



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

JUDGES & RUTH

Week 1

Before You Begin Your Journey...

The book of Judges is mostly made up of narratives. While the early chapters of the book give some editorial perspective, the rest of the book consists of stories or “case histories,” often with little or no commentary.

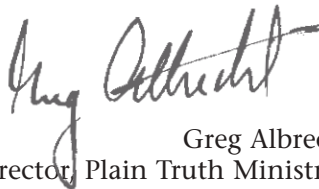
These stories are not for the faint of heart. They tell of times of ignorance and depravity, punctuated by violence and brutality. This was a time of moral and spiritual confusion, with everyone living by his or her own standards. It was a pluralistic society, not unlike today.

But it was also an age of heroes, when men and women were appointed by God to perform legendary exploits for the good of the nation.

While some Christians would rather not read these brutal accounts, there are lessons here that Christians can apply, but only when viewed from a Christ-centered perspective.

The story of Ruth takes place during this time. In the midst of confusion and violence, we find a wonderful example of loyal and godly friendship. Ruth is a non-Israelite, a most unlikely role model, in the minds of the original readers. During such a time we discover that there are still righteous men in Israel, such as Boaz. Ruth and Boaz would become the great grandparents of King David, from whom our Savior would descend (1Ch 2:12-15; Mt 1:5-6).

In that age, there was no human king in Israel. In this age, Christians have the King of Kings. Through him, we are more than conquerors.



Greg Albrecht
Executive Director, Plain Truth Ministries

How to Use the CWR Bible Survey...

1—Read and study at your own pace. This is a devotional. It is designed to help you consider and ponder the great truths of God's written revelation. It is designed to help you worship and come to know God. If you get behind, you can always catch up.

2—We suggest you set aside a special time for the *CWR Bible Survey* every day. We recommend allowing 30-45 minutes, but even if you can only spare 15 minutes, try to make it part of your regular schedule.

3—You will need a good Bible. This might be an excellent time for you to consider purchasing a new Bible. Plain Truth Ministries recommends the *New King James Study Bible* published by Thomas Nelson and the *New International Version Study Bible* published by Zondervan.

4—Always read the assigned passage of the daily lesson in your Bible first. Each daily lesson builds upon the portion of the Bible being covered that day. You may want to begin by praying about what God has in store for you as you read, and then look at the questions and background information.

5—Consider the format of each daily lesson. Almost every daily lesson will include:

- **Opening Up to the Word** —a section designed to help you open your mind to the teaching God has inspired.

- **Digging Into the Word**—this section will encourage you to get your nose into the Bible and think deeply about what it says.

- **Living Out the Word**—here you will be challenged to consider the practical implications for your life. How does this passage help you live?

- **Window On the Word**—will offer key insights to help you more clearly understand the daily Bible passage.

6—After you finish the daily lesson, take some quiet time. You may simply think, look out the window, take a walk, or even get down on your knees. But use this time to let this daily lesson sink in. Ask God to show you what he wants you to understand from your reading and study.

7—Consider the *CWR Bible Survey* for small groups in which you may be involved. Tell your friends about it. If you are involved in a small group that meets for prayer and Bible study, introduce your group to it. Many are seeking an easy-to-read guide to help them understand the Bible and to help them know God. the *CWR Bible Survey* can do that!

8—Remember that while we may refer to the Bible as the word of God—the Eternal Word of God is noneother than Jesus, who inspired the Scriptures to be written by human instruments. Words on paper may tell us about him—but it is not the words that we worship—it is Jesus Christ, the Eternal Word.

