one, narrating a story characterized by drama and violence. It presents a sad and turbulent period in Israel's history, emphasizing Israel's sinking into moral depravity and social anarchy after the death of Joshua.

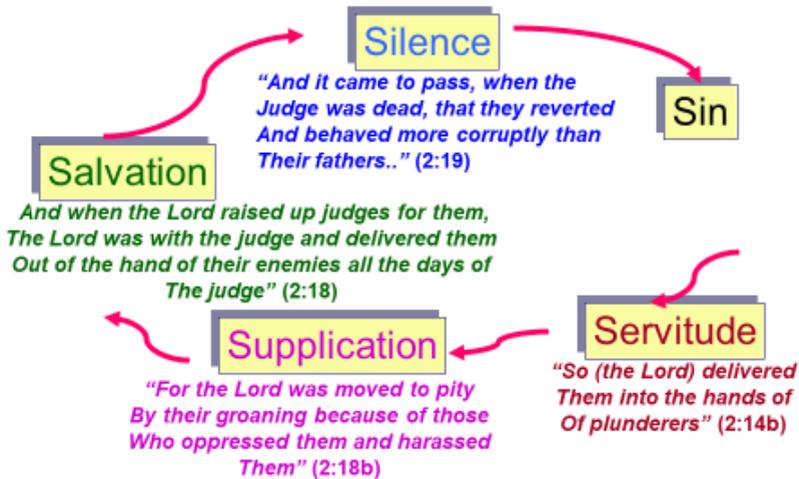
In Biblical history, Judges comes after the book of Joshua, which describes Moses' successor leading Israel into the Promised Land and the initial task of driving the Canaanites of it, one battle at a time.

In contrast to the victorious book of Joshua, Judges shows the failure of Israel to conquer their enemies, claim their inheritance, and the huge effect that this had on their life and relationship with God. Each of the twelve tribes of Israel was allotted a portion of the land as their inheritance, and under Joshua, many of the enemies that lived in the land were defeated and victory was achieved. Yet it was still necessary for each tribe to move into its appointed area and to dwell there. The tribes of Israel partially followed through. Because of Israel's failure to fully possess their land and drive out the Canaanites, they sinned against God, suffered oppression, cried out to God for help, God delivered them and would sin again.

"Whenever the LORD raised up a judge for them, he was with the judge and saved them out of the hands of their enemies as long as the judge lived; for the LORD had compassion on them as they groaned under those who oppressed and afflicted them. But when the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their fathers, following other gods and serving and worshiping them. They refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways" (Judges 2:18-19).

These two verses sum up the repeated pattern throughout the entire book. The pattern is; sin, servitude, supplication, salvation and silence. This pattern would last for over 300 years. We call this, 'Israel's cycle of sin'.

Cycles of the Period of Judges



Spiritually, Judges is about taking our full inheritance in Christ Jesus. The inheritance believers have in Christ centers around heaven, the sum total of all God has promised us in salvation (Eph. 1:11; Col. 3:24; Heb. 9:15). Our heavenly inheritance in Christ does not perish, spoil or fade. It is reserved for us in heaven by God (1 Pet. 1:23). In contrast, everything on earth is in the process of decaying, rusting, or falling apart (Matt. 6:19–20).

The believer’s inheritance in Christ is also described as, “the riches of His grace” namely kindness, patience, glory, wisdom, power and mercy” (Eph. 1:7; Rom. 2:4; 9:23; 11:33; Eph. 3:16; 2:4). This why Paul could confidently write, “My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:19 NIV).

“Your eternal inheritance is priceless, pure, permanent, and protected; no one can take it from you. It can’t be destroyed by war, a poor economy, or disaster. This inheritance, not retirement, is what you should be looking forward to; retirement is a short-sighted goal” – Rick Warren

We trust these studies will help us all to heed God’s warning against disobedience of refusing to remove all worldliness from our lives. Our hope is that we will claim our full inheritance in Christ and embrace by faith our inexhaustible riches in Christ Jesus. As a mighty army of the Lord, then, we will be able to honor God’s name, by extending His Kingdom and performing His will. We will love the Lord with all our hearts, mind and strength and love our neighbors as ourselves. We will obey both, the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.

