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Judges 1

"Conquer or Be Conquered"

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The book of Judges was named for the form of leadership that was over Israel between the time of Joshua's death and the beginning of Israel's monarchy (rule by kings). The book covers about 400 years of Israel's history. There are 12 judges listed in this book, as well as a few others mentioned in 1 Samuel. The six major judges are Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, and Tola. The six minor judges are Jair, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, and Samson. These judges were not black-robed officials with gavels. They were military heroes or deliverers whom God raised up to lead Israel.¹

There are two key phrases that are often repeated in the book of Judges. The first is, *"The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord."*² The second is, *"In those days Israel had no king."*³ Additionally, two times we read in the book of Judges, that *"everyone did as he saw fit,"*⁴ which explains why the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord.

This was an extremely chaotic time in Israel's history. It was a time when they were without singular leadership or without the priesthood, except for one man who pretended to be one.⁵ The first two chapters are somewhat of a prologue that describes this time in Israel's history as a cycle of sin, which Israel finds itself in after Joshua's death. (See diagram at the end of this study guide)

The reason they kept falling back into sin and idolatry was because they never really purged the land of pagan influence. They allowed a remnant to remain and never totally drove out the pagan people who were leading them down a pagan path. Ungodly

¹ [Judges 2:16](#) - *"Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them out of the hands of these raiders."*

² [Judges 2:11, 3:7, 3:12, 4:1, 6:1, 10:6, and 13:1](#)

³ [Judges 17:6, 18:1, 19:1, and 21:25](#)

⁴ [Judges 17:6 and 21:25](#)

⁵ [Judges 17](#)

influences caused them to struggle to live effectively and consistently for God, like they had sworn to do.

We read in [Judges 2:1-3](#), that the angel of the Lord appeared to the Israelites to confront them about their sin.⁶ This was an appearance of Jesus.⁷ He spoke in the first person as God, and he basically said, “You have allowed the ungodly influence to remain and steal you away from God; therefore, those things will be *‘thorns in your sides and their gods will be a snare to you.’*” Moses had told this very same thing years before, when he said: “*But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land, those you allow to remain will become barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides. They will give you trouble in the land where you will live.*” The message was a simple one: Conquer or be conquered!

In this study, we’ll learn what Believers have experienced, but may have never identified as a progression in their walk with the Lord: isolation, insulation, and infiltration.

Isolation

1. When the Lord saves us, we need to pull back and separate ourselves for a time.
 - a. There are some friends we need to lose.
 - b. There are some places we need to stop going.
 - c. There are some things we need to stop doing.
 - d. There are some words we need to stop saying.
2. Becoming a Christian is not simply folding Jesus into the life we are living and carrying on with life as usual.
 - a. Jesus is not like a hitchhiker that you invite into your car so he can join you on the journey you’re taking.
 - b. Becoming a Christ-follower means pulling off the road, getting into the back seat, and letting him drive!
3. Becoming a Christian means recognizing that we were on a reckless path that would ultimately lead to hell and that we need Jesus to rescue us and place us on a completely different path that leads to eternal life.

⁶ “The angel of the Lord went up from Gilgal to Bokim and said, ‘I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land that I swore to give to your forefathers. I said, ‘I will never break my covenant with you, and you shall not make a covenant with the people of this land, but you shall break down their altars.’ Yet you have disobeyed me. Why have you done this? Now therefore I tell you that I will not drive them out before you; they will be thorns in your sides and their gods will be a snare to you.’ ”

⁷ A Christophany is “an appearance before the incarnation of the second Person of the Trinity.” Karleen, P. S. (1987). *The handbook to Bible study: With a guide to the Scofield study system* (316). New York: Oxford University Press.

4. Becoming a Christian means we need to purge our lives of ungodly influences, counting the cost of following Jesus, and understanding the new path we are on and how important it is to have a measure of isolation and separation.
5. **2 Corinthians 6:14-17** - *“Do not be yoked with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial?⁸ What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people. Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord.’ ”*
6. **1 Peter 4:3-4** - *“For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do - living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you.”*
7. It’s important to remember that we are not to remain isolated forever!

Insulation

8. **Jude 20** - *“But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.”*
9. The insulation stage is a time of:
 - a. Becoming strong in your faith.
 - b. Being grounded in the Word of God.
 - c. Growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.
 - d. Becoming mature.

