



GOD'S PRESENCE OUR VICTORY

JACKIE OESCH

***DISCOVERING THE HEART OF GOD AS HIS PEOPLE
TAKE POSSESSION AND LIVE IN THE PROMISED LAND
STORIES FROM THE BOOKS OF JOSHUA AND JUDGES***

**"...I HAVE PUT MY HOPE IN YOUR WORD."
PSALM 119:74**

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GETTING STARTED

As you proceed with your Bible study, *God's Presence, Our Victory* will continue the adventure that is designed to shape the rest of your life. Your journey will be unique to you and will be determined in part by your eager and enthusiastic passion to grow in your knowledge of the Bible and appreciation of several new characters. Your commitment to the study promises to enrich your life as God speaks to you through His Word.

You are encouraged to have five supplies on hand. These items will be used throughout the study. You will use them with each day's study in order to enrich your learning experience.

1. This Bible study: *God's Presence, Our Victory*
2. New International Version of the Holy Bible (NIV). Note: If you are making a new purchase, attempt to find a Bible that has:
 - a. a table of contents with the individual books of the Bible listed
 - b. a cross-reference column, preferably down the center of each page
 - c. a concordance in the back of the Bible
 - d. a few basic maps also found in the back
3. Pen or pencil and highlighter
4. Notebook or tablet
5. 3x5 or 4x6 index cards

With the four features listed in #2 you will be adequately prepared for your study and be ready to successfully navigate through Scripture. When purchasing your Bible do not hesitate to ask a salesperson for help in making your selection. Ask for guidance especially when looking for the cross-reference type listed.

Something you need to know: Different translations of the Bible are available at both Bible bookstores and Barnes and Noble-type stores across the country. The suggested translation for this study is the New International Version, also known as the NIV. References in this Bible study are from the NIV translation. This version is translated from the original text and scholars agree that this translation is exceptionally accurate and uses today's language. Many other fine translations are available and sometimes help to clarify and give understanding to a particular passage of the Bible. In addition to different translations, some Bibles are offered by publishers as "Study Bibles" or "Inductive Study Bibles" or "Life Application Bibles." These Bibles offer extensive notes and other expanded features.

Do not hesitate to write in your Bible. You have permission! That's why a pen and highlighter are included. It's your Bible to study. Make it your own with your notes, your underlining, highlighting, circling and arrows! You are encouraged to use your notebook or tablet for recording thoughts, questions, and tracking your journey through the study.

Each of the six lessons is divided into five parts. These segments are only guides to help move you through the study in a timely manner. The pace for your study is up to you. Sometimes the lesson may demand more time than you have and will require you to complete the lesson in more than one sitting. Other times you may complete one lesson part and choose to move on to the next.

If this is your first attempt to study the Bible, you are encouraged to begin with the first study unit entitled *Making the Bible Yours*. It is a study that provides navigational tools to facilitate your learning and enable you to competently maneuver around in the Bible. *Making the Bible Yours* may be downloaded at www.FullValue.org. Additional units may also be downloaded at no charge.

- *God's Plan, Our Choice* is a study of the first eleven chapters of Genesis.
- *God Promise, Our Blessing* is the story of Abraham found in Genesis 12-25.
- *God's Faithfulness, Our Hope* is the story of Isaac and Jacob written in Genesis 25-36.
- *God's Forgiveness, Our Freedom*, in Genesis 37-50 is the story of Joseph and his brothers.
- *God's Call, Our Deliverance – Part I and II* include the Book of Exodus

Although these studies are recommended, they are not essential for success in studying this eighth unit entitled *God's Presence, Our Victory*.

Finally, you need to understand that this study is written for you to learn on your own. It is designed to be user-friendly. With a degree of self-discipline you will cover the material with little or no difficulty. At the same time, the study will be exciting. You will acquire new information. You will want to share new learning and insights with others. And, you will ask some challenging questions that will beg for answers.

Anticipating this response you are encouraged to seriously consider inviting a couple of friends to study with you. The discipline of working out at a gym, for example, is much easier in association with another person. Together you keep each other motivated and accountable. Maybe you and your spouse would like to ask one or two other couples to join you. Maybe you live in an apartment complex and have a friend you'd like to invite to study with you. Maybe someone at work would like to be invited to learn what God says in the Bible. Maybe you belong to a church or know a church where a class is offered that allows students to dialogue about the things they learned during the week. Whatever your situation might be, create a safe environment for gathering with a small group once a week to share insights and grow together as friends around the study of the Bible. The individuals in your study group, whether large or small, will help to enrich your study as you help to enrich theirs!

It's time to get started! Open your Bible to Joshua 1 and let's continue the adventure.

INTRODUCTION

Israel has finally arrived at the gateway to the Promised Land. The journey has been long and difficult. Family and friends have died along the way. A new generation has been born, a generation that never knew its forefathers. They weren't in the caravan going into Egypt to buy food from Pharaoh nor were they in the mass that fled Egypt after the plague of death had killed the firstborn sons of the Egyptians but passed over the homes of their ancestors.

Moses had been the only leader they knew and now he was dead. Joshua had been appointed his successor and now awaits the Lord's direction to cross the Jordan River into the land that He had given to them in the covenant He made with Abraham. Time has passed. People have come and gone. Leaders have died and new ones appointed. But throughout the centuries, regardless of time, the God of Israel did not change. He remembered His covenant promise to deliver Israel from the Egyptians and give to them the land flowing with milk and honey.

This unit of study entitled *God's Presence, Our Victory* will introduce you to characters and events in Israel's history that enabled the Israelites to take possession of the land that God had given to them. The study will also reveal the consequences of their disobedience when they failed to take complete possession and rid the land of all other people. The Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, and all the other "ites" were to be annihilated. Their failure to obey this command brought other gods, idols made of wood and stone, into the culture and environment of God's people. The Book of Judges paints a disturbing picture of Israel during this period of their history.

You will be challenged with reflective time and encouraged to find ways in which these stories have application in your own life as you live in this 21st Century. You may ask: How can stories that happened thousands of years ago have any relevance for my life? Be open as the Spirit of the Lord comes on you with His power. May you be open to receive His message of truth believing that He will never leave or forsake you and with His presence with you, you will never need fear the battles of life but will find your victory in Him and Him alone.

LESSON ONE ~ PART 1

INTRODUCTION:

Joshua is Israel's new leader. For forty years Moses had led the people through the wilderness. Now, his aide has the position and all the responsibility for leading this great multitude into the land God had promised to their forefathers. The promise God had made hundreds of years ago was to become a reality for these people, descendants that never knew Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob. These patriarchs believed the promise of God and their descendants were about to receive the fulfillment of that promise.

Finally, after all the years of wandering in the wilderness the people arrived at the entrance to this land. They were eager to cross the Jordan River and enter the land that was occupied by many different kings and their people, the Hitites, Canaanites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. However, taking possession of the land would mean war! Battles would rage; blood would be shed, lives would be lost and yet victory would belong to Israel as one kingdom after another would be destroyed.

ASSIGNMENT:

Read Joshua 1. Watch for these four points:

- The borders of the land
- The promise of God to Joshua
- The words of encouragement repeated in this chapter
- The response of the people to Joshua's orders

EXERCISE:

What did you discover?

1. What borders defined the Promised Land? (verse 4)

a. From the south _____

b. To the north _____

c. To the east _____

d. To the west _____

2. What was God's promise to Joshua? (verse 5)

a. _____

b. _____

Question: Why would no one be able to stand up against Joshua? Was it because there were so many Israelites? Was it because of their strength? Was it because they had the latest weapons of war? The answer is in God's promise. What is His promise?

3. What words are repeated four times in this chapter?

Use a colored pencil or marker and highlight these words.

a. Why does the Lord use these words in verse 6?

b. He uses them again in verse 7. Where will Joshua's strength and courage come from according to the rest of this verse?

c. In verse 9 the Lord commands Joshua to be _____ and _____ . What are the antonyms? _____ and _____ Why was there no place for terror and discouragement? _____

4. In verses 10 and 11 Joshua gives his first instruction to the people. What is their response in verses 16-18?

- Whatever you *command* we will _____
- Wherever you *send* us we will _____
- Just as we *obeyed* Moses we will _____

And, their prayer of blessing was that God _____ as He was with Moses. Rebellion and disobedience against Joshua's leadership would be punished by _____. And, the encouragement they gave to their leader was once again the words: _____

LESSON ONE ~ PART 2

REFLECTION:

Take a moment to reflect on what is happening in this chapter. Generations have lived and died since the Lord first promised this land to Abraham and his descendants. Abraham, his son Isaac, and grandson Jacob have all died. Joseph, the great leader in Egypt and all of his brothers are dead and God's promise has been passed to their children. Then after all the years in Egypt and the oppressive years under Pharaoh's bondage God raised up Moses to lead them out of Egypt. Forty years they wandered in the desert while another generation of Israelites died along the way. And now, even Moses is dead.

Yet, God has not changed. The promise He made is the promise that He has kept. He provided the leadership and His abiding presence. As God was with Abraham and Moses He now promises to be with Joshua and His people. In spite of the fact that the ones to whom He made the promise were not there to give witness to its fulfillment, God was faithful and kept His word. God didn't age. God didn't forget. God didn't change His mind. He was faithful to His promise. It's fulfillment was not based on Israel's behavior or on their faithfulness to Him. His goodness to them was based on who He is. As Israel could rely on His Word to be true, so can we thousands of years later rely on His Word as Truth.

APPLICATION:

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." Believing God's Word is Truth, what application do these words have for your life?