I. DETERIORATION – LIVING WITH THE ENEMIES (JUDGES 1 & 2).

Judges chapters 1 and 2, explain the spiritual decline of Israel, which begins shortly after the death of Joshua. At the end of the Book of Joshua, Joshua calls upon the next generation to embrace as their own, the covenant God made with their forefathers, calling upon them to follow his example in making a choice about whom they will serve “ (Joshua 24:14-15). Although the Israelites expressed a determination to serve God, Joshua warned that they would not be able to fulfil their commitment. They simply could not live up to the standards of a Holy God (Joshua 24:19).

Within a short period of time, Joshua’s words were fulfilled as described in Judges Chapter 1. Even though Joshua had crushed the Canaanite kings, the individual Israelite tribes needed to completely wipe out the remaining Canaanites in the land or risk co-existing with them in the land. This is exactly what happened. Even though some of the Canaanites were made slaves, they remained in the land (Judges 1:33-34). Judges chapters 1 and 2 describe the downfall of the nation, and give the reason why God left the Canaanites in the land.

A. Partial Obedience (Judges 1)

Judges Chapter 1 begins with the conquest of Canaan. Judah conquers most of its territory but the other tribes are not as successful. While the other tribes are able to subjugate the Canaanites and Amorites to forced labor, they are unable to dispossess them from the land.

1. Why do you think Christians should go to the Lord for advice on what to do in life and let Him give the answer? (1:1-2; Jas. 1:5).

2. In what ways should Christians join hands with other brethren in our spiritual fight against the Devil? (1:3,17; 1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 2:3-4).

3. What is the Lord's promise to those who faithfully serve him? (1:19; Mt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5-6).

4. If left unconquered in the believer's life, what problems do worldly influences cause? (1:21,27-36; Jas. 4:4).

5. Whose fault was it that the land was not conquered? (1:27-36; Prov. 14:34).

B. Judgment for Partial Obedience (Judges 2)

Judges Chapter 2 describes Joshua's death, and the people's sinfulness of worshipping the Baals. An angel reprimands the people for forsaking God. Consequently, the LORD sold Israel into the hands of their enemies but raised up judges to deliver them.

1. Unlike people, what is it that the Lord does not do concerning His covenants with His people? (2:1; 2 Tim. 2:13).
2. Does God give Christians any advice concerning making covenants with the people of the world? (2:2; Jas. 4:4). What is His counsel?
3. Is there such a thing as a good reason to disobey the Lord? (2:2; Tit. 1:16).
4. In what ways are the evil influences of the world like a snare to God's people? (2:3; 2 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 2:20). What does sin and its punishment bring upon people? (2:4; 2 Cor. 2:5,7; 7:10; 1 Tim. 6:10).
5. Why is it important to have a strong leadership over God's people? (2:6-9; Heb. 13:7,17).

6. What is the greatest work that the Lord has done for His people (2:7,10; Eph. 1:3ff).

7. What is our responsibility to the future generations about the Lord? (2:10; Eph. 6:4; 2 Tim. 2:2). How are we carrying out that responsibility today?

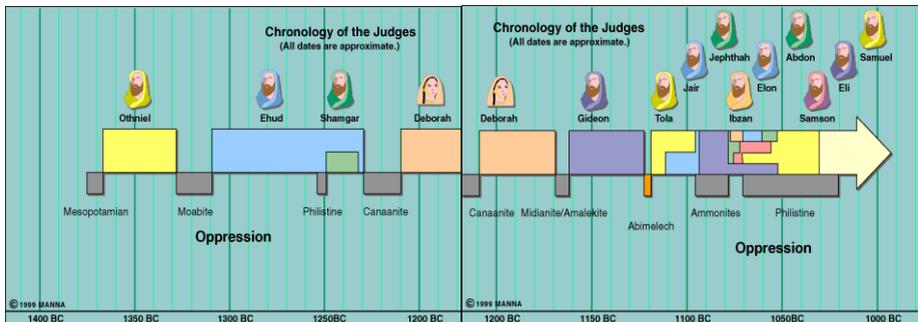
8. As Christians, what must we do about idolatry or anything and anyone that would take the place of God? (2:11-13; 1 Jn. 5:21).

9. While the Lord is full of mercy (2:18; Eph. 2:4-8; Tit. 3:5), what may cause His hand to be against His people? (2:14,20; Heb. 10:30-31; 12:29).

