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THE 66-BOOK 8-WEEK GROUP BIBLE STUDY SERIES • BOOK 07 OF 66

שֹׁפְטִים

JUDGES

Shofetim — "judges" • An 8-Week Group Bible Study

By Greg and Kayla Gibson

WEEK 1 OF 8 • GENERAL / MIXED GROUP EDITION

A Generation Who Did Not Know the LORD — Judges 1:1–3:6

Scripture Scope: Judges 1:1–3:6 (ESV) • Session Length: 75–90 Minutes

LEADER GUIDE EDITION

Complete Participant Text + Interleaved Pacing, Hebrew Word Studies, Facilitation Probes & Pitfalls

Judges — 8-Week Group Bible Study (Leader Guide Edition)

Week 1: A Generation Who Did Not Know the LORD (Judges 1:1–3:6)

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- **The title:** The Hebrew title is Shofetim (שֹׁפְטִים), "judges," from the leaders the LORD raised up to save Israel (2:16). They were mainly deliverers and leaders, not court officials, though Deborah also decided cases (4:4–5). Behind every human judge stands the LORD, whom Jephthah calls "the Judge" (11:27).
- **The setting:** The book opens "after the death of Joshua" (1:1) and runs to the eve of Israel's monarchy. Israel lives as a loose family of tribes in the hill country, surrounded and often oppressed by its neighbors. How long the period lasted is uncertain; the years in the book seem to overlap, and scholars date it in different ways.
- **Its place in the Bible:** In the Hebrew Bible, Judges is the second of the Former Prophets, after Joshua. In English Bibles it is followed by Ruth, which is set "in the days when the judges ruled" (Ruth 1:1), and then by 1 Samuel, which tells of the last judges and the first king.
- **The structure (three parts):**
  - A double introduction (1:1–3:6): the unfinished conquest and the cycle explained.
  - The deliverers (3:7–16:31): Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah and Barak, Gideon (and Abimelech), Jephthah, Samson, and the minor judges.
  - A double conclusion (17:1–21:25): Micah's idols and the tribe of Dan, then the outrage at Gibeah and the civil war, framed by the refrain "Everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (17:6; 21:25).
- **The cycle:** Israel does evil, the LORD gives them into the hand of oppressors, Israel cries out, the LORD raises up a deliverer, the land has rest, and when the deliverer dies the cycle begins again (2:11–19). Each turn of the cycle goes lower.
- **Why it matters:** Judges shows what happens when a generation forgets the LORD (2:10). It reveals God's patience with a people who keep failing, and it shows Israel's need for a faithful king. It prepares the way for Ruth, Samuel, and David, and finally for Christ, the King and Deliverer who does not fail.

How This 8-Week Study Works

Designed for weekly small groups, mini-churches, and community gatherings (75–90 minutes per session) rather than daily homework checklists, each week of Judges invites you to slow down and walk through one of the Bible's most honest books together through six repeatable sections:

- **Section X.1 — Opening:** Sets the scene, the Week at a Glance, Head, Heart, and Hands objectives, the Opening Frame, and the Opening Entry Question.
- **Section X.2 — Historical & Literary Context:** Places the week's chapters inside the structure of Judges and the ancient Near Eastern world.
- **Section X.3 — Movement 1:** The week's first guided passage: Guided Scripture Reading, Anchor Verses, Teaching Narrative, and Group Discussion Questions.
- **Section X.4 — Movement 2:** The week's second guided passage, following the same flow.
- **Section X.5 — Canonical Horizon:** Traces how the passage echoes across Scripture and finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.
- **Section X.6 — Application, Looking Ahead, and Closing Prayer:** Moves the week's study into everyday life, previews next week, and closes in prayer.

Key anchor verses are printed in each section for quick reference. Longer focal passages are read aloud together from the ESV. Judges contains some of the hardest stories in Scripture, including scenes of violence and abuse. The study retells those scenes briefly in its own words rather than printing or reading them in full, so the group can understand what happened and why it is in the Bible without dwelling on graphic detail.

Choosing a Bible Translation: Top 5 Translations Compared

Every English Bible translation falls along a spectrum between two primary approaches: word-for-word translation (formal equivalence, which prioritizes literal accuracy to the original phrasing and sentence structure) and thought-for-thought translation (dynamic equivalence, which prioritizes immediate modern readability by translating idioms and ideas into natural contemporary expressions). Here is how five widely used English translations compare:

- **ESV (English Standard Version) — Word-for-Word**
  - Pros: Follows the wording and sentence structure of the original Hebrew and Greek closely while using modern English; well suited to close study.
  - Cons: Because it tracks the original sentence structure, some phrasing can feel more formal than everyday speech.
- **NIV (New International Version) — Balanced (Between Word-for-Word and Thought-for-Thought)**
  - Pros: Widely read; balances accuracy to the original languages with natural, everyday readability.
  - Cons: Because some idioms are rendered as modern expressions, a few literal wordplays or technical terms can be less visible.
- **NLT (New Living Translation) — Thought-for-Thought**
  - Pros: Warm and conversational; reads smoothly aloud and helps readers follow the big picture of long passages.
  - Cons: Because it prioritizes meaning over literal phrasing, it can be harder to use for close word study.
- **CSB (Christian Standard Bible) — Optimal Equivalence (Balanced)**
  - Pros: Stays close to the original words where possible while smoothing awkward phrasing into natural modern English.
  - Cons: Because it is a newer translation, some well-known verses may sound different from the wording many readers remember.
- **KJV / NKJV (King James Version & New King James Version) — Traditional Word-for-Word**
  - Pros: Historic cadence that shaped English literature and church history; the NKJV updates archaic pronouns ("thee/thou") while keeping the classic rhythm.
  - Cons: Often reads like older English poetry, with complex sentences and archaic or formal vocabulary that can be harder for modern readers to follow.