PRAYER:

O Lord, You are the same Lord who promised Abraham, reassured Isaac and Jacob, called Moses and declared Your presence to Joshua. You are the same Lord that promises me Your presence, reassures me of Your promises, and offers me hope. Thank You for Your goodness and faithfulness that do not change. In spite of my unfaithfulness to You, You are good and faithful to me. Thank You for never leaving nor forsaking me. My heart rests in You.

LESSON ONE ~ PART 3

INTRODUCTION:

In Joshua 2 the Israelites begin preparation for taking possession of the land. If you were the one leading these people into a new and strange land, what steps do you think you would take to prepare for this unknown land? Check out Mapquest? Visit AAA? Read tour books?

ASSIGNMENT:

Read Joshua 2. Things to note:

- What is the mission?
- Who is the central character?
- How did she provide for the spies?
- What did she know?
- What was the agreement?
- What was the report to Joshua?

EXERCISE:

Shittim, the place from where Joshua sent out the spies, can be located on an early map at the north end of the Dead Sea and to the east of Jericho.

1. The mission is simple: Joshua sent out two spies to _____
He was especially interested in _____ (verse 1).
This would be the first major city of conquest.
2. As you reread this chapter list in your notebook the words and phrases that describe Rahab. For example, we know that she's a prostitute but also that she most likely served as an innkeeper. How did she respond to the presence of the Israelites in her house? Contrast her response to the response of Jericho's king. She hid the men, lied for them, negotiated, bound them to an oath, helped them escape and sent them away. What kind of woman would do all that? Get to know Rahab!
 - a. In verses 8-11 mark all the references that speak of fear, melting hearts, and courage that failed.
 - b. Take a moment and turn to Exodus 15:13-16. Israel has just crossed the Red Sea on dry ground and these verses are from the song Moses and the Israelites sang to the Lord. These four verses speak of what is happening to the people of Jericho. Underline all the words that speak of the fear of the nations (Philistia, Edom, Moab, Canaan.) Note: All of these nations can be identified on an early map showing the conquest of Canaan.

c. Rahab was a strong and courageous woman. Her strength and courage came because of what she knew to be true.

- Fact: What were the events (verse 10)?

- Fact: What did she know about Israel's God (verse 11)?

3. What was her request in verses 12-13?

What was their response? _____

4. Rahab helped them escape and gave them instructions so they wouldn't be discovered. And, in essence, the parting words of the spies was that whoever is in your house with you will be spared but we will have no responsibility for anyone outside and, in addition, the oath would be null and void if she told anyone what they were doing.

- a. Rahab's home becomes a shelter, a refuge, an impenetrable fortress. A simple scarlet cord tied in the window marked her home. The spies promised that her home would be passed over.
- b. Do you recall another "pass over" in Israel's history that took place on the night before they left Egypt? Do you remember the blood on the doorframes of the homes that kept death from coming to those within that home? See Exodus 12.

5. The spies return safely to Joshua.

- a. What did they report?

- b. What did they declare?

APPLICATION:

In verse 8 Rahab declares what she knows and then acts according to what she knows. She says, "I *know* that the Lord has given this land to you..." She also *knows* that a great fear of you has fallen on us..." Have you ever asked yourself what you *know*?

- What do you know to be true about the Lord your God?

- How does what you know affect your level of courage and strength or does it cause your heart to melt in fear and trembling?

- The spies and Rahab knew the Lord and acted with strength and courage. The spies declared to Joshua, “The Lord has surely given the whole land into our hands; all the people are melting in fear because of us.”

LESSON ONE ~ PART 4

INTRODUCTION:

The spies returned with an exciting report (Joshua 2:24) and now the time has come for the Israelites to break camp at Shittim, move on and set up camp by the waters of the Jordan River. The next three chapters give much detail but for our study we will give attention to these four points:

1. Crossing the Jordan River
2. The Ark of the Covenant
3. The Community of Israel
4. The Covenant of Circumcision

ASSIGNMENT:

Carefully read Joshua 3-4:24. Look for

- the orders given to the people
- the role of the ark of the covenant
- the recognition of Israel as a community

EXERCISE:

1. What orders were given to the people?
 - 3:3 - _____
 - 3:5 - _____
 - 3:9 - _____
2. The Ark of the Covenant would now go before the people. We hear no more about the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud, the pillars that led the people and gave them light during their time in the wilderness (Exodus 13:21-22). Recall what was kept in the Ark of the Covenant.
See Hebrews 9:4. _____,
_____ and _____

The ark had been kept in the tabernacle as a visible reminder to the people of God's presence living among them.

- a. (verse 3) - Who would be carrying the Ark of the Covenant? _____
- b. What were the people to do? _____
- c. (verse 4) - What would the people know? _____
- d. What was the special instruction? _____

LESSON ONE ~ PART 5

TEACHING:

Consider the word “community.” This group of people was not governed as a democratic society in which every individual could give his or her opinion, vote, and give and thumbs up or thumbs down as to what the leader should or shouldn’t do. These people lived as a theocratic society in which God gave the commands. They lived as His people and were to obey the instructions He gave to them.

Throughout their wilderness experience God shaped His people into community by reminding them of the covenant He had made with Abraham in which He was their God and they were His people. He called them to rise up and accept the high calling to live lives holy and consecrated, set apart for His purposes. In spite of what the Israelites did during these forty years, God remained faithful to them. His love for them never failed. And, we saw that when a part of the community grumbled against the Lord, everyone suffered the consequences (Numbers 14:34-35), when they sinned everyone endured the punishment (Exodus 32:19-20), and when God gave the Ten Commandments He called the whole community of Israel to obedience and promised blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. There were no exceptions. All were treated as His people belonging to this community.

EXERCISE:

Identify in a few of the verses words that indicate they were part of a whole community and not individuals out there to do their own thing. Look for words like “all” and “among,” words that offer a sense of belonging to the larger community.

Reference Words that indicate community

Joshua 3:5	
Joshua 3:9,10	
Joshua 4:1	
Joshua 4:4-7	
Joshua 4:13	
Joshua 4:14	

APPLICATION:

As individuals we desire to belong to a community. Most people are born into the family community. We become involved in different social environments, for example, school, church, work, and volunteer organizations. As participants we agree to the purpose and goals, the ethical and moral structure of the community. Identify a community environment in which you participate or belong.

- How did you become a part of the community? When did you sense that you belonged?

- What is the purpose of this community? Why does it exist?

- What do you contribute and how are you valued by the community?

LESSON TWO ~ PART 1

ASSIGNMENT:

Read Genesis 17:7-14 and Joshua 5:1-12.

TEACHING:

This passage from Genesis speaks of the everlasting covenant God made with Abraham, the covenant that God would be Abraham's God and the God of his descendants. The covenant initiated by God established the relationship between Him and His people. He would be their God and they would be His people. The sign of this covenant relationship between God and Abraham was the circumcision of every male. Now, at this point in Israel's history (Joshua 3-5) it is interesting to note God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 17:8 when He tells Abraham that the land of Canaan would be an everlasting possession to him and his descendants.

In Joshua 5:1-12 two important community events took place. The first was the circumcision of all men born in the desert since the Israelites had left Egypt. Circumcision declared to the community that we are all a part of the eternal covenant in which God declared Himself to be our God and made us His people. Circumcision said to the people that we have been set apart and belong to God and to this community He had established. He also said that anyone not circumcised was to be "cut off from His people" and was not a part of the eternal covenant.

The other event of the community was the celebration of the Passover. This was an act of obedience. They had learned the story of the Lord passing over the community of Israel when back in Egypt the blood of a slaughtered lamb was painted on the doorframes of their homes (Exodus 12). The meal was to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. Exodus 12:24-25 makes it very clear that they were to obey these instructions and when they entered the Promised Land of Canaan they were to observe this ceremony.

INTRODUCTION:

We are about to embark on one of the most familiar battle stories ever told. Songs have been sung about it. Children have been taught the story. School plays have been written in an attempt to recreate the event. This Old Testament battle occurs in Joshua 6.

The Israelites are in position. They have consecrated themselves and are prepared for the amazing things the Lord has in store for them. They waited for the Ark of the Covenant to lead them across the Jordan. Once again, all of the Israelites experienced crossing through on dry ground as the water upstream stopped flowing. Immediately after they crossed the men were circumcised, the Passover was celebrated on the plains of Jericho at Gilgal, and the manna stopped the day after they began eating the produce from the land.

God's people are prepared, fed, rested and refreshed and are now ready to do battle with Jericho. Joshua experiences an encounter with the Lord very similar to the one Moses did in Exodus 3:5. God wanted no doubt in Joshua's mind that He would be with him nor that Joshua would have any misgivings about who was the commander of the army of the Lord. Joshua could only fall facedown to the ground in reverence.

ASSIGNMENT:

Read Joshua 6. As you read watch for:

- God's plan
- Joshua's instructions
- Israel's execution of the plan
- Joshua's warnings regarding Rahab and the devoted things
- Rahab's rescue and Jericho's destruction
- Joshua's curse on Jericho

LESSON TWO ~ PART 2

EXERCISE:

1. What does God reveal to Joshua already in verses 1 and 2?

He has already delivered Jericho into Israel's hands. What caused their fear? Was it anything that the Israelites had done? Was it what God had done? Reread Joshua 5:1.

2. Very simply, what was God's plan (Joshua 6:3-5)?

a. What were the armed men instructed to do? _____

b. The seven priests? _____

What were they to do on the seventh day? _____

c. What were the people to do?

d. What was the wall to do?

3. So, the armed guard of the seven priests all blowing their trumpets led the procession, followed by the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant and the people following as the rear guard.

a. What were Joshua's specific instructions to the people in verse 10?