•Abbreviations Used in the *CWR Bible Survey*—

Genesis	Ge	Nahum	Na
Exodus	Ex	Habakkuk	Hab
Leviticus	Lev	Zephaniah	Zep
Numbers	Nu	Haggai	Hag
Deuteronomy	Dt	Zechariah	Zec
Joshua	Jos	Malachi	Mal
Judges	Jdg	Matthew	Mt
Ruth	Ru	Mark	Mk
1 Samuel	1Sa	Luke	Lk
2 Samuel	2Sa	John	Jn
1 Kings	1Ki	Acts	Ac
2 Kings	2Ki	Romans	Ro
1 Chronicles	1Ch	1 Corinthians	1Co
2 Chronicles	2Ch	2 Corinthians	2Co
Ezra	Ezr	Galatians	Gal
Nehemiah	Ne	Ephesians	Eph
Esther	Est	Philippians	Php
Job	Job	Colossians	Col
Psalms	Ps	1 Thessalonians	1Th
Proverbs	Pr	2 Thessalonians	2Th
Ecclesiastes	Ecc	1 Timothy	1Ti
Song of Songs	SS	2 Timothy	2Ti
Isaiah	Isa	Titus	Tit
Jeremiah	Jer	Philemon	Phm
Lamentations	La	Hebrews	Heb
Ezekiel	Eze	James	Jas
Daniel	Da	1 Peter	1Pe
Hosea	Hos	2 Peter	2Pe
Joel	Joel	1 John	1Jn
Amos	Am	2 John	2Jn
Obadiah	Ob	3 John	3Jn
Jonah	Jnh	Jude	Jude
Micah	Mic	Revelation	Rev

JUDGES & RUTH

Israel's
“Frontier Days”

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Printed in the United States of America.

Introduction to Judges

Authorship: Tradition identifies Samuel as the author of this book, or at least significant portions of it.

Date: The book of Judges may have been written between 1100 and 1000 B.C., perhaps more than a hundred years after most of the events it describes. The book covers a period in Israel's history of as much as 350 years—from about 1380 to 1030 B.C. The total years of the period of the Judges is less than the total of the years of service ascribed to each judge (see below), because some of these judges served at the same time.

Setting and purpose: The book of Judges is included in that section of the Old Testament known as *Historical Books*. The book of Judges describes the continuing attempts of the Israelites to settle in the Promised Land (the land of Canaan, later called *Israel* or *Palestine*). Judges records a series of stories about individual judges who served as leaders to save the nation during oppression, and who in the later period were important judicial figures.

Distinctive features: As you read and study, pay special attention to these key people, Israel's twelve judges: Othniel (40 years as judge), Ehud (years unrecorded, although Israel had peace for 80 years in conjunction with his service), Shamgar (years unrecorded), Deborah (40 years), Gideon (40 years), Tola (23 years), Jair (22 years), Jephthah (6 years), Ibzan (7 years), Elon (10 years), Abdon (8 years) and Samson (20 years). Judges also records Israel's first civil war. This book describes, in vivid, dramatic detail, what happens when a nation slides into moral and spiritual anarchy: "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit" (Jdg 17:6). Repeatedly, the people of Israel abandon God, find themselves punished by the oppression of their enemies and cry out to God for help. The cycle continues when a judge is called by God to deliver the people and to lead the nation, as God calls the people of Israel to return to their covenant with Him. By reading the book of Judges, future Israelites would understand that the Lord is King—not