This study quotes the ESV.

Greg & Kayla's Recommended Study Bibles

Having a trusted study Bible on hand is one of the best ways to go deeper as you read through Judges:

- **Greg's Favorite Study Bible:** The MacArthur Study Bible (ESV), which contains extensive explanatory notes beneath almost every verse, ideal for detailed study.
- **Kayla's Favorite Study Bible:** The ESV Study Bible, containing over 20,000 study notes, articles, and explanations.

The 8-Week Judges Study at a Glance

Week	Title & Passage	Movement 1 / Movement 2	Canonical Horizon
1	**A Generation Who Did Not Know the LORD** (1:1–3:6)	The Unfinished Conquest (1:1–2:5) / The Cycle Begins (2:6–3:6)	Passing on faith; the Deliverer who does not die
2	**The LORD Raised Up Deliverers** (3:7–5:31)	Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar (3:7–31) / Deborah, Barak, and Jael (4:1–5:31)	God's unlikely instruments; the song of victory
3	**The LORD Is with You** (6:1–7:25)	Gideon Called (6:1–40) / Three Hundred Men (7:1–25)	Power made perfect in weakness; light in jars of clay
4	**Who Will Rule?** (8:1–9:57)	Gideon's Last Years (8:1–35) / Abimelech and Jotham's Fable (9:1–57)	The LORD our King; the servant-King
5	**The Outcast and the Vow** (10:1–12:15)	The Outcast Called Home (10:1–11:28) / Jephthah's Vow and Its Aftermath (11:29–12:15)	The God who cannot bear his people's misery; the rejected one made head; careful words and the sacrifice God provides
6	**Samson: Strength and Weakness** (13:1–16:31)	Birth and Early Exploits (13:1–15:20) / Delilah, Gaza, and Samson's Death (16:1–31)	The promised child; victory through death
7	**Right in His Own Eyes** (17:1–19:30)	Micah's Idols and the Danites (17:1–18:31) / The Outrage at Gibeah (19:1–30)	Worship God's way; the King who protects the vulnerable
8	**No King in Israel** (20:1–21:25)	Civil War Against Benjamin (20:1–48) / Wives for Benjamin and the Final Verdict (21:1–25)	The coming King; one people

How to Use This Leader Guide Edition

This **Leader Guide Edition** is built on a synchronized two-edition architecture so you never have to juggle two separate books during your small group or mini-church gathering:

1. 100% Word-for-Word Participant Text Included: Every section, Scripture reading prompt, verbatim ESV anchor verse callout, teaching narrative, table, and discussion or reflection prompt appears here **word-for-word identical** to what your group members see in their Participant Study Edition. Section numbers and question labels match exactly, so leaders and participants can stay on the same page.

2. Interleaved [LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY] Blocks: Immediately following each section, you will find a dedicated leader block containing:

- **Pacing & Time Targets** calibrated for a 75–90 minute session. Pacing targets appear in every Leader section header. If time runs short, shorten the Teaching Narratives rather than the discussion.
- **Hebrew Word Study & Ancient Near Eastern Research Quick-References** so you can explain terms naturally without lecturing, when they add something useful.
- **Question-by-Question Facilitation Probes** listed in question order, designed to move conversation past polite answers into honest reflection.

- **Pitfalls to Steer Around** so you can gently redirect common rabbit trails back to the biblical text.
- **Additional Research Notes** appear when they add something useful.

3. Leader Flags: Numbered in reading order, they mark passages that need pastoral care or tend to raise hard questions, with guidance on handling them. Judges contains scenes of war, assassination, a father's terrible vow, and the abuse of women. The flags give a consistent approach week by week: retell the scene briefly in your own words, never read graphic verses aloud, say plainly what the text condemns, and make room for members who carry their own wounds.

4. Reading aloud: Assign readers ahead of time for the Guided Scripture Reading. Printed anchor verses are for quick reference; read the longer focal passages from an open ESV. Passages marked "in brief" are retold by the leader rather than read.

5. Facilitating well: Ask the printed question, wait, and let silence work. Use the probes to deepen, not to lecture. Aim for every voice to be heard at least once each session.

Week 1 Session Pacing at a Glance (75–90 Minutes)

Section	Focus	Time Target
Section 1.1	Opening: A Generation Who Did Not Know the LORD (Judges 1:1–3:6) (1.1 Q1)	**10 mins**
Section 1.2	Historical & Literary Context: After the Death of Joshua (1.2 Q1–Q3)	**12 mins**
Section 1.3	Movement 1: The Unfinished Conquest (Judges 1:1–2:5) (1.3 Q1–Q5)	**22 mins**
Section 1.4	Movement 2: The Cycle Begins (Judges 2:6–3:6) (1.4 Q1–Q5)	**20 mins**
Section 1.5	Canonical Horizon: Passing On Faith and the Deliverer Who Does Not Die (1.5 Q1–Q3)	**12 mins**
Section 1.6	Application, Looking Ahead, and Closing Prayer (1.6 Q1–Q3)	**9 mins**
Total	**Full Week 1 Group Session**	**75–90 mins**

WEEK 1 OF 8

WEEK 1 SESSION GUIDE · JUDGES 1:1–3:6

Week 1: A Generation Who Did Not Know the LORD

Scripture Scope: Judges 1:1–3:6 (ESV) • Focal Passages: Judges 1:1–2; 1:27–36 (selected); 2:1–5; 2:6–19 • Session Length: 75–90 Minutes

Section 1.1

Opening: A Generation Who Did Not Know the LORD (Judges 1:1–3:6)

Passage **Judges 1:1–3:6**

Opening

Joshua is dead. The land has been given, but much of it is not yet possessed. Israel begins well, asking the LORD who should go up first, and Judah goes. But one by one the tribes settle for less: the Canaanites stay, treaties are made, and their altars stand. The angel of the LORD comes with a rebuke, and the people weep.