1) Do not _____

2) Do not _____

3) Do not _____

b. Then we learn that when the people had marched around the city once they all went home! What a spectacle that must have been! And, they did it for six days!

1) If you had been the king of Jericho what might have gone through your mind?

- 2) If you had been a citizen or a soldier looking out through a peep hole watching this march, what might have gone through your mind?

- 3) If you had been Rahab with a house full of relatives clinging to a promise and feeling the earth shake as this mighty army circled the city every day, what might have gone through your mind?

- c. But, the seventh day was different. What happened that was different?

What happened when the priests sounded the trumpet blast? What was Joshua's command in

- verse 16? _____
- verse 17? _____
- verse 18-19? _____

4. Then the victory came! The people shouted. The walls collapsed and the Israelites moved in and took the city (verse 20). Everything that had life they killed. What did they do with all the silver and gold, bronze and iron (verse 24)?

What happened to Rahab and her family (verses 22-23)? _____

5. In verses 26-27 Joshua made an oath and cursed anyone who would attempt to rebuild Jericho. In case you're interested in what happened to someone who did try, look up the cross-reference following the word "gates" in verse 26. (Note: If your Bible does not have a cross-reference, the reference is 1 Kings 16:34.)

LESSON TWO ~ Part 3

REFLECTION:

What a victory for Israel! It seems as though taking possession of the land was not going to be difficult; in fact, it would be a piece of cake, if all the other battles were like this one! All they had to do was follow the ark around, listen for the trumpet blast, and then shout! Of course, the shouting would not drop the walls. But God used the strength of His army, honored the faithful obedience of His people to His command, and proceeded to fight their battle for them. All this He did because He was their God and they were His people. He wanted the world to know that He was the God of Israel, their Commander-in-Chief!

APPLICATION:

Let's consider Rahab...

1. She entrusted herself to her only hope for salvation. Where does your hope for salvation rest?

2. She kept her part of the oath and as a result provided safety for her family. In what way might your home become an inviting place of safety for your family, friends, and neighborhood?

3. Read Hebrews 11:30-31. What are we told about her?

Because of her faith in the God of the Israelites and because she welcomed the spies, God acted graciously towards her. Consider God's gracious activity in your life:

TEACHING:

Passing through the water at the Red Sea and now at the Jordan River mark significant times in the history of the Israelites. At the first crossing in Exodus 14 their life of slavery to the Egyptians was over and done. The army was drowned and Israel continued their journey to the Promised Land. A new life was before them. God reminded them that He was their God and that they were His people. He gave them certain stipulations for their life together as a community. God's relationship with His people would not be that of a slave driver but that of a

leader. He was not to be feared but someone whom they could love and trust, serve and obey. God's relationship with them was based on love. He wanted only His best for His people.

As the Israelites passed through the waters of the Jordan they left behind their life of aimless wandering, the consequence of their disobedience and rebellion against God. He shaped and molded them into a people united in heart and purpose, a people ready to take possession of the land that was part of the eternal covenant.

This passing through the water has significance for people throughout history. In the New Testament the passing through the water happened to Jesus when He is baptized (Matthew 3:13-17). At the end of Jesus' earthly ministry He commissioned His disciples telling them that all people of all nations are to be baptized (Matthew 28:19). The early church established by Jesus' disciples continued the ministry of preaching the Gospel and baptizing people in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:38).

Baptism is initiated by God. God chooses to make us His by pronouncing the forgiveness of sins and offering life everlasting. Passing through the waters of baptism brings us under the eternal covenant in which God declares Himself to be our God and makes us His people. A life of slavery to sin is left behind. We are able to live free and forgiven in this love relationship that has been established by God. Baptism brings us under new ownership, under new authority, and into a new relationship. We have been redeemed. Our lives have been bought back by God. We have been bought at a price; the price is the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the Lamb of God. Now God Himself chooses to live within us. Our bodies become His dwelling place.

Have you been baptized? Is baptism a new concept for you? What do you know about what God offers to you in baptism? _____

Passing through the waters offers a life filled with purpose and meaning. Passing through the waters makes you a child of the King!

LESSON TWO ~ PART 4

INTRODUCTION:

After the battle of Jericho one would think taking possession of the land was going to be a piece of cake. In Joshua 7 we learn that all the battles didn't occur against the enemy nations living within the Promised Land. Ongoing battles are also rage within God's people as the disobedience and rebellion of individuals affect the whole community.

ASSIGNMENT:

Read Joshua 7 and discover:

- What went wrong?
- Who was guilty?
- What were the consequences?
- What was the punishment?

EXERCISE:

1. The story of Israel's victory over Jericho has just concluded in chapter 6. Now Joshua 7:1 reveals some bad news. What has gone wrong?
 - Who was the culprit? _____
 - What was taken? _____
 - What was the Lord's reaction? _____
2. Look closely.
 - Was Achan the guilty one? Who does the verse say acted unfaithfully?

 - Who did the Lord's anger burn against? _____
 - Remember, in an earlier lesson we considered Israel to be a community. God regarded the community to be guilty. Achan was a part of the community of Israel and what he did as an individual God regarded as an act of the community.
3. Continue with the story and observe the consequences to the community that one man's act caused:
 - Joshua was looking ahead to the next place Israel would possess. Where is the next place he's having the spies check out (verse 2)?

- What report did the spies give and what was their recommendation (verse 3)?

4. They went into battle.

- What happened in verses 4-5?

- What happened to the hearts of the people?

- The reaction of Joshua and the elders: In repentance, clothes are torn. They fall facedown and sprinkle dust on their heads.

- Notice Joshua's prayer (verses 7-9):

- Why did You... _____
- If only... _____
- What can I say... _____
- The Canaanites and the other... _____

- Question: _____

- What did God say to Joshua? What sin had Israel committed (verse 11)?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

- Not only had they sinned but how had they acted in battle (verse 12)?

- On top of everything else what does God declare at the end of verse 12?

- Reread Joshua 6:18. What was Joshua's instruction and warning to the people?

- In verses 13-15 Joshua instructs the people and has them prepare for the discovery of the devoted things that would be found in the community and would be removed. He acknowledged that the covenant of the Lord had been violated and a disgraceful thing had been done in Israel. The significance of those things devoted to the Lord was that they were what God declared to be His and He commanded that all of those devoted things were to be destroyed.
- Joshua verbalized contempt for what had been done. The consequences would be severe. In the morning Achan is found out. What had he taken and done with all of the devoted things?

- Everything was discovered and brought to Joshua. All of his sin was exposed before the Israelites. All of Israel carried out the punishment. What do verses 24-26 tell us?

LESSON TWO ~ PART 5

APPLICATION:

The consequence of sin is death. Achan, his family, and all of his possessions were stoned, burned and buried. It took complete annihilation in order to remove the sin from the community.

1. Oftentimes we attempt to hide or cover up our sin. We speak of having skeletons in our closets. What are those sins that I choose to keep hidden as secrets within my life? What do I keep “swept under the carpet” so to speak?

2. As community how do we deal with sin?

3. How do my secrets affect the way I live in the community of family, friends, and associates?

PRAYER:

O Lord, as a community we must confess our sin before You. We often deny our sinfulness by ignoring the wrongs that are committed. We have become weak in fighting our enemies that would lead us into sin. We surrender to evil rather than do good. Forgive us. Be merciful to us. Forgive us for all that we deny, avoid, ignore, and hide. Free us from the filth and shame, the disgrace we live in and grant us Your grace and mercy.

INTRODUCTION:

Achan and his sin were discovered. He and all he had were removed from the Israelite community. They were stoned, burned, and buried, and then God turned His anger away from the people. God forgives. The Israelite community is cleansed, restitution made, and the conquest of the land resumes. If you were Joshua, would you be a little hesitant to lead the people into battle again after they had been routed and defeated by the men of Ai?

ASSIGNMENT:

Read Joshua 8:1-29.

EXERCISE:

1. What was God's instruction to Joshua in verses 1 and 2?

2. What was the plan for taking Ai (verses 3-8)?

3. What was the outcome (verses 9-29)?

ASSIGNMENT:

Read Joshua 8:30-35. Reread Deuteronomy 11:26-32.

EXERCISE:

- From Ai Israel moved north. Locate Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim on a map that shows the land designated to each of the twelve tribes.
- In verse 30 what did Joshua build? _____
 - What are we told about this altar? _____
 - Note the cross-reference verse in Exodus 20:25. What additional information do we learn? _____
- They offered sacrifices to the Lord. What did Joshua do next in verse 32?

Envision the scene: Half of Israel is standing in front of Mount Ebal (Deuteronomy 27:13) with the other half standing in front of Mount Gerizim (Deuteronomy 27:12). Between them was placed the Ark of the Covenant and the Levi priests. In the presence of everyone he copies on stone the Law of Moses. We can ask why Joshua did this. The cross-reference verse takes us back to Deuteronomy 27:8.

- Then what does Joshua do in Joshua 8:34?

TEACHING:

This event took place in the valley between these two mountains. The mountains were the witnesses of the promise the people made to God. This is a covenant renewal. Daily people who are baptized are renewed in God's Covenant. All of the past is forgiven and all of the future is a clean slate. God gives us a new beginning in which we have His promise the promise of His presence. In the Book of Jeremiah the prophet reminds us "I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." (Jeremiah 31:3) What good news!

LESSON THREE ~ PART 1

REFLECTION:

Be honest with yourself. If you were a member of one particular tribe and told to stand in front of one of these two mountains, how attentive do you think you would be as Joshua copied on stones all the Law of Moses and then read all the words of the law to the people?