10. Why is it that some people will enter right back into sin when times are good? (2:16-19; 2 Pet. 2:14).

II. DELIVERANCE – LIVING UNDER THE ENEMIES (JUDGES 3-16).

Because of their failure to drive out the Canaanites, the Israelites continuously sinned and turned away from God. God would punish them for apostasy, through oppression by the Canaanites. When they cried out to God for help, He faithfully delivered them. The deliverance of Israel came through more than a dozen people, called judges. We know very little about six judges: Shamgar (3:31), Tola (10:1-2), Jair (10:3-5), Ibzan (12:8-10), Elon (12:11-12), and Abdon (12:13-15). However, as highlighted in the introduction, Deborah (and Barak), Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson receive greatest prominence in the book. Consequently, we will look at these more closely without neglecting the others.



A. Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar (Judges Chapter 3)

The LORD sends Othniel to save the Israelites from the king of Aram. After Othniel died the Israelites did evil. King Eglon defeated them. The LORD raised up Ehud who thrust a sword into Eglon's belly. Finally, Shamgar kills 600 Philistines with an ox goad.

1. Why was it necessary that, God's people went through a period of war before they could experience a period of peace? (3:1-2; Isa. 2:4; Rev. 14:13). In what way was living in the world a means to prove God's people regarding their obedience to God? (3:4; Rom. 12:1-2).
2. Living with the world often leads to living like the world. What danger did God's people face in living among worldly influences and marrying into worldly influences? (3:5-6; 1 Jn. 2:15-17).
3. What warning does God give to the Israelites which also applies to 21st century believers? (3:7; Jas. 4:1-4).

B. Deborah (Judges Chapter 4 & 5)

The comprehensive story of Deborah (and Barak) is found in chapters 4 and 5 of Judges. However, for the purposes of your studies as group, it may be helpful to look at one chapter for each study day.

In Judges 4, we are introduced to Jabin and Sisera who oppressed Israel for 20 years. Then, the LORD sends Deborah the prophetess and Barak the warrior to destroy the Canaanite army. However, because of Barak's reluctant participation in the battle, the glory, goes to Jael, wife of Heber the Kenite for killing Sisera, the Canaanite general with a tent peg.

In Judges 5, Deborah and Barak sing about their victory over the Canaanites: "When leaders lead and people are willing, praise the LORD! Blessed is Jael; Let your enemies perish, O LORD!" They praise the LORD, Israeli warriors, and Jael, but scold the tribes that failed to join the fight. In this song, Deborah and Barak reveal the other details of their battle with Sisera in the Jezreel valley in chapter 4.

1. The deliverer used of God in Judges Chapter 4, is the courageous prophetess and judge – Deborah. What will it take for the church today to have a worthy woman like Deborah who has courage and conviction (4:4-10; Prov. 31:10; 1 Tim. 2:9-15; Tit. 2:3-5; 1 Pet. 3:1-6) ?
2. Miriam is one of the three women prophets of the Old Testament (Exod. 15:20–21). Which characteristic of Miriam does Deborah display, while her people were still suffering?

3. Some Christians, like Barak, need to be roused from their lethargy to obey the Lord and get busy battling for the Lord (4:6,14; 2 Cor. 6:2; Eph. 6:10ff). What do you think were Barak reasons for his reluctance to go to war alone? What are some of the reasons people give for lethargy as Christian soldiers?

4. At a time when Israel suffered great oppression, Deborah brought them wisdom and counsel. What positive influence can you bring at home, school, work, church and community during the times of great difficulty?

5. In light of global social injustice and poverty, how can the church fulfil Jesus' command to be 'the salt of the earth' (Matt. 5:13)?

6. The Lord will lead His people to victory over the enemy (4:14; Rev. 19:11-21), using unlikely people and uncommon instruments (4:17-23; 1 Cor. 1:26-31). How does this make you feel about God's calling upon your life?

7. After experiencing victory through the Lord's help, Deborah and Barak retold their experience with God through a song or a poem (Judge Chapter 5). What attitude do they display which we must have concerning our ongoing fight against the enemy? (5:2,9; Eph. 6:10ff).

8. What is our responsibility in bringing about light in a wicked society? (5:7; Phil. 2:15).

9. In spiritual warfare, what is the relationship between the righteous acts from the Lord in heaven and the righteous acts from His people on earth? (5:11; Rev. 19:8).

10. Why is it important that there is a moment in our spiritual life, when we all must decide if we will fight or if we will fail? (5:15-16; Eph. 6:10ff).

