

October 11
Lesson 6 (KJV)

A Faithless Generation

Devotional Reading: [1 Corinthians](#)
[10:1–14](#)

Background Scripture: [Judges 1–2](#)

[Judges 2:6–15](#)

6 And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land.

7 And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel.

8 And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old.

9 And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnathheres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash.

10 And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.

11 And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served

Baalim:

12 And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger.

13 And they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroth.

14 And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies.

15 Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the Lord had said, and as the LORD had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed.

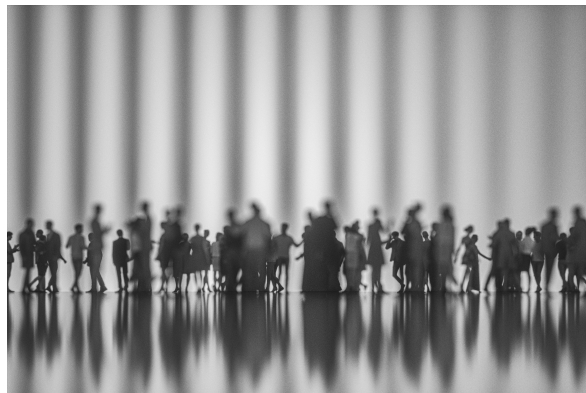


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Key Text

The children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim.—Judges 2:11

Generations: From Canaan to
Jerusalem

Unit 2: From Settled People to Judges

Lessons 5–8

Lesson Aims

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Summarize the consequences of a faithless generation in Israel.
2. Compare the strengths and weaknesses of Israel's wilderness generation, those who entered the promised land, and the generation of the judges.
3. Write a personal statement of faith and commitment to the Lord.

Lesson Outline

Introduction

A. Caught in a Loop

B. Lesson Context

I. Generation Gathered (Judges 2:6–9)

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B. Death (vv. 8–9)

II. Generation Grown (Judges 2:10–15)

A. Disobedience (vv. 10–13)

Differing Priorities

B. Defeat (vv. 14–15)

Coverage

Conclusion

A. Spirals of Life

B. Prayer

C. Thought to Remember

How to Say It

Ashtaroth *Ash-tuh-rawth*

Astarte *A-star-te* (first *a* as in *had*)

Baalim *Bay-uh-leem*

Gaash *Gay-ash*

Timnathheres *Tim-nath-**hee**-reez*

Introduction

A. Caught in a Loop

If you need a humorous response to those who express concern about your love of certain sweet or salty snacks, try this one-liner: “I can resist anything except temptation.” All joking aside, addiction is serious. It involves the compulsive urge to engage with substances and behaviors (or activities) that simulate reward despite adverse consequences. A sense of immediate gratification overrides an awareness of long-term harm. Addiction changes one's brain chemistry,

rewriting the reward system to perpetuate the dependence. People with addiction, therefore, live in a destructive feedback loop.

My experience with years of compulsive negative behavior was not severe, but the difficulty of breaking any cycle is fierce. Some people never escape the loop. Others try but relapse. Sometimes the attempted rehabilitation and relapse become a part of an extended loop. However, it is possible to break negative cycles. A few fortunate people find their way out.

The book of Judges tells the story of an extended negative feedback loop that was experienced nationally. It warns us against temptation and tendencies while displaying God's steadfast faithfulness to His people. The book recounts events roughly between 1380 and 1050 BC.

B. Lesson Context

Joshua had no successor. After his death, God's people became a tribal confederacy, without a central political leader ([Judges 21:25](#)). Their shared ancestry, tradition, and service to God bound them to one another. However, the Israelites in the period of the judges regularly neglected their distinctive history. God's covenant was the structure for reinforc-

ing their memories, but the people fell (or jumped!) away. They became more and more like the surrounding nations in this process.

The author of Judges is unknown but exhibits familiarity with previous books—especially Exodus and Deuteronomy. The book of Judges notes God's relationship with the ancestors of Israel through the story of the exodus ([Judges 2:1, 12; 6:8–10; 11:13–27](#)). It also cites Joshua's leadership ([1:1; 2:6–8, 21–23](#)), God's covenantal relationship with Israel ([2:1–3, 20; 3:4; 5:5](#)), and specific elements of devotion such as the Nazarite vow ([13:4–7](#); compare [Numbers 6:1–21](#)). It emphasizes portions of God's law given through Moses by focusing on remembrance of what God has done ([6; 8; 32:7–11](#)). It also reiterates the blessings and curses for national obedience and disobedience ([Deuteronomy 28:1–68](#)).