What might be going through your mind? _____

It's the desert. Undoubtedly, the people are warm, if not hot and tired. But, everyone heard everything! The whole assembly (verse 35) of men, women, and children, plus those who were aliens living among them heard every word of the Law of Moses. Again, Joshua was only doing what Moses commanded. See Deuteronomy 31:11-13. Why was reading the words of the Law so important?

APPLICATION:

The whole community of Israel needed to hear the Book of the Law, the Law of the land. These mountains gave witness to this event and were the visible reminder to the people of the blessings of obedience and the consequences of disobedience. How this community lived life in obedience to God's Law would be the declaration as His people of their love for Him who was their God.

Consider your own regard for God's Word. If the mountains or plains where you live could speak out and give testimony to the value you have of God's Word, what would they say?

What are things you do and words you speak that give testimony to your relationship with God?

Does your life give witness to what you believe? _____

What is an area of your life that you want the Lord to help make you more authentic?

MEMORIZATION:

Psalm 1 speaks about delighting in God's Word and having it become the essence of our being. If you have not already done so, take time and put this Psalm into your memory library. These six verses hold lots of picture language. Be sure to write these verses on an index card. As you memorize watch for the blessings of those who delight in God's Word and make notes throughout these next days of things you learn about your relationship with God, the One who watches over you.

PRAYER:

O Lord, I want to be like Joshua and the Israelites who delighted in You and taught Your Word to their children. I want my relationship with You to be evident to others that they may come to know You as their God and see themselves as Your people. Thank You for giving your Law which guides me and keeps me aligned to Your will. Forgive me for my past disobedience and disregard for Your Word. Thank you for forgiving me and for never leaving or forsaking me. Thank You for being my God, for making me Your child, and for giving me a new beginning.

LESSON THREE ~ PART 2

INTRODUCTION:

The battles at Jericho and Ai were extremely important. These battles established Israel's God and put fear into the hearts of the kings in parts of the land yet to be conquered. Some kings joined forces to make war against Joshua and the Israelites (Joshua 9:1-2). The people of Gibeon resorted to a ruse (Joshua 9). Reports had traveled throughout the land that Israel was to wipe out all of its inhabitants. People feared for their lives.

We will cover several chapters in this part of the lesson. These chapters contain war stories. Joshua led Israel on a war campaign that annihilated one kingdom after the next as the Lord had commanded Moses and Moses commanded Joshua.

ASSIGNMENT:

Read Joshua 9-11. As you read these three chapters

- Underline reoccurring words and phrases.
- Identify the means God used to give Israel their inheritance.

EXERCISE:

1. Did you notice these repeated words and phrases? What point do they make?
 - a. "Do not be afraid" _____
 - b. "Left no survivors" _____
 - c. "Totally destroyed" _____
2. What were the unusual means used to bring defeat?
 - a. Joshua 10:11 _____
 - b. Joshua 10:12-14 _____
 - c. Joshua 11:20 _____
3. In chapter 9 the deceptive Gibeonites resorted to a ruse. When other kings were joining forces against Israel, what did the people of Gibeon decide to do?

What was the final outcome of their plan (Joshua 9:26-27)?

Because of the oath that Israel made with the Gibeonites (Joshua 9:14-15) the Israelites were committed to waging war with them against the five Amorite kings. Joshua brought the best of his army and took them by surprise.

- What did the Lord do in Joshua 10?
 - Verse 8 _____
 - Verse 10 _____
 - Verse 11 _____
 - Verses 12-13 _____
 - What was declared in verse 14?

 - What happened to the five kings verses 16-27?

4. Joshua 10:28 begins the mantra that continues through chapter 11. We are told that Joshua “totally destroyed everyone” and “left no survivors.” The battles rage on with Joshua leading the Israelites as they advanced against one city after the next. But, we dare not overlook other words used throughout these chapters that remind us who was Israel’s Commander-in-Chief.

- a. Joshua 10:30 _____
- b. Verse 32 _____
- c. Verse 42 _____

It’s interesting to note that the God of Israel fought “for” Israel. He was their Champion! Recall Joshua 10:8. What did God want Joshua to know?

What does Joshua tell the people in verse 25?

- d. Look ahead to chapter 11... What does the Lord tell Joshua in verse 6 when the enemy comes out with such a huge army that appears as “numerous as the sand on the seashore?”

5. What are we told about Joshua?

a. Joshua 10:40 _____

b. Joshua 11:15 _____

c. Joshua 11:23 _____

6. At last, Joshua 11 ends with these words:

LESSON THREE ~ PART 3

TEACHING:

In the Exercise that we have completed we learned the facts of the story. We looked at the battles of Israel against the people and kings of the land they were to possess. We saw Israel always victorious as they followed Joshua's leadership. The country, however, was drenched in the blood of those that God defeated. He showed no mercy to one kingdom after the next. Was all of the bloodshed necessary? Couldn't the people have lived as slaves to Israel? Did they have to die?

We need to remember that the shedding of the blood was the means God used to cleanse the land of all the idolatry and wickedness of these kingdoms. Israel's God was not like the gods of wood and stone. Israel's God covenanted with them to be their God, the One whom they were to worship. Because He knew that His people would be prone to disobedience, grumble, complain, and seek to have their own way, He needed to remove from the land all that would defile them and entice them away from Him. His holiness demanded that all who were not His covenant people were to be destroyed without mercy. His holiness demanded that the land be cleansed and purified. He called His people to holiness. Before Him they were to be blameless (Deuteronomy 18:9-13).

REFLECTION:

One can't help but take some time to reflect on holiness. Consider these reflective questions and jot in your notebook some of the thoughts that come to mind.

- What does it mean to be holy or blameless?
- Is holiness possible? How does one become holy?
- Does blood need to be shed in order for one to be made holy or is there another way?
- Does our world strive for holiness? Does our world strive for purity?
- What does it mean that I am to be blameless before God?
- Blood was shed throughout Israel's history. They offered animal sacrifices, fought battles and died. Where does blood intersect with my life? Do I believe that Jesus died for my unholiness, my ungodliness, my sin? Do I believe that His shed blood on the cross was enough to make me holy before God my Heavenly Father?

PRAYER:

O Lord God, my God, I can only thank You for making me holy by the blood Your Son Jesus shed on the cross. When You look at me You see His blood that covers me and makes me blameless before You. You have acted in mercy towards me by not giving me what I deserve. Jesus is my Champion! Jesus is the One who has given me Life forever with You. Thank You for His sacrifice on my behalf.

LESSON THREE ~ PART 4

Joshua 11 ends with the words, “Then the land had rest from war.” War, war, and more war! All the Israelites had experienced since they set foot in the land was war and all for the sake of taking possession of the land that God had promised. In Joshua 12 all the kings whom the Israelites defeated are listed, all 31 of them. Then chapter 13 begins with the Lord telling Joshua who was well advanced in years that “there are still very large areas of land to be taken over.” In verses 1-7 we learn:

- What land remained to be taken over (verses 2-5)
- What God would do (verse 6)
- What Joshua would do (verse 6, 7)

Moses promised to three tribes (Gad, Reuben, and the half-tribe of Manasseh) that land on the east side of the Jordan would become theirs once the Promised Land had been subdued (Numbers 32). In Joshua 13:8-32 we are given the boundaries of the land each of these three tribes was to receive.

In Joshua 14 we learn how the land west of the Jordan was divided and allotted to each of the remaining tribes and what portion became Caleb’s, the other spy who was permitted to enter the Promised Land (Numbers 14:23-25). Once again, we read the words in verse 15, “Then the land had rest from war.”

ASSIGNMENT:

Joshua 15-21 records what land was distributed to each of the tribes. The only tribe that received no allotment of land was the tribe of Levi. What does Joshua 13:33 tell us was their inheritance?

Numbers 18:20-21 gives more information. How did God provide for them?

Read Joshua 21:43-45.

- The Lord gave Israel _____
- The Lord gave _____
- The Lord’s promises _____

God fulfilled all that He said He would do. His faithfulness to His people has been more than evident through all these many, many years. Those who initially received the promise were not the ones who entered the land. The promise was given to them but fully realized by their descendants.

EXERCISE:

Consider the many stories and experiences that brought Israel to this point in their history. All through the centuries God remembered the covenant promise He made to His people. They knew that although they would never enter the land, their descendants would. The fulfillment of God's promise rested in His Word. This was His covenant that He made with His people. God's promise for Abraham and his descendants for generations to come rested on God's commitment to His covenant (Genesis 17:7). Take time to review some of the stories we have studied in previous lessons in this Bible study series and begin to list them in your notebook. List the stories that were especially meaningful to you and ask yourself why you consider them so important.

Before we move on in our study it is important that we note three different verses in these last chapters. God commanded that every nation inhabiting the land was to be totally destroyed. There were to be no survivors. What do we learn in the following verses?

1. Joshua 13:13 _____
2. Joshua 15:63 _____
3. Joshua 16:10 _____

We will not pursue studying these verses at this time but they are raised up for our awareness as we conclude the study of the Book of Joshua and begin the study of Judges.

ASSIGNMENT:

Read Joshua 23. Note the content of Joshua's farewell address to the people—their elders, leaders, judges, and officials.

- What was the unfinished business?
- What was his exhortation regarding the Law of Moses?
- What were the blessings?
- What were the curses?