Then comes the sentence that explains the whole book: after Joshua's generation died, another generation arose who did not know the LORD or what he had done. What follows is a pattern that will repeat for centuries: sin, oppression, crying out, and rescue, again and again.

Week 1 At a Glance

Scripture Scope	Judges 1:1–3:6 (the unfinished conquest and the cycle explained)
Focal Passages	Judges 1:1–2; 1:27–36 (selected); 2:1–5; 2:6–19
Literary & Structural Anchor	Judges opens with two introductions. The first (1:1–2:5) is political and military: tribe after tribe "did not drive out" the Canaanites, and the record grows worse from Judah in the south to Dan, which is pushed back into the hills. The second (2:6–3:6) is spiritual: a generation forgets the LORD, and the book's cycle is laid out. The week turns on 2:10, where a generation "did not know the LORD."
Big Idea	When a generation does not know the LORD for itself, it drifts into the ways of its neighbors; yet the LORD, moved by his people's groaning, keeps raising up deliverers.

Week 1 Learning Objectives (Head, Heart, Hands)

HEAD **Know the Pattern:** Understand the two introductions of Judges, why Israel's failure to drive out the Canaanites mattered, and the cycle of sin and rescue in 2:11–19.

HEART **Know the LORD, Not Only About Him:** Examine whether our faith rests on our own knowledge of God or on borrowed memories, and receive the comfort of a God who is moved by groaning.

HANDS **Pass It On:** Take one concrete step to tell the next generation what the LORD has done.

Opening Frame: After the Death of Joshua

Joshua ended with a promise and a warning. The people said, "The LORD our God we will serve" (Joshua 24:24), but Joshua had warned that the nations left in the land would become snares and thorns (Joshua 23:13). Judges opens "after the death of Joshua," just as Joshua opened after the death of Moses. The great leaders who saw the Red Sea, the Jordan, and the walls of Jericho are passing away, and much of the land is still unclaimed. What happens to a people when the leaders who saw God's great acts are gone? The question for this week: will the next generation know the LORD for themselves? Before we read together, take a moment to share with the group:

Opening Entry Question (Icebreaker)

1.1 Q1 (Opening Entry Question): Think of a family tradition, a church habit, or a value that someone started. Did it last after that person was gone? What helped it last, or what made it fade?

◆ LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY — SECTION 1.1 · SECTION PACING TARGET: 10 MINUTES

- **Pacing & Time Target:** 10 minutes. Opening and At a Glance, 3 minutes; Head, Heart, Hands, 2 minutes; Opening Frame, 2 minutes; Opening Entry Question, 3 minutes.
- **Facilitation Cues & Follow-Up Probes:**
  - Welcome the group to a new book. Tell them plainly that Judges is honest about human failure and contains hard stories, and that the study will handle them carefully. Take three or four answers to the icebreaker and keep it light.
  - Follow-up probe for **1.1 Q1**: Who started it, and why did it matter to them? Did the next generation understand the reason behind it? What would it take to keep it going?
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around:** Do not start a discussion of prodigal children here; that belongs in 1.4 with Leader Flag 4. Do not front-load the whole book's violence; mention only that hard stories are coming.
- **Additional Research Notes:** Joshua 24:28–31 is repeated almost word for word in Judges 2:6–9, and then 2:10 adds the turning point. The book is framed by Israel asking who should "go up first" (1:1; 20:18), with the same answer, Judah, but a very different enemy at the end.
- **Hebrew Word Study:** Yada' (יָדַע), "know," in 2:10, where another generation "did not know the LORD." In this opening it names the week's big idea: the problem is not missing facts but a generation that never made the LORD's acts its own story.

Section 1.2

Historical & Literary Context: After the Death of Joshua (Judges 1:1–3:6)

Passage **Judges 1:1–3:6**

Entering the World of the Tribes After Joshua

1. Historical Background

The book does not name its author. Jewish tradition credits Samuel. The refrain "there was no king in Israel" (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25) suggests it was written after the monarchy began, and the note that the Jebusites still lived in Jerusalem (1:21) suggests a time before David took the city. The period runs from Joshua's death to the eve of the monarchy. If the years in the book are added end to end they total about 410, more than any dating allows, so most scholars conclude that some judges overlapped and served different regions.

2. Cultural Setting

Around 1200 BC the older world of city-states collapsed, and hundreds of small, unwalled villages appeared in the central hill country. Many scholars connect them with early Israel. Canaanite cities remained strong in the valleys and plains, where chariots were effective (1:19, 27). Baal, the Canaanite storm god, was believed to bring rain and fertility, a constant temptation for farmers in a land that depended on rain.