11. The strong and courageous will risk their own lives for the Lord's service (5:18; Acts 15:26; Phil. 2:30). What happens to those who are fearful and cowardly? (5:23; Rev. 21:8). How do we risk our lives for the Lord's service without appearing like making a name for ourselves?

12. The enemies of the Lord will not get what they want in the end (5:28-30; Rev. 19:11-21; 21:10). What happens to those who love the Lord? (5:31; Dan. 12:3). What does this mean?

C. Gideon (Judges Chapters 6-8)

For the studies on Gideon, you can make three studies, one for each chapter or at your own pace as a group. In Judges 6, the LORD gave the Israelites to Midian. The Midianites oppress the Israelites. An angel appears to Gideon and tells him to destroy his father's idols. Gideon destroys the idols and is given a sign that he will succeed at war.

In Judges 7 God emphasizes His own role in the victory, by telling Gideon to diminish the troop number from 32,000 to 300. Gideon is given a sign of success, and he routs the Midianites. The 300 soldiers crept into the Midianite camp. They blew trumpets and the Midianites fled.

In Judges 8, Gideon requests bread from two towns but the townspeople send him away. He kills the kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna and takes revenge on the people who spurned his request by destroying their two towns, Succoth and Penuel. Gideon rejects an offer to be king and the Israelites worship other gods after he dies.

1. **In Judges 6**, we see that, sin will bring the sinner down very low (6:6). What will happen to the Lord's people when they do not listen to Him (6:10; Prov. 13:15)?
2. A "mighty man of valor" like Gideon is needed today to fight the Devil and stand for right (6:12,14; Acts 4:29; 1 Cor. 16:13; Eph. 6:19). What will it take for the church to have such a man or woman?

3. "Why then is all this befallen us?" is a question that is often answered by looking to the sin(s) in our own life (6:13; Prov. 13:15). What are some of the tragedies that have befallen us, as a country, as a church and individuals, which may be the result of sin?

4. The Lord can use people from all walks of life in His service. Upon what is their victory based? (6:15-16; Ac. 10:34-35).

5. What condition does the Lord give in order for Him to be with His people when in spiritual warfare? (6:16; 2 Jn. 9-11).

6. In what way does the Lord become our peace through the sacrifice of Jesus? (6:24; Eph. 2:14).

7. What does God require of us before we can serve the Lord? (6:25-27; Mt. 6:24; 2 Tim. 3:4).

8. **In Judges 7**, we learn that, apart from the Lord, we can do nothing. How is our total dependence on God most evident in spiritual warfare? (7:2; 2 Cor. 12:9-10).

9. Why is it that we are of no use in the Lord's army if we are fearful and trembling? (7:3; 2 Cor. 1:7).

10. What ways does God use to wean us from depending on things other than Himself, particularly strength of numbers or finance?

11. **In Judges 8**, we learn that, we may grow tired in battle but we must keep fighting (8:4; 1 Cor. 15:58; Gal. 6:9). Why is it that, sometimes young people fear to do what is right? (8:20; 1 Tim. 4:12).

12. When we let the Lord rule over our lives (8:23; Mt. 28:18), evil will quickly follow good (8:27, 33-35; Lk. 8:13; Acts 8:18-24). How is the evil in the world today, in your community and country connected to the disobedience of God's people?

13. Proverbs 15:1 says, *“A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger”*. Colossians 3:12-13 also says, *“Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.”* How does Gideon’s response to the Ephraimites’ complaint (Jud. 8:1-3) demonstrate the above principles?
14. In what ways would you be able to apply Gideon’s approach with the Ephraimites in your areas of tension and conflict at church, home or work?
15. The story of Gideon ends on a tragic note with the Israelites being drawn back into idolatry by an object he had created (8:33-35). How could this have been avoided if he had been able to read the warnings contained in 1 Corinthians 10:12 and Proverbs 16:18?
16. The apostle Peter urges us to ‘be self-controlled and alert’ because our enemy, Satan, ‘prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour’ (1 Peter 5:8). Which areas in your life are most prone to his attack and how can you ‘resist him, standing firm in the faith’ (1 Peter 5:9)?

D. Abimelech (Judges 9)

Abimelech takes control of Shechem and kills his seventy brothers. When a rebellion led by Gaal precipitates, Abimelech kills the entire city. He also attacks Thebaz, but a woman kills him by dropping a millstone on his head.