LESSON THREE ~ PART 5

EXERCISE:

1. What was the work that remained to be done (Joshua 23:3-5)?

2. What was Joshua's command in verses 6-8?

Their obedience would include four demands in verse 7:

- ---
- ---
- ---
- ---

3. If they obeyed what would be the blessing (verses 9-11)?

4. What would be the consequences of their disobedience (verses 12-16)?

5. In summary, Joshua reminds them of God's faithfulness to them. To what did he call the Israelites?

ASSIGNMENT:

Read Joshua 24.

REVIEW:

1. Joshua reviews some of Israel's history. List the stories, the people, and what God did that he raises up for everyone to hear.
- a. Verses 2-4 speak of the Genesis stories.

- b. Verses 5-7 speak of the Exodus stories.
- c. Verses 8-10 speak of Israel's experience east of the Jordan.
- d. Verses 11-13 speak of the Israel's conquest of the land

All of these stories tell Israel's history. In all of their stories God is the main character. God gave Abraham... God sent Moses and Aaron... God brought Israel... God gave the citizens of the many nations into your hands... What does verse 13 say?

- 2. Joshua lays before them all that God had done and calls them to make a declaration before all the community of Israel (verse 14). What is the question he asks them in Joshua 24:15?
-

What is Joshua's declaration in verse 15?

What did all the people declare in verse 21?

The people gave witness to the testimony they gave one another to serve the Lord and obey Him. As a community they were to give an account and then to hold one another to that account. This meant in verse 23 that the community had to

- 3. Joshua died. We are told that Israel served the Lord in verse 31. How long do we know they served the Lord?
-
-

Israel has arrived in Canaan at last. God's faithful presence throughout their wilderness wanderings has safely brought His people to the land promised so long ago. The land is theirs to possess. Things would be different. Community life would change as each tribe dispersed to its allotted land. Their leader is about to die. The future held uncertainty. Aliens and foreigners were still living in the land and needed to be destroyed. And now, in Lesson 4 we hear Joshua's one last declaration.

LESSON FOUR ~ PART 1

REFLECTION:

We've come to the end of the life of Joshua. The Israelites are sent to the land they have inherited and are ready to begin life in their new land. Joshua dies at the age of 110 years. He has experienced more life with God than any other Israelite, except Caleb.

His farewell reminds us of Moses' farewell to the people before He died. The blessings and curses remained. If the people chose to obey, they would be blessed. If they chose to disobey, they would be cursed. Joshua reminded them because he knew the people. He knew that they would serve other gods because of the experience on Mount Sinai. He knew that God would bring disaster on them even after He had been so good to them (Joshua 24:20).

If you are young, it may be difficult for you to understand the reason why a parent or grandparent might speak about such things to you. Their life experiences, however, have taught them many things. Their wisdom speaks to those who follow after them. What has an older person said to you that you remember?

The wisdom they share is your blessing. Can you think of times when you have said, "I remember." Remembering is what keeps mistakes of the past from being repeated. What has someone encouraged you to remember?

Now consider the time when you come to the end of your life. What would you want others to remember that you know to be true because of what your life experiences have taught you?

MEMORIZATION:

A passage in the Bible is Joshua 24:15. It reads, "But as for me and my (house) household, we will serve the Lord." Let this verse grow in its significance for your life as you give witness to what you believe. Take a few minutes to write this verse on an index card and on the back express your desire to take a stand and serve Him out of gratitude to Him for His faithfulness to you. He has declared Himself to be your God and calls You to be His child forever. He has promised heaven to all who believe that Jesus is the One who enables us to stand holy and victorious before God our Father. Because of Jesus we are eager to say, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!"

PRAYER:

I want to be bold like Joshua and take my stand to serve You all the days of my life. You have been faithful to me. Enable me to serve you faithfully. Things of this world offer countless alluring choices. In my heart I know these choices draw me away from you. Strengthen my heart to declare my service to You and You alone. Especially help me in these areas that I confess are temptations in my heart:

INTRODUCTION:

Joshua is dead. They have no leader. There's no succession plan. A chapter in Israel's history has ended. Their deliverance from Egypt, the forty years of life in the wilderness, and the conquest of the Promised Land have all been achieved. The tribes have all been disbursed and live in the regions allotted to them. The land was at rest from war.

Did they need a leader now? Traveling was no longer an issue. They had arrived! So, what's next? Their life has been nomadic but now they are able to establish themselves and put down roots in this new land. They no longer appear dependent on one leader. No longer are they one mass of people on the move. Now they are spread far and wide living as tribal people.

At the same time we need to remember that God regarded them as His covenant people, as a community belonging to Him. Both Moses and Joshua reminded the Israelites of the blessings that would always be theirs if they lived in obedience to God. They also declared the consequences of disobedience to God's Law, the curses for their rebellion if they worshipped other gods. The Law had been given to Israel as a people belonging to God. The Law was what God intended them to obey wherever they lived in the land.

Now we are about to continue our Bible study with the Book of Judges. What will happen to the Israelites now that they have no leader and yet have large areas of land to be conquered?

- What did they actually do?

- What would be the consequences (verse 3)?

- How did the people respond (verse 4-5)?

These verses reveal the source of the problems that plagued Israel throughout its history. They compromised their position by failing to take ownership of their possession. The rest of chapter two summarizes what happened to Israel after Joshua died.

ASSIGNMENT:

Read Judges 2:6-23. Look for answers to these questions:

- What did the Israelites do throughout Joshua's lifetime?
- How did the following generation live?
- What was the Lord's response?
- What was Israel's response to the judges that the Lord raised up?
- What was God's curse upon the people?

EXERCISE:

1. How did the people live throughout Joshua's lifetime (verses 6-7)?

This was a good time, a time of peace as they served the Lord for they had "seen all the great things the Lord had done for Israel." Then, Joshua died.

2. But, the story takes a critical turn. What is mentioned in verse 10?

An immediate question might be: Why didn't the following generation know the Lord or what He had done for Israel?

REFLECTION:

How quickly we forget. Unless we are reminded and remember we will forget! What has been your experience?

- Did someone remind you of what God has done? Who was that person?

- Did the generations before you know the Lord? Were you told about Him?

What were you told?

Or, maybe you were never told and therefore never knew about God's great love for you. If so, what is a permanent memory of life without God's love?

LESSON FOUR ~ PART 3

EXERCISE:

1. What does Judges 2:11-12 tell us that Israel did?

- They did _____ in the eyes of the Lord and _____ the _____ . (These were the foreign gods.)
- They _____ the Lord who had _____
- They _____ and _____ various gods.

2. What was the Lord's response to their behavior (verse 12-16)?

- They _____ the Lord to _____.
- Why? Because they _____ Him and _____ and _____.

• What did the Lord do?

- Verse 14

- Verse 15

3. Verse 16: The Lord raised up judges. What did the judges do?

Note: The judges were leaders, often military-type leaders whom God raised up to deliver the Israelites from the oppressive powers of their enemies.

4. How did the people respond to the judges (verse 17)?

5. Describe the relationship God had with the judges that He raised up:

6. What has happened to the relationship between God and His people (verse 20)?

7. What did God determine to do (verses 21-23)?

REFLECTION:

It's not a pretty picture. God's faithfulness to those who have gone before this generation has been ignored and forgotten. Their rebellion against God and disobedience to His covenant have caused them to prostitute themselves before the gods of wood and stone, before the gods of those not eradicated from the land, Baal, the Semitic deity, and Ashtoreths, the fertility goddesses. They have turned away from their loving, saving God and have chosen the bondage and slavery of other gods. They exchanged the bondage their ancestors knew in Egypt for their own bondage to the worship of other gods. These gods were created by the imaginations of man's own thinking. Their gods were worthless idols that had no life or breath, gods which offered only death. Moses and Joshua warned them about forsaking the Lord their God but the people boldly declared, "We will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:21). Did they remember? Did they remember their promise and keep it?

APPLICATION:

As we look at our own lives and the lives of others in the world around us, we can ask ourselves, "Do we remember, or have we forgotten?"

1. What are the things I am learning that God has done for me? Do I remember that He has created me? That He has called and delivered me, redeemed me and made me His child? That He has promised to be my God and has made me His people? What do I remember?

2. Do I remember that He has called me to be holy and blameless before Him? Do I remember that He is the One who has made me blameless by the blood Jesus shed for me? Do I remember that in my baptism, the passing through the water, that He has made me His child and heir of eternal life? What have I remembered?

3. Do those after me remember who they are? Do they know the story? Do they know of God's great love for them? Do I remember to tell them everything that God has done for them in order that they never forget? What must I remember to tell them?

PRAYER:

Take time to write your prayer asking God to keep you mindful of Him. Share with Him your concern for others who have not heard the story of His great love. Lift up the different individuals that come to mind and ask Him to instill in you a passion to tell others what He has done.

LESSON FOUR ~ PART 4

ASSIGNMENT:

Read Judges 3:1-5. This chapter begins by listing the nations that the Lord left to test those Israelites who had no previous battle experience.

The nations were: _____, _____,
_____, and _____ (verse 3).

According to verse 4 why did God want to test them?

What did the Israelites end up doing (verse 5-6)?

1. (verse 5) _____
2. (verse 6) _____
3. (verse 6) _____

EXERCISE:

In Psalm 106:34-39 the psalmist gives a summary of what was going on during this time in Israel's history. Again, it's not a pretty picture. Consider what these six verses tell us about the choices Israel made:

1. Verses 34-35: What was their act of disobedience?

What did they choose to do instead?