⁸ Common Hebrew noun meaning “baseness,” “worthlessness,” “wickedness,” or “lawlessness.” Belial, however, is often rendered as a proper noun. Thus, such translations as “sons of Belial” appear (Judges 19:22; 1 Samuel 2:12, KJV), “daughter of Belial” (1 Samuel 1:16), or “children of Belial” (Deuteronomy 13:13; Judges 20:13). Newer translations generally prefer the common noun form and give such readings as “worthless rabble” or simply “worthless” and the like (Deuteronomy 13:13; Judges 19:22; 20:13; 1 Samuel 1:16; 2:12; 10:27; Proverbs 6:12). One possible exception to this rule is found in Nahum 1:15, which some scholars think should be rendered as “Belial,” a personalized designation of the Assyrian conqueror who had been a threat to the southern kingdom of Judah. Intertestamental literature often used “Belial” as a proper noun and thus prepared the way for its New Testament usage. In the New Testament the term appears once as “Belial” (or Beliar in 2 Corinthians 6:15) and is identified with Satan, the personification of all that is evil. Noncanonical writings of the NT period commonly used it as a name for Satan or the Antichrist. Elwell, W. A., & Comfort, P. W. (2001). *Tyndale Bible dictionary*. Tyndale reference library (157). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

10. The reality is the more we are equipped in our faith, the more we are insulated and protected against some of the damaging effects of the world so we can go into the world to make a difference, rather than the world making a difference in us.
11. Becoming grounded in our faith and growing in the Word of God is like putting on a coat that insulates us against the harsh elements of the world, so we can go out into it without it having the same effect.
12. [Ephesians 6:10-11](#) - *"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes."*
13. Pastor Gary made the statement that it was his job to help insulate Christians against the world so they can be effective in it, and he gave [Ephesians 4:11-12](#) as the Lord's directive, not only for himself, but all of the pastors on staff.
 - a. [Ephesians 4:11-12](#) - *"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare [equip] God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up..."*
14. The Bible instructs every Christian to *"grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,"* according to [2 Peter 3:18](#).

Infiltration

15. Christians are called to infiltrate their world with the good news of Jesus!
16. In [Matthew 5:13](#), Jesus said, *"You are the salt of the earth..."*
17. Salt Penetrates
 - a. Salt flavors whatever it comes in contact with, and so should we.
 - b. In other words, we should rub off on people.
18. Salt Preserves
 - a. Meat that is cured with salt will not spoil.
 - b. While the world is decaying around us, we need to have a preserving effect.
19. Salt Purifies
 - a. Salt is a natural antiseptic, because it helps heal.

- b. As we hold out the pure Word of God, it will have a purifying and healing effect in the lives of sin-sick, dying people.

Conclusion

- 20. The Israelites failed at the first stage of isolating themselves against pagan influences, so the other states didn't matter (insulation and infiltration).
- 21. They were unwilling to push out the ungodly influences and be separate for the Lord, because they thought it was no big deal that a little bad remained.
- 22. They found out that there was resistance!
 - a. [Judges 1:27](#) - *"... the Canaanites were determined to live in that land."*
 - b. [Judges 1:35](#) - *"... the Amorites were determined also to hold out..."*
- 23. Ungodly things do not simply go away; we must be determined to uproot them from our lives.
- 24. [1 Peter 2:11](#) - *"Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul."*
- 25. When the Lord came and confronted the Israelites about this, something wonderful happened.
- 26. [Judges 2:4-5](#) - *"When the angel of the Lord had spoken these things to all the Israelites, they people wept aloud, and they called that place Bokim. There they offered sacrifices to the Lord."*
- 27. The Israelites wept over their sin and they appealed to the mercy of God, which is what God wants us to do.
- 28. God wants us to be broken over sin, to appeal to his mercy, and to ride our lives of every ungodly thing!

Discussion Questions

- 1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
- 2. Read [Judges 1:19-21, 27-36](#) to provide an overview for this study.

3. Allow the people in your group to share experiences they've had regarding times when they lived in a cycle of sin. (Print copies of the diagram to use as a handout)
 - a. What were some of the ungodly influences you allowed in your life?
 - b. How did the Lord help you completely remove these things from your life?
4. What did you learn during the lonely times you experienced when you started the process of separating yourself from people, places, activities, etc.?
5. How did the Lord minister to you and become your best friend?
6. Read and discuss [2 Corinthians 6:14-17](#) and [1 Peter 4:3-4](#).
7. Spend time talking about characteristics of individuals and churches that embrace the idea that Christians must remain isolated.
8. How has the Holy Spirit helped you grow in the Lord because you've invested time in reading his Word?
9. Read and discuss [Ephesians 6:10-11](#) and [2 Peter 3:18](#).
10. In what ways are you salt and light in your sphere of influence?
11. Read and discuss the characteristics of salt. (See #17 through #19 above)
12. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: accurately assess where they are in the process of maturation (isolation, insulation, and infiltration); purpose in their heart to remember the counsel of Scripture, no matter how long they've been a Christ-follower ([2 Corinthians 6:14-17](#) and [1 Peter 4:3-4](#)); be intentional when it comes to reading and studying the Bible; be difference-makers in their sphere of influence by being salt and light.



* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).