3. Literary Structure of Judges 1:1–3:6

- **Who will go up first?** (1:1–2)
- **Judah and Simeon** (1:3–20)
- **Benjamin and Joseph** (1:21–26)
- **The tribes that did not drive out the Canaanites** (1:27–36)
- **The angel at Bochim** (2:1–5)
- **Joshua's death retold** (2:6–9)
- **Another generation** (2:10)
- **The cycle explained** (2:11–19)
- **The LORD's verdict and the nations left to test Israel** (2:20–3:6)

4. Key Themes

Forgetting and remembering; partial obedience; the cycle of sin and grace; the LORD's anger and pity; testing.

5. Theological Considerations

Judges sets out a pattern rather than only a list of events. Israel's sin is relational: they "abandoned the LORD" (2:12). Yet the cycle is driven as much by God's compassion as by Israel's sin, for the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning (2:18).

6. Relevant Scholarly Insights

Many critical scholars treat Judges as part of a larger history completed during the exile; evangelical scholars generally hold that it was written early in the monarchy from older sources. Leaders should present the chronology as uncertain rather than fixed.

The cycle of Judges:

Israel does evil → the LORD gives them into the hand of oppressors → Israel cries out → the LORD raises up a deliverer → the land has rest → the judge dies, and Israel turns back, worse than before

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.2)

> **1.2 Q1:** Judges begins by asking, "Who shall go up first for us against the Canaanites?" (1:1). What does it say about Israel at this moment that they began by asking the LORD?

1.2 Q2: Baal was believed to bring rain and good harvests. Why might a farming people be tempted to trust Baal "just in case," and what are some modern versions of trusting something else for security?

1.2 Q3: Look at the cycle above. Which step surprises you most, and why do you think the cycle kept repeating instead of ending?

◆ LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY — SECTION 1.2 · SECTION PACING TARGET: 12 MINUTES

- **Pacing & Time Target:** 12 minutes. Context summary and the cycle, 6 minutes; discussion, 6 minutes (about 2 minutes per question).
- **Facilitation Cues & Follow-Up Probes:**
  - Read the cycle aloud slowly, one step at a time, and tell the group it will return every week. Keep authorship and dating brief; the point is that the setting is real and the chronology is debated.
  - Follow-up probe for **1.2 Q1**: How did Joshua's generation learn to ask the LORD first? What happens later in the book when Israel stops asking? Where do you ask God first, and where do you ask him last?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.2 Q2**: What made Baal seem practical? Did Israel reject the LORD outright or add Baal beside him? What do people in our culture trust for "rain" and "harvest"?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.2 Q3**: Who starts the cycle, and who breaks into it? What does it mean that each cycle ends worse than before (2:19)? Have you seen a pattern like that in a life or a community?
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around:** Do not let the chronology debate take over. Avoid explicit or speculative descriptions of Canaanite ritual practices (see Leader Flag 3). Do not shame members by listing their possible idols for them.
- **Additional Research Notes:** Nehemiah 9:26–28 and Psalm 106:34–46 summarize the same cycle in prayer and song. Acts 13:19–20 includes the judges in Paul's summary of Israel's history. "Baal" is also a common noun meaning "lord," "owner," or "husband," so not every use of the word refers to the god.
- **Ancient Near Eastern Research Notes:** Texts from Ugarit (discovered in 1929, about the thirteenth century BC) describe Baal's battles with the sea and with death and his role in sending rain. The Ashtaroth were goddesses of fertility and war, known elsewhere as Astarte. The plural "Baals" suggests local forms of Baal worshiped at many shrines. "Chariots of iron" (1:19) were probably chariots with iron fittings, most effective on flat ground.
- **Hebrew Word Study:** Shafat (שָׁפַט), "judge," the root of the book's title, used in 2:16–19 for the leaders the LORD raised up. In this context section it shows that "judging" in this book means mainly rescue and setting things right for the oppressed, which is why the book's title points first to the LORD's saving initiative.

Section 1.3

Movement 1: The Unfinished Conquest (Judges 1:1–2:5)

Passage Judges 1:1–2:5

Guided Scripture Reading

Open your Bible to **Judges 1**. Read aloud in this order, with brief connecting summaries between readings:

- **Reader 1: Judges 1:1–2** (focal passage) — Israel asks the LORD who should go up first; the LORD answers, Judah, and promises to give the land into its hand.
- **Leader summary of Judges 1:3–18** — Judah and Simeon fight together. The Canaanite king Adoni-bezek is captured and disabled in the same way he had treated seventy other kings, and he admits that God has repaid him. Caleb gives his daughter Achsah to Othniel, and Achsah boldly asks her father for springs of water.
- **Reader 2: Judges 1:19–21** — The LORD is with Judah in the hill country, but the people of the plain, with their chariots of iron, are not driven out; Benjamin does not drive out the Jebusites of Jerusalem.
- **Leader summary of Judges 1:22–26** — The house of Joseph takes Bethel after a man of the city shows the spies the way in; he and his family are spared.
- **Reader 3: Judges 1:27–36** (focal passage, selected) — Tribe after tribe did not drive out the Canaanites, until Dan is pressed back into the hill country.
- **Reader 4: Judges 2:1–5** (focal passage) — The angel of the LORD comes to Bochim with a rebuke; the people weep and offer sacrifice.

Anchor Verses (ESV)

> **Judges 1:1:** After the death of Joshua, the people of Israel inquired of the LORD, “Who shall go up first for us against the Canaanites, to fight against them?”
>
> **Judges 1:19:** And the LORD was with Judah, and he took possession of the hill country, but he could not drive out the inhabitants of the plain because they had chariots of iron.
>
> **Judges 2:1–2:** Now the angel of the LORD went up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, “I brought you up from Egypt and brought you into the land that I swore to give to your fathers. I said, ‘I will never break my covenant with you, and you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall break down their altars.’ But you have not obeyed my voice. What is this you have done?