2. And, what about their idolatry?

a. Verse 36: _____

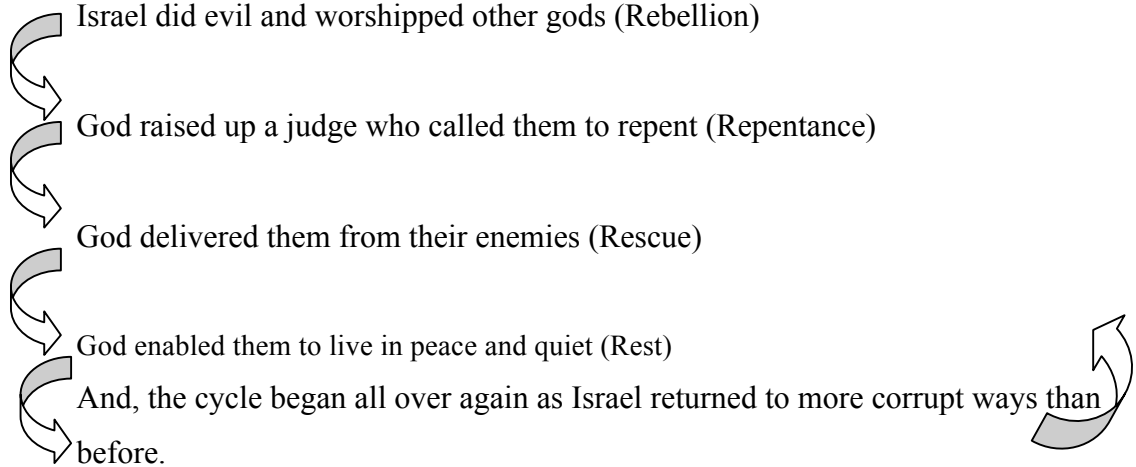
b. Verse 37: _____

c. Verse 38: _____

3. Verse 39: They _____ themselves by what they _____;
by their _____ they _____ themselves.

TEACHING:

A pattern of behavior begins to unfold as one judge after the next is raised up. Earlier in this study we looked at Judges 2:16-19. The cycle went something like this:



Since we can't delve into the details of each chapter we will simply identify some of the judges and consider Israel's pattern of behavior. You are encouraged to use colored markers to give attention to the people's refusal to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways.

EXERCISE:

Immediately in Judges 3:7-11 the pattern of behavior is established.

- What did Israel do (verse 7)?
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____

They *forgot the Lord* and exchanged Him for other gods.
- What was God's reaction to their behavior (verse 8)?
 - _____
 - _____

He made Israel subject to the foreign kings.
- How did the Israelites respond to their bondage (verse 9)?
 - _____

Living uncomfortably they cried out to the Lord.

- How did God respond (verse 9)?

- _____

God raised up a judge who saved them.

- There was _____ in the land until the judge _____
(verse 11).

LESSON FOUR ~ PART 5

ASSIGNMENT:

Read Judges 3:12-16, 30 and Judges 4:1. It's a sad picture but verse 12 begins with the words "once again."

EXERCISE:

In your Bible underline with different colored markers each of the following parts to Israel's behavioral cycle:

1. What did Israel do?
2. What was the Lord's response?
3. What happened to the Israelites?
4. What did Israel do?
5. What did the Lord do?
6. What was the new condition of the land?
7. What happened to the judge? And, *once again*...

Othniel, Ehud, Deborah and Gideon were all judges. In Judges 8:33-35 we read that no sooner had Gideon died than *once again* the Israelites prostituted themselves to Baal. One can ask:

- What was so appealing about the foreign gods that they would defile themselves by worshipping them?

- Why would they abandon the God who had rescued them from the hands of all their enemies on every side (verse 34)?

- Why would they fail to show kindness to their leader for all the good things that he had done for them (verse 35)?

EXERCISE:

Four different words and phrases give us a clue as to why they did what they did. What are the words and phrases in the following verses?

1. Judges 2:2 _____
2. Judges 2:17 _____
3. Judges 3:7 _____
4. Judges 8:34 _____

APPLICATION:

These clues give us warning as well. Look at each of these clues, read the Old Testament reference that gives instruction to Israel, and read the New Testament reference that gives instruction to us.

Clue	Old Testament Reference	New Testament reference
Obey	Deuteronomy 6:5-6	John 14:15, 23
Listen	Deuteronomy 30:20	John 10:27-28
Do not forget	Deuteronomy 4:9	James 1:25
Remember	Psalms 105:5	Luke 22:19

1. How do we demonstrate our love for the Lord? _____
2. Not only are we called to listen but also to _____
3. To keep from forgetting what we have heard we are encouraged to _____
4. What does Jesus offer in order that we might remember Him? _____

In these references practical instruction is given for us regarding the generations yet to come:

- Psalm 78:5-7 _____
- Psalm 145:4-7
 - Tell _____
 - Speak of _____
 - Meditate _____
 - Proclaim _____
 - Celebrate _____

How might you strengthen your memory in order that you never forget?

How might you help to strengthen someone else in order that they may come to know the Lord and never forget Him?

LESSON FIVE ~ PART 1

WHAT WE LEARN ABOUT GOD:

The Good News is for all of us.

1. In Psalm 106:40-46 we are reminded of God's anger and wrath towards His people. But, take a moment to look closely at verses 44-46. In spite of rebellion He heard their cry and for their sake He _____ His covenant.
2. Psalm 111:5b reminds us again that He _____ His covenant, not just for the moment but _____! Just as He remembered the covenant He made with Abraham, He remembers the covenant He made with us in our baptism. He is our God and we are His people... forever!
3. Jeremiah 31:33-34 tells us that in spite of wickedness He not only forgives but He _____ our sin no more. He forgets our sin!

PRAYER:

Praise the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all His benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. Thank You, Lord, for remembering the eternal covenant that You have made with Your people. Thank You for forgetting my sin, for remembering it no more.

DIGGING DEEPER:

The Book of Judges documents several stories about the judges whom God raised up following the deaths of Joshua and the whole generation who knew the Lord and what He had done for Israel. These judges were raised up to save Israel from the hands of those who oppressed them even though Israel would not listen to the judges but continued to prostitute themselves before other gods. Some of these historical stories are gruesome. One example is recorded in Judges 3, the story of Ehud the left-handed deliverer. Another ghoulish event takes place in Judges 4 during the time when Deborah served as judge in Israel. Judges 6 begins the story of another

prominent judge Gideon. In Judges 11 we read about Jephthah, the man who made a foolish vow. You are encouraged to read and begin to familiarize yourself with the facts of these stories.

ASSIGNMENT:

Probably the most familiar character in the Book of Judges is Samson, the Nazirite, the man known for both his strength and weaknesses. His story begins in Judges 13.

As you read, identify the following:

- The characters in the story
- The problem
- Facts about the Nazirites
- The encounter with the angel of the Lord
- The answered prayer

EXERCISE:

- Who had control over the Israelites? According to verse 1 why did this happen?

- Who are the primary characters in the story?

- What was the problem?

- In spite of the woman's problem, what was the angel's message to her?

LESSON FIVE ~ PART 2

TEACHING:

What was a Nazirite? The Nazirites were people “set apart to God.” The angel of the Lord gave the woman specific instructions that were to be implemented immediately and continued through the pregnancy. What were these instructions (verse 4 and 5)?

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- These instructions were established already in Number 6:1-21. Compare the regulations and stipulations of the Nazirite with words spoken by the angel of the Lord’s in Judges 13:3-7.

The Nazirite was one who separated himself to the Lord. His presence served as a visible reminder to the people that God had called His people to holiness by separating themselves from the gods of those around them and to live set apart as children of the eternal covenant.

EXERCISE:

1. What was Manoah’s prayer? What was his question? (verse 8)

2. Manoah invites the visitor to stay and have dinner. Then he asks the angel of the Lord, “What is your name?” What was the reply?

3. Then, how did the angel of the Lord reveal Himself in verses 19-21?

4. What was the response of Manoah and his wife (verse 22-23)?

5. The Lord kept his promise to Manoah and his wife. Samson _____
and the Lord _____ him, and the _____
began to _____ him.

REFLECTION:

From everything we can tell this baby was something special. He was conceived by a woman who was sterile and childless. All of his life he would be a Nazirite, set apart to God. His parents were godly people asking God to teach them how to bring up the child and inquiring what was to be the rule for the boy's life and work. They believed what they were told and acted accordingly.

Parents-to-be often read books that tell the mother what to expect during the pregnancy or what the child will need once it's born or what the different stages the child will go through as it passes from infancy to early childhood. These parents-to-be in Judges 13 had different concerns. They asked the Lord to teach them how to bring up the child who is to be born. If you were the one who was the parent-to-be, what would you ask the Lord to teach you?

EXERCISE:

What is the instruction given in each of these verses?

- Genesis 18:19 _____
- Deuteronomy 6:5-9 _____

- Proverbs 22:6 _____
- Ephesians 6:4 _____

LESSON FIVE ~ PART 3

APPLICATION:

Whether a parent-to-be, single, childless, young or old, Manoah's pursuit of instruction for living our lives is just as important for us.

1. What does it mean to me that I am set apart to God?

2. Assuming that it's never too late, what teaching and instruction do I want and need as I consider living out the rest of my life?

3. What is the purpose statement for my life? What is at the core and essence of my being that determines what my life is all about?

PRAYER:

Write out your prayer asking the Lord to guide you in the way that you should go.

INTRODUCTION:

At the end of Judges 13 we thought we had the perfect child, a child who loved and honored his parents, a child who grew up as one blessed by the Lord and in whom the Spirit of the Lord was beginning to stir. Chapter 14 begins to tell us about the life of this child that has now become a man. As we continue our study of Samson's life keep in mind the reason God had Samson set apart.

The end of Judges 13:5 tells us that “he will begin the _____
_____ of _____ from the hands of the
_____.”