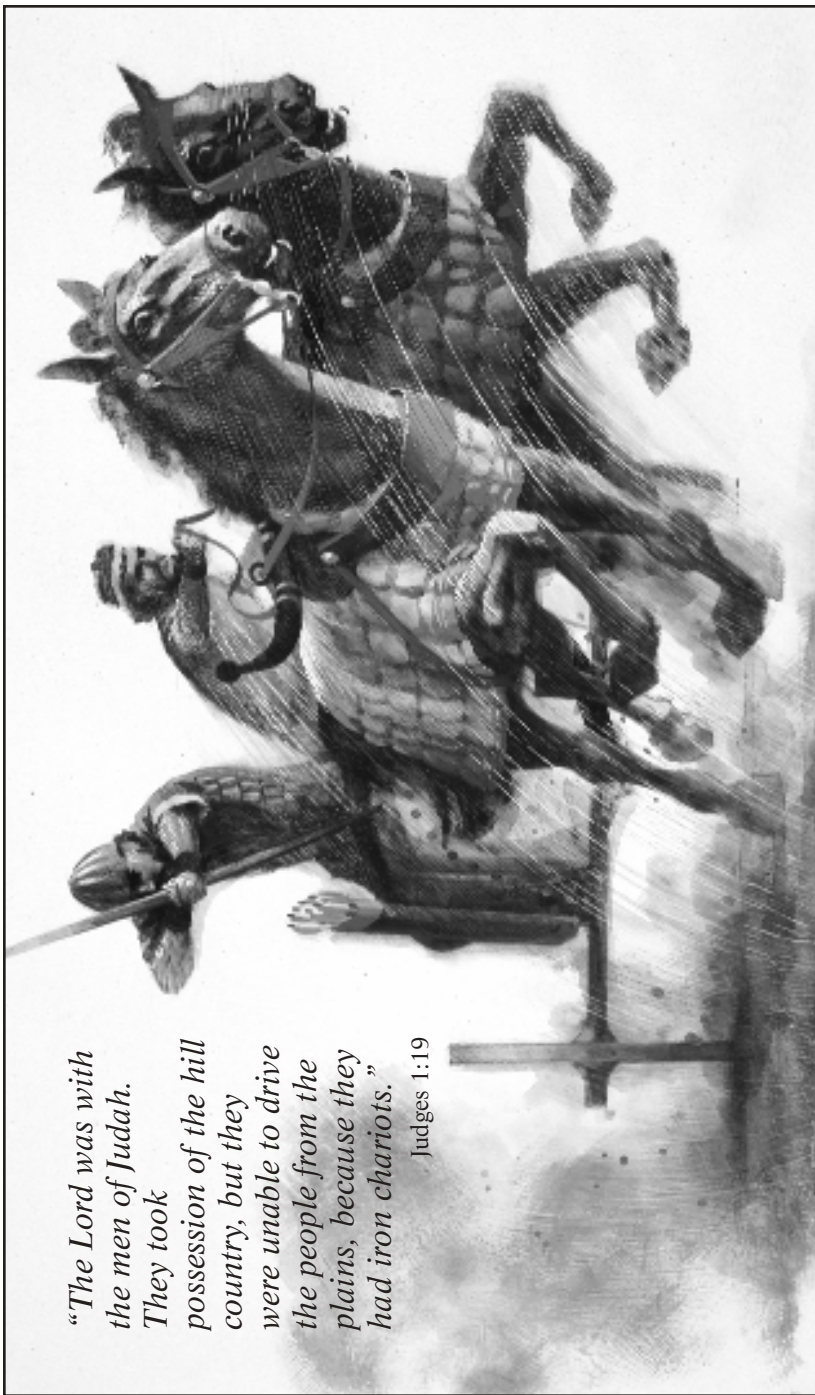
Baal, Dagon or any other pagan deity. They would also understand that the spiritual condition of the nation determined its political and material situation—a lesson that reinforced the old covenant principle of “blessings for obedience and cursings for disobedience” found in the book of Deuteronomy. For Christians, the book of Judges is an inspiring and reassuring story of God’s patience and mercy as he delivers his people over and over again—looking forward to the ultimate deliverance for the entire human race that would later come through Jesus Christ.

Reading outline:

Day	Text	Theme
1-2	Judges 1–2	Introduction: Conquest and Compromise
3	Judges 3	Othniel, Ehud and Shamgar
4-5	Judges 4–5	Deborah and Barak
6-10	Judges 6–9	Gideon and Abimelech
11	Judges 10–11	Tolah, Jair and Jephthah
12	Judges 12	Ibzan, Elon and Abdon
13-19	Judges 13–16	Samson
20-22	Judges 17–18	Micah and the Danites
23-26	Judges 19–21	Outrage of the Benjamites

*“The Lord was with
the men of Judah.
They took
possession of the hill
country, but they
were unable to drive
the people from the
plains, because they
had iron chariots.”*

Judges 1:19



From Conquest to Compromise

DAY 1

Judges 1:1-36

“Compromise is but the sacrifice of one right or good in the hope of retaining another—too often ending in the loss of both,” wrote Tyrone Edwards. Do you think compromise is always destructive or can it sometimes be productive?

1. After the death of Joshua, when confronted with enemies, the nation did not have a combined military force. Rather, individual tribes were called upon to seize certain territories. Which tribe was “conscripted” here? Whom did they ask for assistance and what were the terms?
2. What happened to the conquered king Adoni-Bezek (v. 4-7; see *Window On The Word*)? Why did he feel he was treated in such a manner?
3. What prize was offered for military heroism (vs. 11-13)?
4. Which tribes fully conquered the lands given them? Which ones compromised God’s commands? Why?