1. Please identify ways in which Abimelech's rule was a foretaste of the rule of Saul as 1 Samuel 8 shows?
2. Compare the attitudes of the people described in Judges 9:1–6, and those in 1 Samuel 8:19?
3. The company one keeps tells a lot about what kind of character one has (9: 4, 24; 1 Cor. 15:33; Jas. 4:4). What precaution must we exercise in relation to people we associate with and the influence of the world?

4. What should be the Christian's response to the evil policies of civic or political leaders? (9:6; Acts 5:29; 1 Tim. 5:20).

5. People who do not live right will bring trouble into their life as sin dominates them (9:20; Prov. 13:15). Identify any areas in your life where you could lose the freedom God has given you in Christ (Gal. 5:1).

6. Romans 8:11–14 teaches us the principle of 'putting to death the deeds of the body'. How does this principle help us to be free from the domination of sin?

7. The Bible also teaches that, true love does not boast and is not puffed up, and pride goes before a fall (9:2,53-57; 1 Cor. 13:4; Prov. 16:18). We also learn that vengeance belongs to the Lord and he will avenge the wickedness of man (9:56; Rom. 12:17-19). In what way is obeying these truths a means to mortifying deeds of the body?

E. Tola and Jair (Judges 10)

Two judges, Tola and Jair, rule over Israel one after the other. After their deaths the Israelites worship other gods violating the teaching that, “no man can serve two masters” (10:6; Mt. 6:24; Rom. 6:16). Angered and grieved over the sinful trouble of mankind (10:7,16; Mt. 23:37-38), the LORD gives the Israelites over to the Amorites and Ammonites. As always, sin brings troubles, distress and misery to the people who commit it (10:9,16; Prov. 13:15). Then the Israelites cried out to God and put aside foreign gods.

1. What does Isaiah’s rebuke in Isaiah 1:10-20 have in common with God’s response to the Israelites’ prayer in Judges 10:11–16? What factors were lacking in their prayer? (Judg. 10:10).
2. According to Proverbs 13:3, Ephesians 5:6 and Titus 2:8 how significant are the words we speak?
3. Did you speak any empty or destructive words yesterday or last week? How can we use our speech to build people up and not tear down?

4. Our journey back to God begins with the confession, “We have sinned”, followed by repentance, “And they put away the foreign gods”) (10:10-16; Lk. 15:18-21; Acts 2:37-38; 8:22-24; Jas. 5:16; 1 Jn. 1:9). What does this teach us about true repentance its fruits? (10:16; Mt. 3:8; Lk. 3:8).

5. As we face our spiritual enemy today, “What man is he that will begin to fight?” is a good question to ask ourselves (10:18; 2 Sam. 10:12; 1 Cor. 16:13). In relation to activities in your church, how careful should you be about volunteering for a task? Should you hesitate to respond until you know that you can fulfil the commitment?

F. Jephthah (Judges 11)

Jephthah becomes the leader of the Gileadites. When the Ammonites cause trouble, he foolishly vows to sacrifice the first person he sees when he returns from war. After lecturing and defeating the Ammonites, on returning home, his daughter is the first person to greet him. Jephthah offers his daughter as a sacrifice.

1. If the Lord can use people from all walks of life in His service (11:1; Acts 10:34-35), why do we often identify one’s culture, career, color, civilization, social status and experience as hindrances to the Christian’s service for God?

2. What are the implications of knowing that, the Lord is the Judge of all the earth on people both, believers and unbelievers? (11:27; Gen. 18:25).

3. The story of Jephthah sacrificing his daughter is tragic and it warns us to be careful not to make rash vows, because when we make a vow we must be careful to keep it (11:30,39; Lev. 27:1-33; Deut. 23:21; Eccl. 5:1-7). Is this caution the reason why many Christians are reluctant to make commitments in Christian service?

4. How does the necessary care about commitment and fulfilment affect the way people are recruited in church for activities like Sunday school, choir, music band, door-to-door work or cleaning and repairing the church building?

G. Ibban, Elon, Abdon (Judge 12)

The Ephraimites attacked Jephthah. Jephthah leads the Gileadites to victory over the Ephraimites and caught survivors by making them say 'Shibboleth'. Three other chiefs named Ibban, Elon, and Abdon rule Israel after Jephthah dies.