ASSIGNMENT:

Read Judges 14. Watch for:

- What did Samson want?
- What was the argument?
- What happened on the road to Timnah?
- Consider the incident of the carcass and the honey.
- What happened at the feast?
- How did the story end?

EXERCISE:

1. Keeping in mind that Samson would begin to deliver Israel from the Philistines, read through chapter 14 once again and identify some of the more important *facts* of the story.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Write additional facts in your notebook.

2. Samson was demanding that his parent secure a particular _____
woman for him as his wife (verse 2). Why did his parents object strongly to his demand?

3. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power. This is the first incident in which his physical strength is displayed. What was so important about the honey taken from the carcass of the lion? What do you recall from Numbers 6:6-7?

4. Samson's wife was threatened by the bridegroom's companions. What did they threaten to do (verse 15)?

5. So, Samson's wife goes home and then sobs and whines and continues to press Samson until he can stand it no longer. He confides in her the answer to the riddle. What is the consequence because Samson gave his wife the answer?

6. Samson knew how they got the answer because she was the only one who knew. What is Samson's reply to their correct answer?

7. Once again, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power (verse 19). What did he do?

Samson was furious. Where did he go? _____

What happened to his wife? _____

8. How did you expect the story to end?

LESSON FIVE ~ PART 4

WHAT WE LEARN ABOUT GOD:

- At the beginning of this chapter Samson is portrayed as a demanding and disrespectful son. He refused to follow the laws of God and marry only an Israelite woman. Instead, he insisted on taking a Philistine woman to be his wife. Then we read verse 4: “His parents did not know that this was from the Lord, who was seeking an occasion to confront the Philistines...” And, we’re puzzled. Is this what God is like? Does this mean that God sometimes even leads a child to be demanding and disrespectful? Or, might this mean that God can use and even create situations that allow Him to accomplish His righteous purposes?
-
-

- Twice in this chapter we read that “the Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power.” Each time Samson demonstrated extraordinary physical strength. The first experience was told in verses 5-6 and the second was in verse 19. One was against a _____ and the other against
-

God chose to use Samson to display His strength. Consider times when you have been made aware or even observed God’s power and strength displayed through the life of another. The use of extraordinary strength is also evident when in an emergency situation activated adrenal glands have lifted cars and moved rocks.

- Does this extraordinary strength mean only physical power? What do we learn about God when the Word says that the Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power?
-
-

TEACHING:

Experiencing the Spirit of God may be something unfamiliar to you. Samson was an extraordinary man. Not only was he conceived by a sterile and childless woman but he was set apart as a Nazirite. He was raised in a godly home to parents who called on the Lord for wisdom as they brought up the boy for the life and work God had for him to do.

You may be wondering: If I haven’t experienced the Spirit of God does that mean something is wrong with me? The Spirit of God is not a feeling. It’s not waiting for an emotional experience. The Spirit of God comes upon our lives in powerful ways that are quite ordinary. Bringing His love and compassion to a lonely, hurting friend, listening attentively to the disappointment and fear of someone who has lost a job or missed a promotion, and celebrating an accomplishment, a

birth or an engagement are all examples of ordinary ways in which the Spirit of the Lord comes in power.

For those who have been made His in baptism, the Spirit of the Lord comes in power as He claims them to be His own. He sets them apart for His holy purposes. The use of ordinary water and His holy Word combine to give us an extraordinary experience. In baptism He makes us His children, heirs of His Kingdom and offers life everlasting with Him. In baptism He takes the pollution of our sin and gives us an extraordinary measure of His grace and mercy through the forgiveness of all our sins. If you have not experienced the extraordinary gift of His grace and mercy, the forgiveness of all of your sins through faith in Jesus, my prayer for you is that the Spirit of the Lord will come to you in power in this moment.

PRAYER:

O Jesus, You have died for me. You are my Savior. May Your Spirit come to me in power that comes only from knowing You. Keep me from looking for an extraordinary experience filled with emotion and feeling but rather open my eyes to see Your Spirit at work in the ordinary ways in which You choose to use me. Today I especially offer to You my prayer of praise and thanksgiving for all the blessings You have so graciously poured out on my life.

REVIEW:

Already in Judges 13, even before he was born, we learned that Samson was to be a Nazirite, set apart to God (verse 5) and that he would begin the deliverance of the Israelites from the Philistines. In Judges 14:2 we learned that Samson chose to marry a Philistine woman. This woman was a means God used to confront the Philistines (Judges 14:4). However, in his anger and because of her manipulation Samson returned to his father's house and his wife was given to a friend who had attended him at his wedding.

LESSON FIVE ~ PART 5

ASSIGNMENT:

Read Judges 15. Once again you will be looking for the facts of the story.

- What did Samson learn when he returned to his wife?
- What was Samson's revenge?
- What was the response of the Philistines?
- How did the Israelites get involved?
- What was God's response to Samson's need?

EXERCISE:

1. What happened when Samson returned to be with his Philistine wife (verses 1-2)?

2. What was her father's solution to the problem?

3. Samson felt that his revenge on the Philistines was justified. What did he decide to do (verses 4-5)?

4. How did the Philistines respond (verse 6)?

5. What was Samson's response (verse 7-8)?

6. The rock of Etam was located in the territory of the tribe of Judah. In order to capture Samson the Philistines camped out in Judah. What did Judah do once they understood what the Philistines wanted (verse 11-13)?

7. Once again, what happened in verse 14?

8. It appears that Samson's revenge on the Philistines was completed. He was satisfied. The place was called

9. Samson has a real need in verse 18. What is it?

10. How did the Lord respond?

And, Samson was strengthened and revived.

11. Israel was under the rule of the Philistines. Samson, however, served as judge and led the Israelites during this period of time. How long?

TEACHING:

This chapter is about revenge. Revenge is getting even with an individual or group. Revenge becomes like an insatiable appetite. It is never satisfied. Revenge is the attempt to get the upper hand. "It's payback time! I will retaliate. I will get back at you." "I won't let this pass without retribution." "You caused me pain and now I'm going to see to it that you experience pain." And, each infliction is worse than the one before. "I won't rest until you get what I believe you deserve." It insinuates that I'm right and you are wrong.

CHALLENGE QUESTION:

What is the antidote to revenge and how is it obtained?

LESSON SIX ~ PART 1

WHAT WE LEARN ABOUT GOD:

What do these verses tell us about God and vengeance?

- Deuteronomy 32:35 –

- Isaiah 2:12, 17-18 –

- Leviticus 19:18 –

- Romans 12:17-21 –

Write a summary statement. What do we learn about God and vengeance from these passages?

APPLICATION:

We must take time to consider our own response to the evil that is done to us whether intentional or not. Unjust things happen every day. Some things just don't seem fair. Certain actions and responses are just not right. How do we respond? Samson felt justified in seeking revenge for the wrong that had been done to him by the Philistines and vice versa. From our teaching what have we learned is the godly response to bearing a grudge or seeking revenge?

Does a particular injustice come to your mind, something done to you or by you. What are God's instructions for living at such times as this?

When do you find it difficult to respond in a godly manner to an injustice?

The newspapers are filled with incidences of people acting revengefully against others. During this next week clip out articles that the media considers worthy of attention but in essence are only stories of vengeance. What might we learn from these outcomes?

MEMORIZATION:

Read Psalm 94. Pay back is God's job. God is the Judge. He is the One who is our fortress and our rock, a place where we can run to and hide. Samson ran to the cave in the rock of Etam. The Lord our God is our rock in whom we can take refuge. He will pay back and destroy the wicked. This is His promise. Write Psalm 94:1-2, 22-23 on an index card. Memorize it! Keep the card handy and note the different times when you observe revenge or when you yourself wanted retribution.

LESSON SIX ~ PART 2

TEACHING:

Dealing with revenge as God would have us do is beyond our human ability. Our inclination is to pay back evil for evil. Jesus Himself gives us the example of the ultimate cost for not rendering evil for evil. Look up the following references and consider the truths these passages teach:

References	Teaching
Matthew 5:44-45	
Luke 23:34	
Acts 7:59-60	
Romans 12:14-21	
1 Peter 2:23-24	
1 Peter 3:9	

Write a summary of what these references teach regarding our response to those who mistreat us.

PRAYER:

O Lord, often I find myself in situations when I feel that others have treated me unjustly. You must have felt that way when you were crucified on the cross. What had you done to deserve such punishment, even death? You were silent. You didn't seek retribution or revenge. You never asked the Father to pay back evil for evil. You kept silent for my sake. Give me an extra measure of Your power. May Your Spirit of power come on me, Lord, so that rather than seek revenge I am able to love others as You have loved me.

INTRODUCTION:

Judges 16:1-22 begins and ends in Gaza, a town situated in the southern part of Philistine territory. Locate this town on the map just off the Mediterranean coast due west of the Dead Sea. The story of Samson and Delilah reveals the vulnerability of this man to the deception of sin. Remember that God had given the instruction to Manoah and his wife that their son Samson was to be a Nazirite. One distinguishing stipulation for Samson was that his hair was not to be cut (Judges 13:5).

Another important fact to remember is that as a Nazirite Samson was set apart to begin the deliverance of Israelites from the Philistines. We learned that once again Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord who delivered them into the hands of the Philistines (Judges 13:1). The Philistines were intimidating because of their advanced use of iron. For much of Israel's history these people remained a menacing threat. They were a remnant of those who occupied the Promised Land at the time Israel began to take possession. Now during the time of Samson's leadership they continued to be a threat to the Israelites.