Teaching Narrative: Partial Obedience and a Rebuke at Bochim

1. Asking First (Judges 1:1–2)

The book begins well. Israel inquires of the LORD, and the LORD sends Judah with a promise: the land is given. The question "Who shall go up first?" will return at the end of the book (20:18), aimed at a very different enemy.

2. Judah's Beginning (Judges 1:3–18)

Judah and Simeon fight together. Adoni-bezek, a cruel king, receives what he had done to others and confesses it as God's repayment. Caleb, Othniel, and Achsah bring a hopeful echo of Joshua: faith takes hold of the inheritance, and a daughter asks for springs and receives them.

3. The LORD Was with Judah, But… (Judges 1:19–21)

The LORD's presence is stated plainly, and so is the limit: the plain was not taken because of chariots of iron. The note records Judah's limits, and perhaps its lack of faith (compare Joshua 17:18), not the LORD's weakness.

4. The Drumbeat of "Did Not Drive Out" (Judges 1:27–36)

One tribe after another lets the Canaanites stay, often putting them to forced labor instead. The list gets worse: first the Canaanites live among Israel, then Israel lives among the Canaanites (1:32–33), and finally Dan is pushed back by the Amorites (1:34). Partial obedience has become settled compromise.

5. The Angel at Bochim (Judges 2:1–5)

The angel of the LORD speaks as the LORD himself: I brought you up from Egypt; I will never break my covenant; you were not to make covenants with these people or leave their altars standing. "What is this you have done?" Because of it, the nations will be thorns in Israel's sides and their gods a snare. The people weep, name the place Bochim, "weepers," and offer sacrifice. Tears come, but the next chapters show no lasting change.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.3)

1.3 Q1: "The LORD was with Judah" (1:19), and yet the people of the plain were not driven out. How can God's presence be real in a person's life while there are still areas they have not given over to him?

1.3 Q2: Achsah asked her father for springs of water and received them (1:14–15). What does her boldness teach about asking for what God has promised?

1.3 Q3: Instead of driving out the Canaanites, several tribes put them to forced labor (1:28–35). Why might "managing" a problem feel easier than removing it? What does that look like in the life of faith?

1.3 Q4: The angel asked, "What is this you have done?" (2:2). Why do you think God names the covenant he made and kept before he names Israel's failure?

1.3 Q5: At Bochim the people wept and offered sacrifice, but their lives did not change (2:4–5). What is the difference between sorrow over consequences and real repentance?

◆ LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY — SECTION 1.3 · SECTION PACING TARGET: 22 MINUTES

- **Pacing & Time Target:** 22 minutes. Guided Scripture Reading with brief retellings, 6 minutes; Anchor Verses and Teaching Narrative, 6 minutes; discussion, 10 minutes (about 2 minutes per question).
- **Facilitation Cues & Follow-Up Probes:**
  - Have one reader take 1:1–2, a second 1:27–36 (or selected verses from it), and a third 2:1–5. Retell 1:3–18 yourself in two or three sentences. Ask the group to listen for the repeated phrase "did not drive out" during the reading.
  - Follow-up probe for **1.3 Q1**: Does the verse blame God or Judah? What did Joshua tell the tribes about chariots (Joshua 17:18)? Is there an area in your life where you have decided, "This one is too strong"?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.3 Q2**: What did Achsah ask for, and why did springs matter in a dry land? How does her story echo Joshua 15:16–19? What keeps us from asking God boldly?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.3 Q3**: What did Israel gain from forced labor? What did it cost them later (2:3; 3:5–6)? Where are we tempted to keep something we should give up because it seems useful?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.3 Q4**: What has God done, and what has he promised? Why does sin look different against the background of his faithfulness? How would you answer his question?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.3 Q5**: What did the people do at Bochim? What did they not do? How can a person tell whether their sorrow is leading to change (2 Corinthians 7:10)?
- **LEADER FLAG 1: Adoni-bezek (1:5–7)**
  - The first scene of Judges is violent. Retell it briefly in paraphrase: Adoni-bezek was captured and disabled in the same way he had treated seventy kings. Do not quote the verses or dwell on the details. Point to the text's own emphasis, his admission that God had repaid him (1:7). Do not treat the scene as humorous, and remember that members who have suffered violence may need care.
- **LEADER FLAG 2: "Did not drive out" and the conquest (1:19–36)**
  - Members coming from Joshua may ask whether Israel should have been more violent. Explain that the issue in Judges 1–2 is covenant faithfulness: Israel made treaties, left the altars standing, and adopted Canaanite worship (2:2; 3:5–6). Use the same honest context about the conquest given in the Joshua study. Never apply these texts to any modern people, land, or conflict.
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around:** Do not turn the list of tribes into a geography lesson; summarize it in words and keep the focus on the downward pattern. Do not claim that Bochim is a known location; it is unidentified, though some link it with Bethel.
- **Additional Research Notes:** The failures in Judges 1 continue notes already found in Joshua (Joshua 13:13; 15:63; 16:10; 17:12–13). The warnings about snares and thorns go back to Exodus 23:33, Numbers 33:55, and Deuteronomy 7:16. The Bethel spy story (1:22–26) echoes Rahab, but here the tone is decline.
- **Ancient Near Eastern Research Notes:** Disabling captured kings, as was done to Adoni-bezek, made them unable to hold weapons or run and humiliated them. In the ancient Near East a royal messenger spoke in the first person for his king; the angel of the LORD speaks as the LORD himself ("I brought you up from Egypt"). The Kenites (1:16), a semi-nomadic group related to Moses' father-in-law, settle with Judah; Jael, in Week 2, is a Kenite.