1. Unnecessary complaints among brethren can lead to needless division, in-fighting, and loss of life (12:1-6; Gal. 5:15). What were the roots of the division in Corinth (see 1 Cor. 1:10–17)? How would the teaching given in 1 Corinthians 13 resolve it?
2. Acts 15:36–41 informs us that Paul sharply disagreed with Barnabas that they had to separate. In the context of doctrinal and ecclesial differences, are there times when division between Christians is inescapable and even desirable? What should Christian unity be based on and what issues should Christians divide over?
3. What positive things can we do to help defuse divisions and tensions in church, especially those arising from differences of personality, class or culture?
4. Our speech identifies who we are (12:6; Mt. 26:73; 1 Pet. 4:11). How can we use speech for the building up relationships and advancing the cause of the Gospel?

H. Samson – (Judges 13-16)

The author of Judges commits 4 chapters to the narration of the story of Samson, which is perhaps the second longest following Samuel. Again, looking at one chapter per study day may be helpful for the group.

Judges 13 teaches us that, the LORD gave Israel to the Philistines. An angel appears to Manoah and his wife and tells them they will have a Nazirite child. The child is born and he is named Samson.

When Samson grew up, he took a Philistine wife (Judges 14). He killed a lion and bees made honey in the carcass, the incident he used to pose a riddle to thirty Philistine men, at his celebratory feast. The Philistine men cajole Samson's wife into giving them the answer and Samson responds by killing the thirty men. He posed a riddle but his wife explained it.

When denied access to his wife, who had married another man, Samson burns the Philistine fields (Judges 15). After being handed over to the Philistines, Samson kills a thousand Philistines with a jawbone.

Again, Samson falls in love with another Philistine girl named Delilah (Judges 16). She persuades him to reveal the source of his strength and then double-crosses him. Delilah had his hair shaved so he lost his strength and was captured. He is tortured in a Philistine arena but manages to destroy the Philistine temple. In doing so, he kills himself and the enemy in attendance.

1. Samson was to be a Nazarite, meaning that he was exclusively dedicated to the Lord. How does a life dedicated the Lord relate with unclean living? (13:7,14; 2 Cor. 6:14 – 7:1; 1 Peter 2:11).
2. The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. What is the parental responsibility to children even before they are born? (13:8,12,14; Eph. 6:4).
3. There is great fear in the presence of the Lord. How do you feel to know that one day we all will see God in the judgment day? (13:22; see also 6:22-23; Heb. 12:28-29).
4. What kind of sacrifices should Christians offer to God? (13:23; 1 Pet. 2:5-9).
5. Contrary to the wishes of his parents, Samson loved a foreign girl (Judges 14). Does it matter for Christians who they date and marry? (14:2; 1 Cor. 7:39; 1 Pet. 3:7).
6. Ruined character often begins at home. Parents need to be careful what they give their children. (14:2-3; Eph. 6:1-4; Tit. 2:4). In your view, what mistakes did Samson's parents make in raising him up?

7. The marriage covenant and vow between a husband and wife should be taken seriously (14:20; Mt. 5:32; Mt. 19:9; Lk. 16:18; Rom. 7:2-3; 1 Cor. 10:11-12). Why does the world today treat the institution of marriage with contempt?

8. Strong men like Samson can have a weak character that leads to a tragic downfall (14:2,9,15,17,20; Mt. 26:41; 1 Cor. 9:24-27; 10:12). What must we do with our areas of strength so that they do not become our weaknesses?

9. If God can use foolish, weak, and sinful men like Samson to accomplish his purposes, why do Christians still make excuses to devoted services of God? (14:2, 9, 15, 17, 20; Gen. 45:4-8; Ex. 9:16; Acts 4:27-28; 8:1-4; Phil. 1:12-19).

10. Why does God prohibit us from returning evil for evil? (15:1-8; Rom. 12:17-21).

11. How does a sinner and a fool bring trouble to his own house? (15:11; Prov. 11:29; 14:1; 15:6,29).
12. How does the rule, 'Do unto others, what you would have them do unto you' (17:12), help us develop a true love which does not work ill toward others? (15:11; 16:15; Rom. 13:10; 1 Cor. 13:3-7).
13. What lesson do we learn concerning the consequence of loving the wrong person or thing? (16:16-19; 1 Jn. 2:15-17).
14. How do broken vows lead to broken lives? (16:17; Mt. 5:37).
15. The Lord leaves those who leave him (16:20; Rom. 1:24,26,28; 2 Tim. 2:12; 2 Jn. 9-11). How is this truth comparable to the LORD's promise that He will never leave nor forsake us even to the end of the age? (Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5)