1. How does conflict and confrontation affect you? Do you rise to the challenge or avoid it?
2. Do you feel like someone who is in power and control (the Israelites) or do you feel like someone who is under attack and about to be driven out (the Canaanites)?

*Israel had been commanded by God to **drive out** the inhabitants of Canaan. However, this chapter makes it clear that Israel **compromised**, permitting various pagan groups to remain in their territory. Their presence among Israel began a downhill slide for the nation. A barbaric practice is included in this chapter—**thumbs and big toes cut off** (vs. 6-7). Sadly, this was a common way of humiliating and crippling a conquered enemy ruler. Without thumbs, the king would not be able to use a weapon and without toes he could not chase his enemies in battle.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

DAY 2

Rebuked by an Angel

Judges 2:1-23

OPENING
up to the Word

One sad theme throughout Judges is Israel's apostasy—falling away from their covenant with God. As a Christ-follower, what areas of your life remain unsundered to him?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Compare the angelic announcement in Joshua 5:13 to that in Judges 2:1-5. What is different about the messages and what accounts for the difference?
2. How old was Joshua when he died (vs. 8-10)? Where was he buried? What happened to the nation shortly after his death? What do those events say about Joshua and his leadership?
3. Why did God provide Israel with judges (v. 16)? How did the people respond to their leadership? What accounts for their lack of respect toward God's leaders?
4. Describe God's attitudes and actions toward Israel. How important to God was Israel's response toward his covenant?

LIVING
out the Word

1. In verses 6-10 a lack of spiritual leadership results in a corresponding lack of belief and obedience. Are there parallels in our society?
2. Verse 10 declares that a "generation grew up, who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel." How could something this drastic happen so quickly? What would the remedy have been for such a crisis?
3. Verse 22 indicates that God chose to "test" Israel. Have you recently experienced a time of testing? Did you learn from the experience?

WINDOW
on the Word

***The angel of the Lord** cited in 2:1 is one of several angelic visitors reported in Scripture. Angels are emissaries sent by God with messages or to provide guidance and protection. Other angelic appearances can be found in Genesis 16, 22 and 32. According to the New Testament, angels continue ministering to God's people today (Heb 1:14).*

Defection and Deliverance

DAY 3

Judges 3:1-31

In spite of Israel's rebellion, when the people cried out to God, God responded positively, graciously, lovingly and promptly. Have you had a similar experience or witnessed something like this in the life of another person?

1. What were the consequences of Israel's neglect of faith (vs. 1-8)? What happened in verses 9-11?
2. The consequences of Israel's apostasy are recorded in verses 12-14. How does God respond to their plea for help?
3. How did Ehud conquer the evil King Eglon? How did Ehud manage to escape?
4. What judge followed Ehud and what was his claim to fame?

1. This chapter begins by stating that God used other nations to "test" Israel. Does anyone in your life seem to be a test of your patience, love or faith? Does this test strengthen or weaken you? Or does it merely show you how much you need God's grace and Christ in your life?

2. Read verses 7 through 15 and 30. Note the pattern of Israel's history: *rebellion*, *retribution*, *repentance* and *redemption*. What can a Christ-follower learn from this pattern?

*This chapter offers what appears to be a trivial piece of information, yet in the context of the story it is important. Ehud, the second judge of Israel, was **left-handed** (v. 15). This was a key element in the assassination of the pagan King Eglon. Ehud's left-handedness allowed the element of surprise, as the King did not expect the use of a dagger with the left hand.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

DAY 4

The Woman of Fire

Judges 4:1-24

OPENING
up to the Word

Consider the women who have been important in your life. Which ones of them inspire you? Why?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Verse 4 begins by describing Deborah as “a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth.” The phrase “wife of Lappidoth” could also be translated “woman of fire.” Why would this title fit?

2. Which words best describe Barak—courageous or cowardly, bold or timid, pro-active or hesitant? Do you think he was reluctant to take charge? How did he respond to God placing a woman in charge?

3. Where did Sisera find shelter? What happened in the tent? Was Jael ethical in her actions (see *Window on the Word*)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. The second verse says “the Lord sold them (Israel) into the hands of Jabin.” Those words reminded the people of Moses’ prophecy, using the same graphic phrase (Dt 32:30). Has there been a time in your life when you disregarded sound, godly advice and were hurt in the end?