The focus of today's lesson comes from the book's introduction, a portion of historical review that leads into a doctrinal admonition. It supplies a framework for understanding the narratives of the specific judges that follow ([Judges 3:7–16:31](#)). Judges presents a repetitive cycle of sin often referred to as "the Judges cycle": (1) a generation passes away, (2) the next generation ignores God's expectations,

(3) the people follow false gods, (4) God is provoked to anger, (5) the Israelites experience oppression under foreign rule, (6) they cry out to God in their distress, (7) the Lord raises up a deliverer for the people, and (8) peace is restored to the land (2:10–19). On a simplified level, one may remember this cycle as *duplicity*, *disaster*, *distress*, and *deliverance*, or, using a different alliteration, *sin*, *suffering*, *supplication*, and *salvation*.

I. Generation Gathered (Judges 2:6–9)

A. Dismissal (vv. 6–7)

6. And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land.

The book of Joshua concludes with a parallel passage to this verse and the three that follow (Joshua 24:28–31). As his final recorded act of leadership, Joshua had called the twelve tribes of Israel together in Shechem to renew their covenant with God. The specifics of this covenant renewal are recorded in Joshua 24:1–28 (see Lesson 5).

The departure of every man *unto his inheritance* refers to the land distribution that is described in Joshua 13:8–19:51. Each tribe except Levi received a portion

of Canaan in which to settle.

Until this point in Israel's history, the people have moved together as a cohesive whole. There has been evident unity under the leadership of Moses and Joshua. But now, for the first time, the Israelites are dispersed across a larger region as *every man* departs to possess a slightly different portion of the *inheritance*.

What Do You Think?

Can we “do” faith on our own, or is formal Christian community necessary for faithful obedience to God?

Digging Deeper

How do Acts 2:42–44; Galatians 6:1–2; and Hebrews 10:24–25 influence your answer?

7. And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel.

Piecing together various data points, *the days of Joshua* ended around 1400 BC. Allowing twenty years or so for *all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua*, we come to the period of the judges, which began in roughly 1380 BC (see Introduction).

The Hebrew word translated *served* occurs in various contexts to depict sub-

servience, either to other people (example: [Judges 9:28](#)) or as the worship of a deity. The writer intends the latter sense here. The word can also signal the worship of pagan gods (see [2:11](#), below). Service unto God was the original indication of God's faithfulness promised to Moses when God spoke to him through the burning bush ([Exodus 3:12](#)). The Israelites accepted their identity as God's people ("a peculiar treasure") when they gathered at mount Sinai to receive God's commands ([19:5](#); [20:1–17](#)). Under Joshua's leadership, *the people* worked for God and worshiped Him as well. They continue faithfully for a generation.

The word *elders* does not signify age alone; the term also applies to local leadership. Elders adjudicate disputes and administer justice as community-recognized authorities (example: [Deuteronomy 21:18–21](#)). The elders who *outlived* Joshua most likely represent the end of the second generation after Egyptian bondage. The first generation—the generation of the exodus itself—was sentenced to forty years in the wilderness for lack of faith; only two people from that generation entered the promised land: Joshua and Caleb ([Numbers 14:20–24](#); [26:65](#); [32:10–13](#); [Deuteronomy 1:34–35](#)). Therefore, the second generation would

be those who followed Joshua's leadership after Moses. Those of the second generation had crossed the Jordan River with him when God miraculously stopped the waters, and the riverbed became dry ground ([Joshua 3:9–17](#); [4:22](#)).

What Do You Think?

How are worship of God and service to God connected?

Digging Deeper

How do [Deuteronomy 10:12](#); [Psalm 100:2](#); and [Romans 12:1](#) affect your answer?

B. Death (vv. 8–9)

8. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old.

The book of Joshua describes Moses as *the servant of the Lord* more than a dozen times. We see that characterization echoed here, now applied to *Joshua* (compare [Joshua 24:29](#)). Scripture designates a handful of other people in a similar way. These include Abraham ([Genesis 26:24](#)), David ([2 Samuel 7:5, 8](#)), Caleb ([Numbers 14:24](#)), and Job ([Job 1:8](#)). To be God's servant should be the goal of every believer.

Like his ancestor Joseph, Joshua dies at *an hundred and ten years old*. Interestingly, their ages are each recorded twice ([Genesis 50:22, 26](#); [Joshua 24:29](#); [Judges 2:8](#)).

Someone who lives that long today is called a “supercentenarian.”

9. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnathheres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash.

This verse repeats [Joshua 24:30](#) almost word for word. Joshua is *buried* in the place he personally inherited after the allotment of lands to the tribes ([Joshua 19:49–50](#)). He is buried *in the mount of Ephraim* because he is from the tribe of Ephraim ([1 Chronicles 7:22–27](#)). The allotment of land for this tribe is described in [Joshua 16:5–9](#). It was a relatively small area, given that Ephraim was the second smallest of the twelve tribes ([Numbers 26:12–56](#)).

The precise location, including *the hill Gaash*, is disputed (compare [2 Samuel 23:30](#)).

II. Generation Grown ([Judges 2:10–15](#))

A. Disobedience (vv. 10–13)

10. And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.

A generational shift occurs, and the first element in “the Judges cycle”

emerges (see [Lesson Context](#)). The reference to *all that generation* applies to the second generation of the exodus; the phrase *another generation* refers to the third since escaping Egypt (see commentary on [Judges 2:7](#), above). The text poetically notes the deaths of those in the second generation as being *gathered unto their fathers*. Similar descriptions are found in [Genesis 49:33](#), [2 Kings 22:20](#), etc.

The new generation hasn’t experienced God’s miraculous *works* in the same way as either the first or second generations. A breakdown seems to have occurred: the second generation failed to transfer what they *knew* about *the Lord* to their children in a way that compelled them to accept and live by it (contrast [Deuteronomy 6:6–7](#)).

The word *knew* in this context points beyond information in and of itself. It includes the concepts of recognition and acknowledgment. This new generation is not unaware of the Lord, but the people do not pledge their undivided loyalty to Him as their God. For example, Eli’s sons, who were priests, certainly knew God’s requirements—so the phrase “they knew not the Lord” means that they failed to obey Him ([1 Samuel 2:12–17](#)).

What Do You Think?

What is the role of [Psalm 78](#) in the spiri-

tual life of the Israelites?

Digging Deeper

What are you purposefully doing to shape the understanding, belief, faith-life, and moral choices of the next generation?

11. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim.

A form of the phrase *did evil in the sight of the Lord* occurs dozens of times in the Old Testament. In the book of Judges, such behavior signals the second aspect of “the “Judges cycle” (see [Lesson Context](#); compare [Judges 3:7, 12; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1](#)). It refers primarily to idolatry (examples: [1 Kings 11:6–7; 2 Kings 21:1–5](#)). Prior to the judges, Scripture uses the saying to characterize the Israelites who died in the wilderness because of doubt, fear, and a lack of faith in God’s deliverance ([Numbers 32:13](#)).

The phrase *the children of Israel* refers to the third generation of Israelites counted from the people’s release from Egypt, the new generation presented in the previous verse. Although God claims them as His *children*, this new generation repeats the rebellion of their ancestors, ignoring warnings the Lord gave about forsaking Him for other gods ([Exodus 20:3–5; Deuteronomy 4:25–26](#)). God is aware of the evil they do; He sees what is

happening despite any belief otherwise ([Psalms 10:11; 94:7](#)). The Israelites’ acts are not hidden from Him. God is watching and evaluating His people in His wisdom.

The plural word *Baalim* refers to fictitious gods known individually by the designation *Baal*, which means “lord” or “master.” Among the Canaanites, the Baals are gods of storms, weather, and fertility. Since agriculture was a fundamental building block of ancient Near Eastern society, Baal was understandably popular. In this instance, the *Baalim* generally represent all Canaanite gods or the various local manifestations of Baal present in the region. Baal is the most frequently mentioned false god that the Israelites rebelliously worship throughout the Old Testament. Ancient people worshiped Baal to receive agricultural abundance; therefore, the Israelites’ idolatry is directly connected to whom they choose to credit for their provision and prosperity.

What Do You Think?

Are false gods present in modern society? If yes, list examples.

Digging Deeper

What tools has God given believers to overcome the temptation of worshiping false gods? What strategies will you personally implement to protect your-

self?

12a. And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them.

The action implied by the word *forsook* in the book of Judges includes the concept of abandonment and the replacement of that which is abandoned with something else (compare [Judges 2:13](#); [10:6](#), [10](#), [13](#)). The Israelites of this third generation do what the second generation swore not to do ([Joshua 24:16](#)). God is faithful, but the Israelites are not (compare [Judges 2:1](#)).