III. DEPRAVITY – LIVING LIKE THE ENEMIES (JUDGES 17-21).

The Israelites forgot God's standards of right and wrong such that, "everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Jud. 17:6; 21:25). Instead of focusing on the sins of Israel or of their judges, the last five chapters of Judges look closely at the lives of two Levites, representatives of the religious leadership of the nation, who failed to hold the nation accountable for its sin. Judges concludes with an accusation of the Levites, who like the people they are supposed to lead, are also messed up. Their small, individual stumbles worsen to tribal and national scopes and plummet Israel into political and moral anarchy. We can see that, when God is left out in the national and personal affairs, truly, *"everything and anything goes"*.

A. Idolatry –Micah and a Levite’s idolatry (Judges 17)

In Judges 17, Micah builds a house of worship and hires a young Levite to serve as his priest. There was no king so everyone did what was right in their own eyes. Micah convinced himself that he had done the right thing even though he had disobeyed God. In the same way, sometimes, Christians are so determined to do something, claiming it to be God’s will, when it is not.

1. The Bible has a lot to say about idols and their worship. God’s people must guard themselves from idols (17:5; 1 Jn. 5:21). What do the following Scriptures teach about idols: Exod. 20:3-4; 23:13; Ps. 81:9; Isa. 42:17; 1 Cor. 10:7, 14?

2. According to Amos 5:18–24 and Isaiah 1:10–17, God criticizes the worship of His people. What does God say that He requires instead? How does this attitude compare to that of the Pharisees in Mark 7:1–15?

3. Things dedicated to the Lord should not be used in an unauthorized way (17:3; 1 Cor. 16:1-2). Religious syncretism is the mixing of differing or conflicting religious beliefs and practices. Why is it that, there are many today who claim to follow the Lord and at the same time engage in unauthorized religious practices? (17:2-5; Zeph. 1:5; Mt. 15:1-8; 23:1ff).
4. Why is counterfeit religion sometimes hard to detect? (17:2-5; Mt. 7:21-23).
5. Religious leaders often exchange the truth of God's word for a "better deal" and suppose that godliness is a "way of gain." What can church and individual believers do to help leaders not lead for personal gain? (17:10; 18:20; Ezek. 34:2; Jn. 10:12; 1 Tim. 6:5).
6. How is the church today comparable to Micah's home-made shrine? How has modern-day idolatry creep into the church? What must we do to remove idolatry from the church today?
7. Obedience is better than sacrifice. The Lord will bless us with good when we obey his Word. What is the difference between obedience and simply doing religious things? (17:13; 18:5; Mt. 7:21-23; 2 Jn. 9-11).

Idolatry –Dan’s Tribal Idolatry (Judges 18)

During the conquest of Canaan, under Joshua’s leadership, the Danites were commanded to occupy the region between Ephraim and Judah. Because they did not take complete control of the territory, the tribes on either side of them became stronger, forcing them to relocate. The Danites send out five scouts, migrate northward and stay with Micah. They abduct Micah’s priest and seize his religious objects. They massacre the people of Laish, rename the town Dan, and set up a new religious center for themselves.

1. According to the Old Testament, what are the characteristics of a false prophet (1 Kings 1–14; Jer. 23:33–40; Neh. 6:12–14)?
2. According to Jude 4, 1 John 4:1–6 and 1 Timothy 4:1–3, a false teacher has certain hallmarks. What are they?
3. Today, what are some of the false teachings circulating in the church in Africa, especially in Zimbabwe? Give Biblical evidence why these teachings are false.
4. Instead of being discerning enough, like the Danites, many people ignore the authorized worship of God in preference to their own way (18:31; Jn. 4:24; Col. 3:17). How can we be discerning without being overly suspicious of everyone?

B. Immorality—Group rape of Jewish Concubine in Jebus (Judges 19)

A Levite settles in Gibeah for the night after picking up his concubine from his father-in-law's house. The men of Gibeah attempt to sodomize him but end up raping the concubine until her death. As a response, the Levite cut up his wife's body and sent a piece to each tribe throughout the land of Israel.

1. Please identify the similarities between the Israelites' behavior (Judg. 19), and that of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:1–11)
2. In what ways is this behaviour at odds with God's commands of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13?
3. Do you agree with the assertion that these practices are a sign of God's judgement as described in Roman 1:24–32? Why?

