

# Judges Group Studies – Introduction

## Background Notes

- Some of the central problems in the history of Israel are their forgetfulness of God's saving deeds, and their forsaking of God in terms of intermarrying with the nations and worshipping their gods. As a period in Israelite history, the period of the Judges certainly demonstrates these themes. It raises the hope of a king who will keep Israel on the straight and narrow.
- From Joshua onwards, a new concept of history begins to develop in the Bible: that the events of Israelite history are God's response to their faithfulness or unfaithfulness, within his greater plan for them. He tests Israel by giving them the task of driving out the tribes in promised land. But they fail to obey him, leaving people in the land and not destroying their altars. So God judges them by not driving the peoples out for them. Yet his judgement is a further test of whether they will remain faithful with the temptations of the pagan nations around them. In the process he is helping them better understand their covenant relationship with him. We see this in the pattern of rebellion and salvation that illustrates God's faithfulness and salvation despite the harsh consequences of disobedience.
- The Judges were more leaders and military deliverers than civil or religious judges. It is important that God chose them rather than it being a hereditary or democratic position.
- The book of Judges establishes a pattern of events: People serve other Gods; God lets a nation oppress them; They cry out for help; God raises a judge to deliver them; The oppressors are defeated; There is peace until the death of the Judge. However, the pattern is not just cyclical – it is a downward spiral by the end of which victory and peace are no longer clear or lasting.

## Study Plan (see hand-out below)

- Begin with prayer for God's help in coming to grips with the book of Judges
- “A People”
  - Read 1:1-3 as the introduction to the book
  - Give a brief outline of Israelite history to this point (especially from Egypt to the Promised Land) and from this point on (the kingship starts in Israel with Saul, David etc.). Introduce judges as the period between entering the Promised Land and the start of the kingship.
  - Point out some of the major themes that the book will raise: evil, judgement, salvation, saviours, anarchy.
- “A Prelude”
  - Read Deuteronomy 7:1-6
  - Fill out the table
    - When:
      - The Lord your God brings you into the land
      - The Lord your God has delivered them over to you
    - Do:
      - Destroy them totally
      - Make no treaty with them
      - Break down their altars
      - smash their sacred stones
      - cut down their Asherah poles
      - burn their idols in the fire
    - Do Not:
      - Make a treaty
      - Show mercy
      - Intermarry
    - Because:
      - They will turn you away from God
      - God will get angry and destroy you

- You are a people holy to God
    - The Lord your God has chosen you
    - You are his treasured possession
- “A prologue”
  - Read 1:27-33
  - Questions
    - What is the obvious emphasis here?
      - Peoples not driven out when they should have been
    - What tension does this raise?
      - What will God do?
  - Read 2:1-5
    - What is the actual punishment here?
      - A punishment that will likely result in more disobedience?
      - An object lesson of the relationship between God and his people
      - Another stage of refinement like the wilderness – disobedience prompting correction.
  - If you have the DVD, “Judge Dredd”, watch the voice-over introduction.
  - Read 2:10-2:16 (on the sheet)
- “A Pattern”
  - Read 2:10-19
  - Split up the doughnut shape into sections according to the pattern described
  - What are the characteristics of a judge?
    - Delivers from raiders
    - God with them
    - Tell the people what to do
  - Why does the pattern repeat?
    - Judge Dies
    - Israel ignore the Judge
  - What expectations does the pattern raise?
    - A judge who doesn’t die?
    - A new heart for Israel?
    - A way for God to preserve the covenant?
  - Read 2:20-3:6
  - What is the point of God’s punishment?
    - To refine his people by testing them
    - To illustrate what is lacking in their covenant relationship
- “A Point”
  - How do we go about working out the relevance of the passage for us?
    - Identify the big themes/principles/questions (e.g. how does relationship with God work, given human sinfulness?)
    - Work out how Jesus resolves these themes (e.g. Jesus deals with our sin so we can remain in good relationship with God)
    - Brainstorm situations where we personally encounter this theme (e.g. When we find ourselves trapped in a cycle of sin)
  - So what are the themes/principles applicable to us?
    - E.g. 1 Peter 2:9-12: Us as the people of God who are rescued by God
    - E.g. 1 Cor 10:1-12: Warnings important for Christian growth
    - E.g. Heb 3:8-15: We’re being refined by God
- Finish by allocating weeks of the series for different members to prepare
- Close in prayer



After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel... They provoked the Lord to anger because they forsook him and served Baal... In his anger against Israel the Lord handed them over to raiders who plundered them... Whenever Israel went out to fight, the hand of the Lord was against them to defeat them, just as he had sworn to them. They were in great distress.

Then the Lord raised up judges...

<i>Prologue</i>	(1:1-2:5)
<i>Synopsis</i>	(2:7-3:6)
<b>Othniel</b>	(3:7-11)
<b>Ehud</b>	(3:12-30)
<b>Shamgar</b>	(3:31)
<b>Deborah</b>	(4:1-5:31)
<b>Gideon</b>	(6:1-8:32)
<i>Abimelech</i>	(8:33-9:6)
<b>Tola</b>	(10:1-2)
<b>Jair</b>	(10:3-5)
<b>Jephthah</b>	(10:6-12:7)
<b>Ibzan</b>	(12:8-10)
<b>Elon</b>	(12:11-12)
<b>Abdon</b>	(12:13-15)
<b>Samson</b>	(13-16)
<i>Epilogue</i>	(17-21)

**A People:** Genesis to Joshua

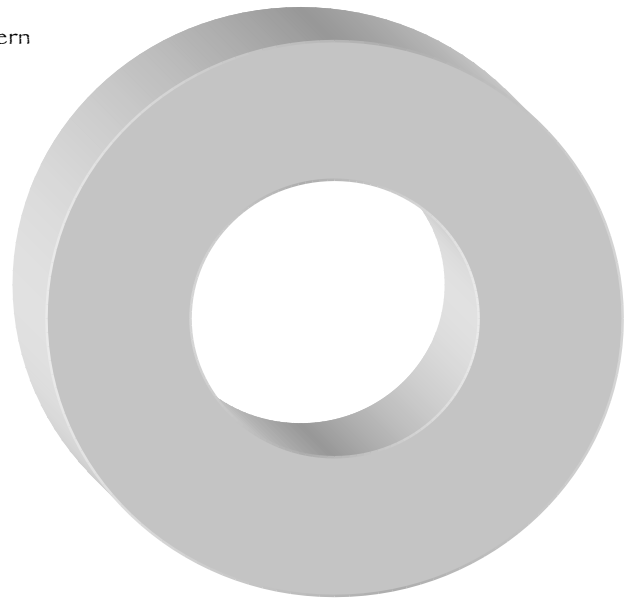
**A Prelude:** Deuteronomy 7:1-6

When...	Do:	Don't:	Because -

**A Prologue:** Judges 1 -----> Judges 2:1-5  
 Emphasis?  What is the actual punishment here?  
 Tension?

**A Pattern:** Judges 2:10-19 - Draw a diagram of the pattern

- What are the characteristics of a Judge?
- Why does the Pattern repeat?
- What expectations does it raise?



**A Purpose:** Read 2:20-3:6 - Again, what is the point of God's punishment?

**A Point:** How do we go about working out the relevance of this passage for us?

So what are the applicable principles?

1 Peter 2:9-12
1 Corinthians 1-12
Hebrews 3:8-15