2. Put yourself into the camp of Israel. You are a leader. How would you explain the military crisis to the Israelites?

3. Israel found it easy to drift away from God. Are there signs that one is drifting away from a relationship with Jesus? Or is Jesus always there?

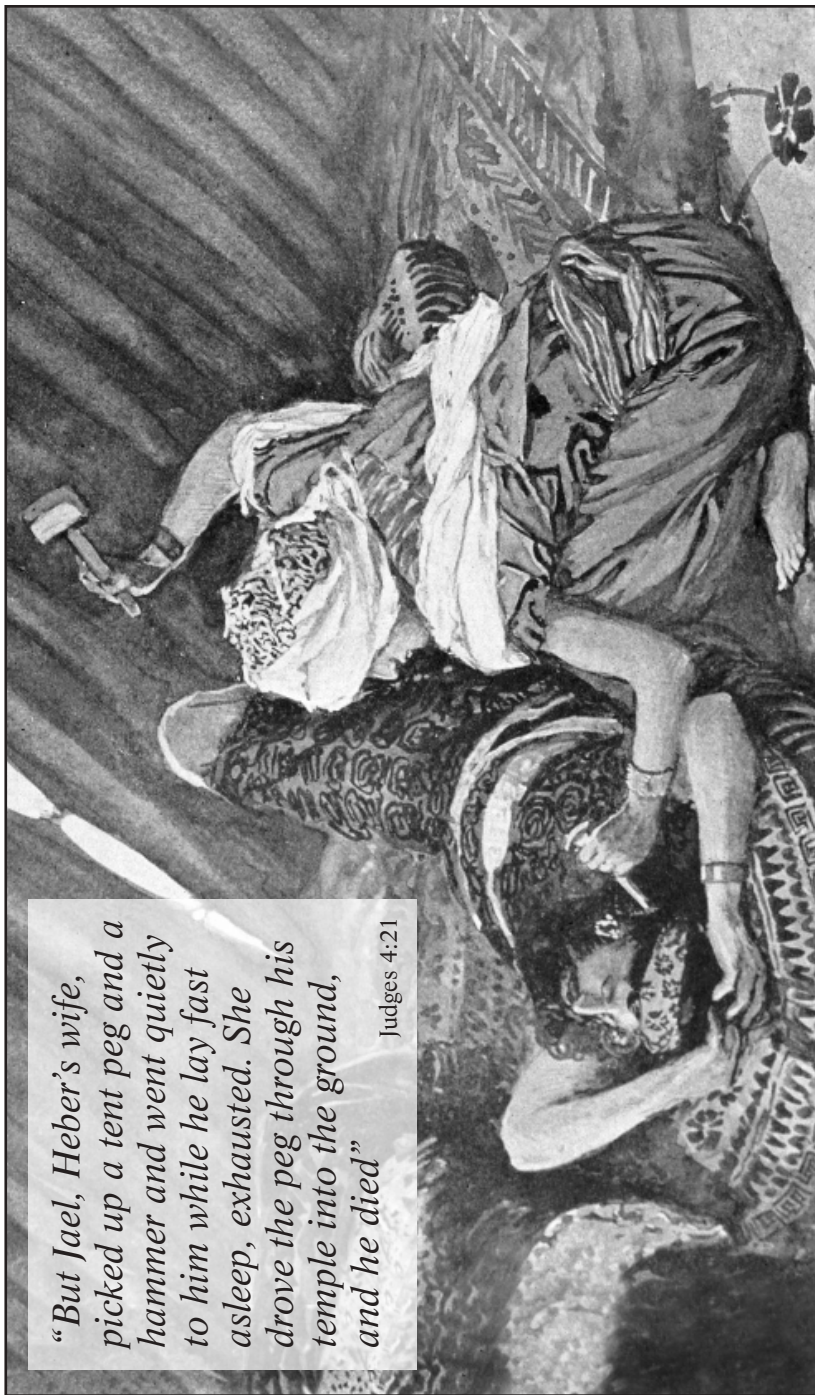
4. When you experience turmoil, how do you cry out to God—do you pray, talk with a friend or pastor, confess sin and ask forgiveness or write your agony in a journal? In what ways have you experienced Jesus’ deliverance?