- **Hebrew Word Study:**
  - Horish (הוֹרִישׁ), "drive out," the causative form of yarash (יָרַשׁ), "possess," the key word of Joshua, in 1:19, 21, and 27–33. In this movement it is repeated like a drumbeat, almost always with "not," and in 2:21 the LORD answers in the same word: he will no longer drive the nations out. The land given in Joshua is only partly possessed.
  - Bochim (בֹּכִים), "weepers," with the verb bakah (בָּכָה), "wept," in 2:1–5. In this movement it shows that Israel's tears at the angel's rebuke were real but not lasting; weeping returns at the end of the book (20:23, 26; 21:2), framing Judges with grief.

Section 1.4

Movement 2: The Cycle Begins (Judges 2:6–3:6)

Passage **Judges 2:6–3:6**

Guided Scripture Reading

Open your Bible to **Judges 2**:6. Read aloud in this order, with brief connecting summaries between readings:

- **Reader 1: Judges 2:6–10** (focal passage) — Joshua dismisses the people; Israel serves the LORD all the days of Joshua and the elders; Joshua dies; another generation arises.
- **Reader 2: Judges 2:11–19** (focal passage) — The cycle: evil, anger, plunderers, distress, judges raised up, pity, and relapse.
- **Leader summary of Judges 2:20–3:6** — Because Israel has broken the covenant, the LORD will no longer drive out the nations Joshua left; he will use them to test Israel and to teach war to a generation that had not known it. Israel lives among these peoples, intermarries, and serves their gods.

Anchor Verses (ESV)

> **Judges 2:10:** And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done for Israel.
>
> **Judges 2:11–12:** And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals. And they abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed down to them. And they provoked the LORD to anger.
>
> **Judges 2:16:** Then the LORD raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them.
>
> **Judges 2:18:** Whenever the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge, and he saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge. For the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them.

Teaching Narrative: Another Generation and the Cycle of Grace

1. A Faithful Generation (Judges 2:6–9)

The end of Joshua is told again: Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua and of the elders who had seen his great work. Joshua dies at 110 and is buried in his inheritance.

2. Another Generation (Judges 2:10)

Then comes the turning point of the book. The next generation did not know the LORD or what he had done for Israel. They had the land, the stories, and the memorials, but they did not know him.

3. They Abandoned the LORD (Judges 2:11–13)

Israel did what was evil in the LORD's sight and served the Baals and the Ashtaroth. They left the God who brought them out of Egypt and went after the gods of the peoples around them. Their sin was relational: not only breaking rules but leaving the God who had rescued them.

4. The LORD's Anger and the Plunderers (Judges 2:14–15)

The LORD gave them over to raiders and enemies. The hand of the LORD was against them, as he had warned, and they were in terrible distress.

5. The LORD Raised Up Judges (Judges 2:16–19)

In mercy the LORD raised up judges who saved them. He was with each judge and saved Israel all the days of that judge, because he was moved to pity by their groaning. But the rescue lasted only as long as the judge lived. When the judge died, they turned back and behaved worse than their fathers.

6. The Nations Left to Test (Judges 2:20–3:6)

The LORD will no longer drive out the remaining nations. They become a test of whether Israel will walk in his way, and a school of war for a generation that had not fought. Israel fails the test: they live among the nations, intermarry, and serve their gods.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.4)

1.4 Q1: Judges 2:10 says the new generation "did not know the LORD or the work that he had done for Israel." How is knowing about God different from knowing God?

1.4 Q2: Israel "abandoned the LORD" and "went after other gods" (2:12). Why does Scripture describe idolatry as leaving a person rather than only breaking a rule?

1.4 Q3: The LORD raised up judges because he "was moved to pity by their groaning" (2:18). What does it tell you about God that he answered people whose trouble was largely their own fault?

1.4 Q4: Each judge saved Israel only "all the days of the judge" (2:18), and then the people turned back. Why do you think the rescue did not change Israel's heart?

1.4 Q5: God left the nations in the land to test Israel (2:22; 3:1–4). How can the pressures and temptations around us become a test of whom we will follow?

◆ LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY — SECTION 1.4 · SECTION PACING TARGET: 20 MINUTES