The relationship between Samson and Delilah is familiar. Hollywood has made movies about this story; however, many people do not understand that Samson had been set apart to God for His righteous purposes. As you read the story consider the relationship between these two characters and consider whether or not this truly is a love story.

ASSIGNMENT:

Read Judges 16:1-22. Watch for the *facts* of the story.

- Who are the characters in the story?
- What is the plot?
- How does the story end?

LESSON SIX ~ PART 3

EXERCISE:

1. What do the people of Gaza, the Philistines, set out to accomplish (verses 1-2)?

- a. Where was Samson?

- b. How did he escape (verse 3)?

2. Delilah is the new love of Samson's life (verse 4). She was cunning and conniving. What was the scheme she agreed to with the Philistine rulers (verse 5)?

- a. What was she to do?

- b. What would be her compensation?

3. Three times Delilah asked Samson to reveal the secret of his strength and three times he deceived her. Note the progression of her crafty approaches:

- a. Verse 6: _____

- b. Verse 10: _____

- c. Verse 13: _____

Delilah was persistent in her ploy for her personal and selfish gain.

4. And, three times Samson gave flippant and frivolous responses:

- a. Verse 7: _____

- b. Verse 11: _____

- c. Verse 13: _____

Samson enjoyed withholding the secret of his strength from Delilah.

5. What were Delilah's accusations (verses 10, 13, 15)?

6. What means did Delilah use to finally discover the secret of his great strength (verse 16)?

7. With nagging and prodding she wore Samson down and he told her everything. Delilah succeeded. She got the information she needed, told the Philistine rulers who came running with their payoff of silver, cut his hair while he was sleeping, and _____ (verse 19).

8. What happens when Samson awakens (verse 20)?

a. The Philistines seized him. What did they do to him?

b. Where did they take him?

c. What did they make him do?

9. What does verse 22 say that seems to offer a small ray of hope?

REFLECTION:

One can't help but ask the question: What went wrong? Here was a man who had supernatural physical power, a man who had been set apart to God from birth, who led Israel for twenty years, and who was to begin Israel's deliverance from their oppressor. Now this same man is weak, blind, and has been set to grinding in the prison. The oppressor he had been sent to destroy seemingly has destroyed him.

Samson's uncontrolled sexual appetites ultimately led to his ruin. He demanded that his parents get a Philistine woman for his wife (Judges 14:2). He took a prostitute (Judges 16:1) and now has fallen in love with another woman (Judges 16:4). Serious consequences followed each relationship. With his wife the situation had to do with a riddle and the consequence was giving thirty garments and sets of clothes. With the prostitute it had to do with the people of Gaza attempting to kill him and the city gates were destroyed, and with Delilah his strength was gone and the Lord also left him. What more would it take for this man to learn the foolishness of his ways?

In many ways Samson appears to be childlike having the body and strength of an adult man but living as foolishly as a child who lacks discipline and maturity. His appetites determine his actions. His character lacks strength. As a result, he is vulnerable to his own appetites and lacks discernment and fortitude to respond wisely to the temptations posed by others.

One can't help but wonder what he thought about all day shackled and grinding in prison. If you had the opportunity to interview Samson one morning while he was at the wheel, what are three questions you would like to ask him? Your questions are not to be answered with a "yes" or a "no." Your questions are not to begin with the word "why?"

- _____
- _____
- _____

LESSON SIX ~ PART 4

APPLICATION:

We can't look critically at Samson if we are not willing to look critically at our own lives. Take time to consider those things that make you vulnerable to poor judgment and discretion. Consider the appetites that expose weaknesses in your character:

What do you hear them saying to you as they wear you down with their nagging and prodding?

In what ways do they accuse you of lying and foolishness?

What strength is yours as you determine how to handle the onslaught of temptation?

EXERCISE:

If we draw on our strength alone, we lack the strength God makes available to us. What do these verses teach us about real strength?

Reference

Teaching

Exodus 15:2	
2 Samuel 22:33	
Psalms 46:1	
Isaiah 40:31	
1 Corinthians 1:25	
1 Peter 4:11	

MEMORIZATION:

Philippians 4:13 is a short verse to memorize. However, this verse holds truth. It reminds us that we can do all things, even when faced with the impossible. The word “everything” includes all things. The source of all strength is the Lord. I can do everything through Him! He is the provider of all strength. He is the one who provides me with strength. Once again you are encouraged to write this passage on an index card. Enjoy the exercise of memorizing it. Practice drawing on the strength of the Lord for all of your strength whether physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual.

PRAYER:

Write your prayer using Ephesians 3:16 and Colossians 1:11. Change pronouns to make your prayer personal. God wants to hear you use His Word as you speak to Him in the same way a parent enjoys hearing a child use words and concepts that the parent has taught the child.

ASSIGNMENT:

Samson was captured; his eyes were gouged out, and now the Philistines have him in Gaza grinding in the prison. Judges 16:22 says that his hair began to grow again. His strength was returning. Read Judges 16:23. Be on the lookout for the following:

- Why were the Philistines celebrating?
- What was their entertainment?
- What was Samson’s prayer?
- How did God answer Samson’s prayer?

EXERCISE:

1. What did the Philistine rulers decide to do (verse23)?

2. Who did they credit for the capture of Samson?

3. Their revenge was fulfilled. What had Samson done that made him their enemy (verse 24)? Review these references:
 - a. Judges 14:19 - _____
 - b. Judges 15:3-5 - _____
 - c. Judges 15:14-15 - _____
4. The crowd had been eating and drinking and now they called for Samson. What did they want him to do (verse 25)?

5. What did Samson ask a servant to do (verse 26)?

6. What do we learn about Dagon's temple in verse 27? Who had gathered to watch Samson perform?

7. What was Samson's prayer (verse 28)?

8. Samson placed his hands on each of the two central pillars of the temple. What were his final words?
 - a. He pushed with all his might and

 - b. Who was killed with him?

9. What are we told in verse 31?

LESSON SIX ~ PART 5

REFLECTION:

The Philistine rulers believed that the ultimate revenge was theirs. They sacrificed and feasted confident that their god Dagon had delivered Samson into their hands. But, Samson continued to seek revenge one last time. In verse 28 he asked the Sovereign Lord for the strength to execute one blow that would give him revenge for the loss of his eyes. In a physical sense he had lost his eyesight. One can't help but ask if he hadn't also lost his spiritual eyesight. The people had been feasting and celebrating their deliverance of Samson into their hands. They were giving Dagon the credit for their success and offered a great sacrifice to this god of theirs. Worshipping this false god, however, was not what caused Samson to call upon the Lord asking for one more extraordinary display of strength. Rather he sought to revenge the Philistines for the loss of his two eyes.

- What had caused Samson to lose his perspective? What caused him to forget that God had set him apart for His own righteous purposes?

- How had Samson's vengeance on the Philistines replaced his ability to see things from God's perspective?

- Did blind Samson see things quite clearly and calling on the Lord bring God's vengeance on the Philistines who were celebrating Dagon's victory? Support your answer:

Take a few minutes and write some of your own reflections on this critical ending to Samson's life according to these verses in Judges 16:23-31

PRAYER:

O Sovereign Lord, through the life of Samson we see the destruction of vengeance. Ultimately, we see the destruction it causes, the loss of life—death. Samson lost a perspective on life that ended in death. Take the destruction of hatred from my life and replace it with Your love and forgiveness. Enable me to see life from Your perspective for You constantly forgive and grant to me Your grace and mercy. At all times keep my eyes focused on You, the Giver of every good and perfect gift. Fill me with Your compassion and empower me to respond to all of life with grace and mercy, not repaying evil for evil but repaying evil with good.

THE BOOK OF JUDGES CONCLUDES:

Although we will not be looking with detail on the remaining chapters in the Book of Judges, one sentence remains that is repeated several times. What are we told in Judges 17:6, 18:1, 19:1 and 21:25?

Corruption was rampant. Above all else, idols and other images were made, worshipped and kept within the homes of the Israelites. In addition, the priests were crooked, seeking their own things rather than the things of God. The lifestyle of the times is summarized in this repeated sentence: “In those days, Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.” The Book of Judges ends with these words.

Without obedience to God’s commands and laws the Israelites made for themselves their own laws. They made themselves the god who governed their lives. Their law was that there was no law. They lost their identity as God’s people. They blended in and looked like everyone else. They no longer lived as people set apart to God. They abandoned their responsibilities to the community and regarded themselves as individuals of greater importance.

Consider ways in which “everyone did as he saw fit” can be observed and one change you can make that would make a difference:

- Within society?
-

- Within the family?
-

- Within yourself?
-

REVIEW

Identify the names of the people you recall from your study. Write a couple of words that tell about those individuals. Don't be discouraged if you don't remember all of them. This isn't a test, so take time to look up references to trigger your memory!

Name	Words of Recollection	Reference
Joshua		Joshua 1
Rahab		Joshua 2
Achan		Joshua 7
Ehud, Deborah, and Gideon		Judges 3-6
Nazirites		Judges 13:7
Samson		Judges 13
Philistines		Judges 13:1
Delilah		Judges 16

A few phrases and sentences were repeated in our study. List those you remember. References are given to help get you started.

1. Joshua 1:6 _____
2. Joshua 10:28 _____
3. Joshua 11:23 _____
4. Judges 1:19 _____
5. Judges 2:11 _____
6. Judges 14:19 _____

Write three or four sentences that describe what has happened to the Israelites in the Books of Joshua and Judges. What has happened to them in regards to the land, their leadership, taking possession of the land, living without a king, and the ongoing rise and decline of their spiritual lives as they related to God and worshipped other gods?