4. The gospel is the good news that no sinner is beyond the gracious redemptive reach of God. What can we do to reach people caught up in the practices described in Romans 1?

5. In light of this discussion do you think that the church should invest time and resources in addressing moral issues such as prostitution, homosexuality, abortion and pornography?

6. In light of the severity of immorality around us today, what is God's counsel concerning how to deal with it, and speak out against it? (19:30; 1 Cor. 13:6; 16:13).

C. infighting –Civil war between Benjamin and other tribes (Judges 20)

The Israelites gathered to attack Benjamin for the actions of Gibeah. After three days of intense battle, the Israelites nearly wipe out the entire tribe of Benjamin. All of the women and children are put to the sword and only six-hundred men survive.

1. Read Judges 1:8, 17 and compare the treatment of the tribe of Benjamin with their attack on the Canaanites.
2. The men of Israel knew that sin is a reproach to any nation (Prov. 14:34). What is it that they did which we should imitate today? (Judg. 20:1,11; 1 Cor. 5:1-13).
3. What does the lack of unity against wrong-doing lead to among brethren? (20:13-14; Gal. 5:13-15).
4. Why is it important for God's children to seek His counsel before making important decisions and plans? (20:18,23,27; 1 Peter 5:7).
5. Although Christians know that, right will triumph at the end of the battle, why do they so easily give up? (20:48; Rev. 19-22).

Infighting—kidnapping of dancing virgins of Shiloh (Judges 21)

The Israelites are disturbed by the possible annihilation of Benjamin. However, they previously swore to keep their daughters from the Benjaminites. In order to save Benjamin, they kill the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead and give the girls to the Benjaminites. The Benjaminites also kidnap girls from the annual festival and take them as their wives.

1. When sin is practiced and tolerated among God's people, infightings arise and there will be divisions (21:15; Gal. 5:13-21). How can the church prevent this from happening within its rank and file?
2. In relation to some major doctrinal issues of our time, when is it right to part ways with people who call themselves Christians?
3. "Everyone did what was right in his own eyes" is a subjective and human moral standard that is relative and ever-changing. How different is the Word of God moral standard? (21:25; 2 Tim. 1:13; 2:2; 3:16-17; 1 Pet. 2:25; Jude 3).

4. When everyone does what is right in his own eyes it will lead to terrible times. In what form do the terrible time come, especially in our time? (21:25; 2 Tim. 3:1-5).

5. If the Book of Judges closes by telling us that 'in those days Israel had no king; everyone what was right in his own eyes' (Judg. 21:25), does it follow that, a king would be the solution to their problems? (cf. 1 Sam. 8).

6. Christians are in danger of setting hopes on men rather than on God. How can we be balanced in our appraisal of strong biblical leadership and personal responsibility and depending on God's power?

CONCLUSION

In terms of practical application, we can conclude that, disobedience always brings judgment. The Israelites teach a perfect example of what we are not to do – continuing to rebel against God, because He will always punish rebellion against Him. However, God does not punish us arbitrarily as if He enjoys seeing us suffer. On the contrary, God disciplines us because He loves us as sons (Heb. 12:6).

God's relentless sending of judges to an ever-sinners people marks the Book of Judges as a testament to God's faithfulness. Even "if we are faithless, He will remain faithful" (2 Timothy 2:13). Though we may be unfaithful to Him, as the Israelites were, still He is faithful to save us and preserve us (1 Thessalonians 5:24) and to forgive us when we seek forgiveness (1 John 1:9). God is compassionate, slow to anger and abounding love. His love for Israel despite their sin and rejection of Him pictures Christ on the cross. Jesus died to deliver all who would ever believe in Him from their sin. While most of those who followed Him during His earthly ministry eventually fell away and rejected Him, He kept His promise to go to the cross and die for them and us.

Most supremely, the book of Judges presents the need for a perfect Judge who delivers people from sin once for all (Rom. 6:10; Heb. 10:10). Unlike the sinful mortals like Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah and Samson who brought temporary relief to Israel, Jesus Christ our perfect Judge, King Priest, and Prophet came to forever break the vicious cycle of sin. The birth of Jesus is foreshadowed in the angel's announced to Samson's mother that she would bear a son to lead Israel (Judg. 13:7; Luke 1:31).

Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). Now he calls to you, me and everyone, "Come to me all of you who are heavy laden and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).