- **Pacing & Time Target:** 20 minutes. Guided Scripture Reading with brief retellings, 5 minutes; Anchor Verses and Teaching Narrative, 5 minutes; discussion, 10 minutes (about 2 minutes per question).
- **Facilitation Cues & Follow-Up Probes:**
  - Have one reader take 2:6–10 and another 2:11–19. Pause after 2:10 and let the verse sit for a moment before going on. Point back to the cycle in 1.2 as 2:11–19 is read. Retell 2:20–3:6 yourself.
  - Follow-up probe for **1.4 Q1**: What did the earlier generation see that the next did not (2:7)? Can someone grow up surrounded by faith and still not know the LORD? What helped you move from knowing about God to knowing him?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.4 Q2**: What did the LORD do for Israel according to 2:12? How does Joshua's call to "cling" to the LORD (Joshua 23:8) contrast with "abandon"? Where are we tempted to drift rather than to rebel openly?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.4 Q3**: Does 2:18 say Israel repented, or only that they groaned? Where else did God hear groaning (Exodus 2:23–25)? How does this shape the way you pray when your trouble is your own fault?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.4 Q4**: What changed when each judge died? What does that show about depending on a human leader? What kind of deliverer would Israel need for the change to last?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.4 Q5**: What was being tested? How is a test different from a trap? What pressure in your setting most tests your loyalty to the LORD?
- **LEADER FLAG 3: Baal worship and Canaanite religion (2:11–13)**
  - Describe Baal and Astarte briefly and factually as storm and fertility deities, using the Ugarit background. Avoid speculative or explicit descriptions of ritual sexual practices; scholars debate them, and they are not needed for the point. Connect to modern parallels carefully (anything trusted to give security, provision, or success in place of God) without listing members' possible idols in a way that shames them.
- **LEADER FLAG 4: "Another generation… who did not know the LORD" (2:10; 3:1–6)**
  - Many members carry grief over children or grandchildren who have walked away from faith. Do not suggest that parents are fully to blame or that faithful parenting guarantees faithful children; Joshua's generation served the LORD, and still the next generation did not. Hold together responsibility (Deuteronomy 6; Psalm 78) and God's grace. The intermarriage note in 3:6 concerns serving other gods, not ethnicity, and members in mixed-faith marriages need care (1 Corinthians 7:12–16).
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around:** Do not present the cycle as a mechanical formula that guarantees rescue whenever people cry out; it is driven by God's free compassion. Do not suggest that hardship always means a person is under judgment.
- **Additional Research Notes:** Deuteronomy 4:9–10, 6:6–9, and 6:20–25 command parents to teach their children; Psalm 78:1–8 laments a generation that forgot. Deuteronomy 8:2 says God tested Israel in the

wilderness to know what was in their hearts, the same idea as the testing in 2:22 and 3:1–4.

- **Ancient Near Eastern Research Notes:** The remaining nations of 3:3, including the Philistines, the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hivites, were peoples of the coast and the northern hills. Ancient Near Eastern treaties often listed curses for disloyalty; Israel's covenant warnings (Deuteronomy 28) work the same way, and Judges shows them coming true.
- **Hebrew Word Study:**
  - Yada' (יָדַע), "know," in 2:10 and again in 3:1–2, of those who had not known the wars of Canaan. It means personal, experienced knowledge, as when Pharaoh says he does not know the LORD (Exodus 5:2). In this movement it explains the whole book: the new generation had not taken the LORD's acts as their own.
  - 'Azav (עָזַב), "abandon," in 2:12–13. It is the opposite of davaq (דָּבַק), "cling," in Joshua 23:8. In this movement it shows that Israel's sin is letting go of the God who brought them out of Egypt.
  - Shofet (שֹׁפֵט), "judge," in 2:16–19. In this movement it shows that deliverance comes from the LORD's initiative, and that each judge is temporary: the rescue lasts "all the days of the judge."
  - Nicham (נִחַם), "moved to pity," in 2:18. The verb can mean to be sorry, to relent, or to be moved with compassion (Genesis 6:6; Exodus 32:14). In this movement it shows that the cycle is driven not only by Israel's sin but by God's compassion.
  - Nasah (נָסָה), "test," in 2:22 and 3:1, 4. In this movement it shows that the nations left in the land are both judgment and test: each generation must choose for itself whom it will serve.

Section 1.5

Canonical Horizon: Passing On Faith and the Deliverer Who Does Not Die

Passage **Judges 2:10**

Tracing the Thread Across Scripture

A generation that did not know the LORD and a God who kept raising up deliverers both point forward to faith passed on and to the Deliverer who never dies. Turn to each passage as the connections are traced.

1. Teaching the Next Generation (Deuteronomy 6:6–9; Psalm 78:1–8)

Moses told parents to talk of God's words at home and on the road, when lying down and rising up. The psalmist resolves to tell the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD so that they will set their hope in God and not be like their stubborn fathers. Judges 2:10 shows what happens when this fails.

2. Faith Passed on Through People and Scripture (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14–15)

Paul remembers the sincere faith that lived first in Timothy's grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice, and the sacred writings Timothy had known from childhood. God uses families and his word to pass on faith.

3. Each One Must Know the Lord (Jeremiah 31:34; John 1:12–13)

Faith is not inherited automatically. In the new covenant God promises that all his people will know him, from the least to the greatest. Those who receive Christ are born not of blood or human will but of God.

4. The Deliverer Who Lives Forever (Hebrews 7:23–25)

The judges saved Israel only as long as they lived. Hebrews contrasts the many priests who were prevented by death from continuing with Jesus, who continues forever and always lives to intercede for those who draw near to God through him.

5. From the Judges to the Savior (Acts 13:19–23)

In his sermon at Pisidian Antioch, Paul moves from the judges to Saul, to David, and then to Jesus, the Savior God brought from David's line. The longing of Judges finds its answer in Christ.

6. Compassion for the Harassed (Matthew 9:36)

The LORD's pity at Israel's groaning (2:18) is shown in Jesus, who had compassion on the crowds because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Anchor Verse (ESV)

> **Judges 2:10:** And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done for Israel.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.5)

1.5 Q1: Psalm 78 says one generation should tell the next God's glorious deeds. Who first told you about the Lord, and what made their witness believable to you?

1.5 Q2: Hebrews 7:25 says Jesus "always lives" to intercede for his people, unlike the judges who died. Why does it matter that our Deliverer will never be replaced?

1.5 Q3: Jesus had compassion on the crowds because they were like sheep without a shepherd (Matthew 9:36). How does that picture connect with the LORD who was moved to pity by Israel's groaning?