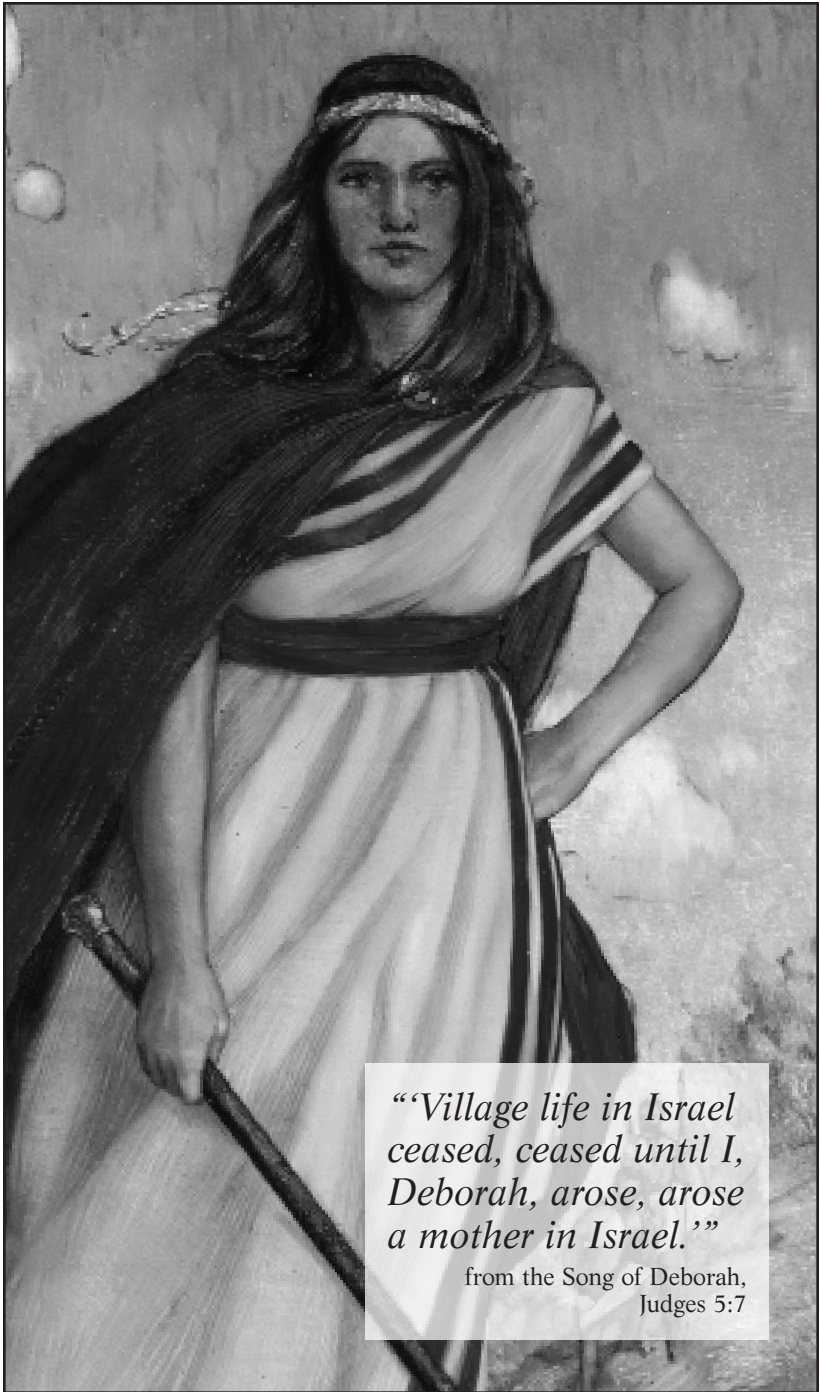
WINDOW
on the Word

*While Deborah is the dominant character in this chapter, a minor role is played by another woman, **Jael**. Although not an Israelite, she killed Israel’s enemy, Sisera. There are three possible reasons why she acted: (1) she knew Sisera was a wicked despot; (2) Sisera’s cruelty may have impacted her family or tribe; (3) she knew Israel had won the war and she did not want to be punished for harboring an enemy.*

*“But Jael, Heber’s wife,
picked up a tent peg and a
hammer and went quietly
to him while he lay fast
asleep, exhausted. She
drove the peg through his
temple into the ground,
and he died”*

Judges 4:21





*“Village life in Israel
ceased, ceased until I,
Deborah, arose, arose
a mother in Israel.”*

from the Song of Deborah,
Judges 5:7

Turning Darkness Into Light

DAY 5

Judges 5:1-31

With this chapter we see that Deborah is a prophet, leader *and* poet. What three words would you use to describe a woman you admire who has served as a public figure?

