



Consequences

Session 8 • Judges 2:11-23



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 2** (Poster: *Outlines of Joshua, Judges, Ruth*). Write *Joshua → Judges* on the board or on a large sheet of paper. Make copies of **Pack Item 8** (Handout: *Joshua, Judges, Ruth Time Line*) and **Pack Item 13** (Handout: *The Cycle of Judges*).

ASK: What factors might cause people to break their commitments, and how can we guard against this in our own lives? (p. 69)
Discuss responses.

READ: Enlist a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 69.

BACKGROUND: Direct attention to what is written on the board (or a large sheet of paper). Point out that this session represents a shift from the book of Joshua to the book of Judges. Share that while the theme of Joshua's story was a wholehearted devotion to God, the theme for Judges is a cycle of sin, judgment, confession, and restoration.

EXPLAIN: Summarize this information from **Understand the Context** (p. 69) to provide more information:

- “The Israelites were not supposed to make agreements with the Canaanites and

coexist with them, but they did. Because of their sins, the angel of the Lord confronted Israel with a declaration of judgment. . . . As soon as Joshua and the elders who served with him died, a new “generation rose up who did not know the LORD or the works he had done for Israel” (2:10). This generation abandoned the Lord and began worshiping the gods of the surrounding peoples in Canaan. Instead of ridding the land of the Canaanites, Israel became like the Canaanites. As a result, whenever the Israelites went out to war, the Lord was against them and caused them to be defeated (2:15).”

TRANSITION: *The book of Judges focuses on the cycle of sin of the Israelites—and the rescue God provided through His judges.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

CONTEXT: Highlight the “Prologue” for Judges on **Pack Item 2** (Poster: *Outlines of Joshua, Judges, Ruth*). Explain that this prologue sets the context for Israel's sin in the rest of the book.

SHARE: Provide copies of **Pack Item 8** (Handout: *Joshua, Judges, Ruth Time Line*). Point out that Joshua had divided the land around 1385 BC. A few years later, Joshua died and the nation's spiritual spiral began.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read

Judges 2:11-15 as the group listens for the spiritual shift in Israel.

RECAP: Identify the gods pursued by the Israelites after Joshua’s death:

- **(2:11-13)** The Israelites “followed other gods from the surrounding peoples.” Specifically, they pledged their allegiance to “Baal and the Ashtoreths.” Baal, the Canaanite god of weather and nature, lured the people for obvious reasons. As an agricultural society, the residents of Canaan depended on favorable weather conditions for their crops and livestock. The Ashtoreths (a female counterpart to Baal) represented the goddess of sex, love, and fertility. In this worship, prostitution was permitted, even encouraged.

ASK: What factors contribute to a person or a group abandoning God? (p. 71)

TRANSITION: *God had warned His people that idolatry would come with consequences. He poured out His anger on them in an effort to bring them back to Him.*

READ: Call for a volunteer to read aloud Judges 2:16-19, directing the group to listen for the cycle described.

EXAMINE: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 13** (*Handout: The Cycle of Judges*). Encourage adults to work in pairs to review the article and to highlight the key points. After a few minutes, allow the pairs to share their thoughts. Use the following information to explain the connection between spiritual prostitution and idolatry.

- **(2:17)** Rather than obeying God, the Israelites “prostituted themselves” by following false gods. The Hebrew wording can refer to literal adultery within the marriage context or, as here, to spiritual adultery against God through idolatry. Through His covenant with His people, God saw the Israelites as His spouse. Rejecting Him and turning to other gods was tantamount to adultery.

RECAP: Share more about the judges God raised up for Israel:

- **(2:16)** The judges functioned as military deliverers who saved their people from their enemies. With that said, the true Savior of Israel was the Lord Himself who raised up and empowered these leaders to deliver their people. God repeatedly raised up judges to deliver His people from their adversaries. The Lord was with the judge, and He enabled the judge to deliver and protect the people from their enemies.

ASK: What does God’s providing a deliverer tell us about God’s character? (p. 71)

READ: Call for the group to read silently Judges 2:20-23, looking for the primary reason God brought continued punishment against the Israelites.

ASK: Why is disobedience—sin—such a big deal to God? How can sin spiral us away from God today? (p. 71)

RECAP: Encourage adults to express in their own words how God revealed His attitude toward sin in these verses. Highlight that He withdrew His hand of protection from the people and allowed their enemies to

overwhelm them. Summarize the following to highlight God’s motivation for allowing His people to suffer at the hands of their enemies:

- **(2:22)** Punishment was not God’s only purpose in allowing Israel’s enemies in the promised land. He noted that He wanted “to test Israel.” The Hebrew rendered *test* can mean to evaluate the quality of an item or, metaphorically, an individual’s character. The idea relates to making sure something is real or has substance. Although God never tempts anyone to sin (see Jas. 1:13), He will put His people through times of testing and trials. Ultimately, God’s plan for Israel was to bring them back to Him. That is always the goal of chastisement from the Lord. He never allows His people to suffer for no reason or simply to be cruel.

STATE: *This was not the generation that had conquered the land. That generation, along with Joshua, had passed from the scene. This was a new generation of Israelites who had to learn how to trust God for themselves. When they failed, God placed them in situations that would challenge them to come back to Him. Repentance and restoration are always God’s purpose in discipline and testing.*

ASK: **When and how has God tested you? How is your faith stronger as a result?** (p. 71)

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week’s Bible passage:

- God’s people must guard against the danger of forgetting what the Lord has done for them.
- Believers can be assured that God’s faithfulness to act on behalf of His people is rooted in His character, not in ours.
- Believers can expect their obedience to God to be tested.

DISCUSS: Guide the group to read and respond to the **Apply the Text** questions on page 71. Challenge adults to remember that God’s character is the key to His discipline.

PRAY: Provide a few moments of silent prayer, encouraging adults to reflect on their lives and to identify how they might be caught in a cycle of sin. Urge them to confess this to God and ask for His help moving forward. Close the session in prayer, asking God to protect each adult from the same cycle of sin, judgment, confession, and restoration that the Israelites experienced.

AFTER THE SESSION

Send an email or text to challenge the group to reflect on the **Apply the Text** questions from page 75. Encourage them to develop spiritual disciplines to prevent spiritual drift.