◆ LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY — SECTION 1.5 · SECTION PACING TARGET: 12 MINUTES

- **Pacing & Time Target:** 12 minutes. Teaching connections, 6 minutes; discussion, 6 minutes (about 2 minutes per question).

- **Facilitation Cues & Follow-Up Probes:**
  - Assign participants to look up Psalm 78:1–8, 2 Timothy 1:5, Hebrews 7:23–25, and Acts 13:19–23 ahead of time. Keep the focus on how Judges 1–3 points forward to Christ, not on new detail from Judges.
  - Follow-up probe for **1.5 Q1**: Was it what they said, how they lived, or both? Who might be watching your faith in the same way? What would you want them to remember?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.5 Q2**: What happened in Israel each time a judge died? How does an ever-living Savior change the way we face failure and relapse? What does it mean that he "intercedes"?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.5 Q3**: What does a shepherdless flock look like? Where do you see people today who are harassed and helpless? How does Jesus' compassion invite us to come to him?
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around:** Do not present faithful parenting as a guarantee; Jeremiah 31:34 and John 1:12–13 remind us that each person must come to know the Lord. Avoid turning 1.5 into a lecture on parenting methods.
- **Additional Research Notes:** Hebrews 11:32 names several judges among the faithful, which the study will meet in later weeks. Deuteronomy 31:9–13 commands the reading of the law every seven years so that children who have not known it may hear and learn, the opposite of Judges 2:10.

Personal & Group Application (Head, Heart, Hands)

HEAD	Israel began by asking the LORD but settled for partial obedience, and a generation arose that did not know him; still, the LORD raised up judges because he was moved by their groaning.
HEART	Faith must be our own: not borrowed memories of what God did for someone else, but knowing the LORD and clinging to him.
HANDS	Faith tells the next generation what the LORD has done, and refuses to "manage" what God has told us to drive out.

Section 1.6

Application, Looking Ahead, and Closing Prayer

Application

Take a few minutes to move this week's study into everyday life. Discuss these three questions together and write down what you want to remember:

1.6 Q1: Is there an area of your life where, like the tribes in Judges 1, you have settled for managing something God has asked you to give up? What would one step of obedience look like?

1.6 Q2: What is one thing the LORD has done for you that the next generation in your family, church, or neighborhood needs to hear?

1.6 Q3: How could this group help one another keep knowing the LORD and not only knowing about him over the coming weeks?

Looking Ahead to Next Week

Recap: In Week 1, Israel began by asking the LORD but did not drive out the Canaanites, wept at Bochim without lasting change, and a generation arose that did not know the LORD; the cycle of sin, oppression, crying out, and deliverance began.

Transition: The cycle has been explained. Next week we watch it happen, and we meet the first deliverers the LORD raised up, some of them very unexpected.

Week 2 Overview — The LORD Raised Up Deliverers (Judges 3:7–5:31): Movement 1, Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar (3:7–31), covers the model judge, a left-handed Benjaminite, and a farmer with an oxgoad. Movement 2, Deborah, Barak, and Jael (4:1–5:31), covers a prophetess who judged Israel, a hesitant commander, a tent-dwelling woman, and the Song of Deborah. The Canonical Horizon traces God's unlikely instruments and the song of victory.

Focal Readings to Preview

- Judges 3:7–11
- Judges 3:15
- Judges 4:4–10
- Judges 4:14–16
- Judges 5:1–5, 31

My One Concrete Step for the Week Ahead

Write down or name aloud the specific rhythm, boundary, or conversation you want to practice before next week's gathering:

Closing Prayer

Close your time together by inviting each person to share a one-sentence takeaway or prayer request, then pray together along these lines:

Closing Group Prayer

LORD our God, you brought your people into the land and you keep your covenant even when we do not. We confess the ways we settle for partial obedience, managing what we should surrender and making peace with what you told us to drive out. We pray for our children and grandchildren, and for those who do not yet know you or the work you have done; open their eyes to see you. Thank you that you are moved by our groaning, even when our trouble is our own doing. Thank you for Jesus, the Deliverer who does not die but lives forever to intercede for us. Help us know you truly and make your works known to the generation coming after us. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

◆ LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY — SECTION 1.6 · SECTION PACING TARGET: 9 MINUTES

- **Pacing & Time Target:** 9 minutes. Application and questions, 5 minutes; Looking Ahead and Focal Readings, 2 minutes; Concrete Step and Closing Prayer, 2 minutes.
- **Facilitation Cues & Follow-Up Probes:**
  - Encourage participants to write their concrete step before the prayer. Offer to talk afterward with anyone burdened for a family member who has walked away from faith. Invite a volunteer to read the closing prayer or pray in their own words.
  - Follow-up probe for **1.6 Q1**: Why does that area feel easier to manage than to surrender? What did "managing" cost Israel? Who could pray with you about it?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.6 Q2**: Who is that person? What would make it natural to tell them? When will you do it?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.6 Q3**: What practices would help? How can we encourage each other without pressure? What would you want the group to ask you next week?
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around:** Do not end the session on guilt about the next generation; end on the LORD's compassion and the living Deliverer. Keep the concrete step specific and achievable. Do not rush the prayer to make up lost time; trim the recap instead.
- **Additional Research Notes:** Othniel (3:7–11) was already introduced in 1:13, which makes him a bridge from the first introduction to the deliverer stories. The pattern of 2:11–19 appears almost word for word in his account, which is why he is often called the model judge.