1. Note the six divisions of this hymn-poem: (1) praise (5:1-5), (2) oppression (5:6-11), (3) call to action (5:12-18), (4) battle (5:19-23), (5) gratitude to Jael (5:24-27), (6) ode to the mother of Sisera (5:28-31).

2. What was Deborah's intention in writing this song (vs. 2-3)?

3. Describe Israelite life according to verses 6-9.

4. What did some Israelite tribes do or not do (vs. 15-17)?

5. Who is "most blessed" and why (v. 24)?

1. This poem is a reminder that God can use strong spiritual leaders to help turn darkness into light (vs. 6-9). Has Jesus used used spiritual leaders or teachers to in this way in your life?

2. The spiritual lesson in verses 13-18 is this: *Don't allow others to discourage you!* Have you ever allowed this to happen? How can you ensure it doesn't happen again? Does Jesus always encourage you?

3. Some Israelites volunteered and helped, while others remained indifferent (vs. 13-18). When is the last time you took a "stand" for someone who needed your support?

Meroz is an obscure name that is not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible. Some speculate that Meroz may have been a Canaanite town that initially agreed to support some of Israel's tribes, but broke the treaty, believing that the Canaanites could not be defeated. This may be why Meroz and its people are cursed in verse 23.

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

DAY 6

Least Likely to Succeed

Judges 6:1-32

OPENING
up to the Word

Do you find yourself repeatedly falling back into unhealthy, inappropriate or wrong habits? Have you turned to Jesus to do what you cannot?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Who was Israel's latest oppressor? What was the impact on Israel and how did the people respond?
2. What was God's first message to the Israelites, and whom did he send (vs. 7-10)? Where was Gideon found and what was he doing (v. 11)?
3. What was Gideon's objection concerning the mission? How was the issue resolved (vs. 12-24)?
4. Why does Gideon follow the angel's instructions only under cover of darkness?

LIVING
out the Word

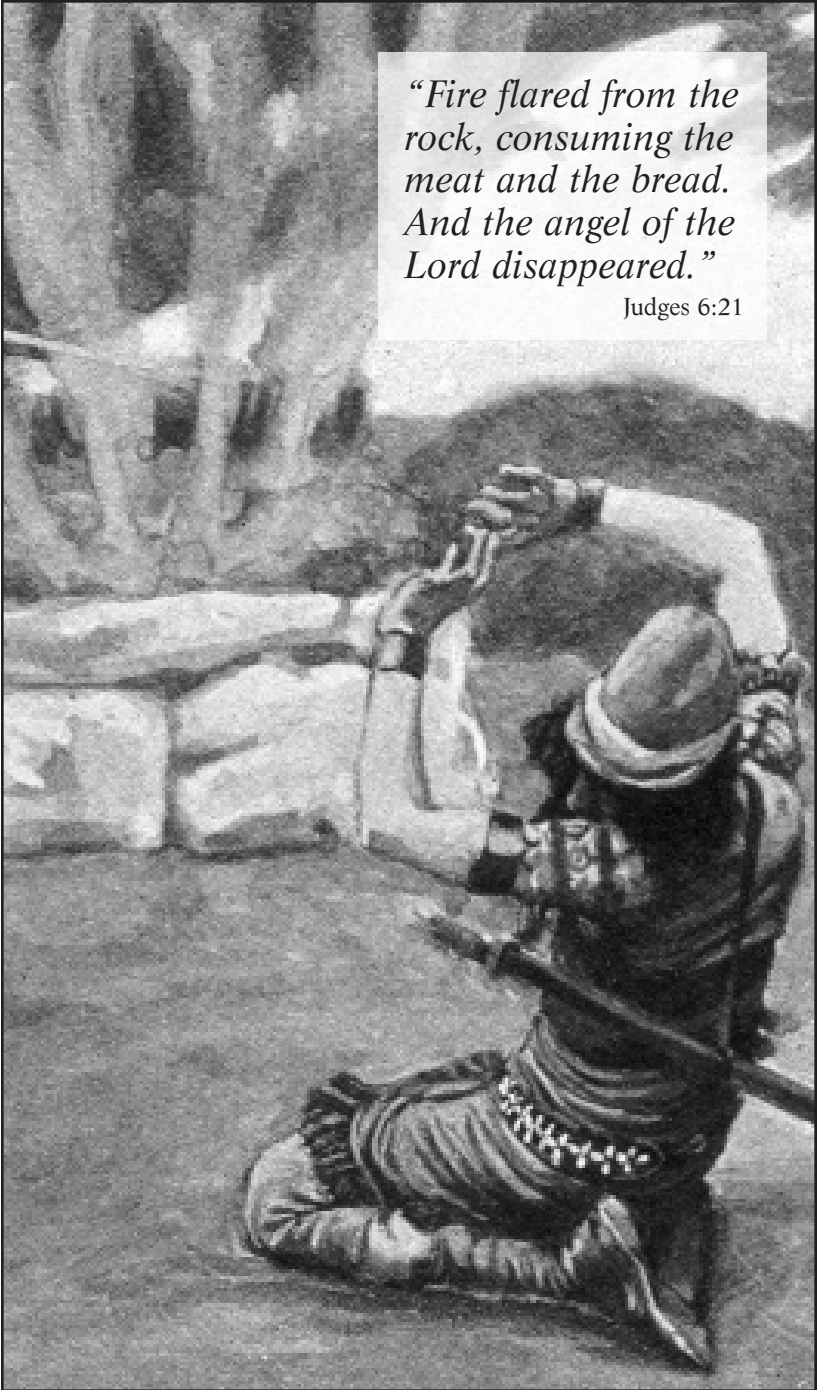
1. Gideon tore down one altar and erected another. Does anything in your life need tearing down? What kind of "altar" would you erect to give God glory for the new life he has given you in and through our risen Lord Jesus Christ?
2. The Law of Moses didn't allow people to build altars on high places. Why do you think God commanded Gideon to do this? If God can command people to break his law, then he is more important than law. Give that some thought, from a Christ-centered perspective.

WINDOW
on the Word


*The **Midianites** (v. 1) were a sizable and powerful group of nomadic bandits who conducted raids on the Israelites. They destroyed crops, stripped the land like "locusts" and stole livestock. The Midianites forced the Israelites to live like animals, seeking shelter in mountain caves. The people the Israelites had initially conquered were now their masters. Israel's turning away from God resulted in their poverty, fear and slavery.*

“Fire flared from the rock, consuming the meat and the bread. And the angel of the Lord disappeared.”

Judges 6:21



Artwork by James Tissot



“Gideon rose early the next day; he squeezed the fleece and wrung out the dew—a bowlful of water.”

Judges 6:38

Is It Really God's Will?

DAY 7

Judges 6:33-40

If you were to take a “spiritual inventory” of yourself, which of the following words might best describes your relationship with God: cautious or bold, fearful or fearless, anxious or confident?

1. What groups had allied together to make war on Israel (v. 33)? Where were they gathering (see *Window on the Word*)?
2. What was the response from Gideon? Who was summoned (vs. 34-35)?
3. Describe Gideon's test. How many times did he test God? Why? How did God respond, and what does the response indicate about God?

1. Have you ever asked for or received a “sign” from God to take certain steps or specific actions? What would make you feel that a particular event was a sign from God?
2. Some view Gideon's need for confirmation of God's will as a sign of weakness and immature faith. Others see Gideon as cautious at first, but faithful and bold once he was convinced. How do you view Gideon? Could he be a role model for you in your spiritual journey?
3. As Christ-followers, who have Holy Spirit living within them, is it appropriate to seek an external “sign” from God? Or does God inspire us and lead us from within to make wise decisions?

The Valley of Jezreel is an area separating Galilee from Samaria. The region was a rich agricultural center. Whoever controlled the valley's fertile land controlled the people who lived in and around the area. From early times, the Valley of Jezreel was controlled by Canaanites who had most of the military power.

OPENING
up to the Word

DIGGING
into the Word

LIVING
out the Word

WINDOW
on the Word