The text commemorates God, who rescued the people from bondage in *Egypt*. After setting them free, God identified Israel as His covenant people and Himself as their God ([Exodus 6:6–7](#)). He is the *God of their fathers*—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ([3:6](#)). This designation should tie Israel’s generations together as it speaks to God’s faithfulness. But God knew in advance what His people would do as they lived among the land’s inhabitants ([23:32–33](#)).

The Israelites succumb to the temptation of other gods because the people around them negatively influence them. The Israelites’ actions exemplify a theme

that spans from Genesis to Revelation: allegiance versus assimilation.



Visual for [Lesson 6](#). Place the visual in a prominent place. Point to the visual and ask students to consider which way their lives are headed.

Differing Priorities

Years ago, I worked for a well-known credit card company. A prominent businessman owned it and purchased the controlling shares to save the business from going bankrupt. He cared deeply for the company and all its employees, nurtured it, and worked hard to keep it healthy. When the businessman died, his son became the CEO. He callously sold the company to the highest bidder, who closed the doors for good.

Similarly, when the founder of a well-known discount mart died, the employees who worked under him reported a decline in integrity after his son assumed leadership. They missed the family-like atmos-

phere the founder developed and encouraged. Under the son, they felt they were no longer known and valued. They sensed a significant shift in priorities.

In both situations, the sons did not know their employees like their fathers did. The new generation made business decisions based on values and priorities other than those of their fathers.

Whether we look at a modern case like those above or one such as in [Judges 2:10–12](#), we naturally wonder, “*Whose fault was it?*” Perhaps those in the older generation bear some responsibility for not having instilled proper values in their children (compare [Deuteronomy 6:6–9](#)). Yet, history affirms that people are personally responsible for their actions. For many reasons, a new generation of Israelites emerged who did not know the Lord, and evil resulted. How does this stark fact affect your priorities? What might you need to reprioritize or reorder?

—PM

12b–13. And provoked the LORD to anger. And they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroth.

God’s displeasure at His people’s disobedience results in *anger*. The Hebrew word translated here as *provoked* means to be vexed, sorrowful, and troubled. The people’s choice to turn away from God

grieves Him.

Ashtaroth is the plural for the Canaanite goddess Astarte, who is associated with war, sexuality, and healing. She is imagined to be the consort of Baal, and some people believe that together they bring fertility to the land and humans.

B. Defeat (vv. 14–15)

14. And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies.

Anger is often described as “burning” (*hot*) in Hebrew. The root image is a blast of hot air from the nostrils. The Lord’s anger is caused by Israel’s failure to be exclusively loyal to Him. Israel’s violation of the covenant is serious. Hundreds of years later, this continuing tendency will be likened to sexual immorality ([Jeremiah 3:6–10; 9:2; 23:10–14; Hosea 2:1–6; 4:12–13](#)).

Consequence kicks in as God gives His people over to oppression by *their enemies*. God had warned Israel through Moses that they would face such domination by adversarial nations as a curse for their disobedience ([Deuteronomy](#)

28:15–68; 31:16–21). Therefore, they face raiders who loot and plunder their wealth. They become subject to local rulers and live in oppression.

When the Israelites entered Canaan, the hearts of the land’s pagan kings “melted” in fear ([Joshua 5:1](#)). The Canaanites lost their courage because of God’s power and might. They yielded to the Israelites both voluntarily and involuntarily. In this place and time, God now gives the Canaanites the upper hand.

15. Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed.

The declaration regarding *the hand of the Lord* is an anthropomorphism, which means using a human characteristic to describe God. Other texts use this technique regarding God’s eyes and ears ([Psalm 34:15](#)), His mouth ([Isaiah 62:2](#)), and His face ([Exodus 33:20](#)). Here the word *hand* signifies God’s power and might. His hand brought Israel out of Egypt; Scripture declares this in other places by using the words *hand* and *arm* as near synonyms (examples: [Deuteronomy 4:34](#); [5:15](#); [26:8](#)). His hand was with Israel when they entered the promised land ([Joshua 4:24](#)), but now it is turned *against*

them *for evil*. This verse doesn’t refer to a moral evil since God doesn’t tempt people to sin ([James 1:13](#)). Rather, it relates to physical distress; the same Hebrew word is translated as “adversities” in [1 Samuel 10:19](#).

What Do You Think?

How does God correct waywardness in modern times?

Digging Deeper

What are the consequences of sin? How do [Isaiah 59:2](#) and [Romans 6:23](#) impact your answer?

Coverage

Hailstorms in Colorado are sometimes so severe that insurance companies only write policies with a high deductible for hail damage. This requirement can come as a rude shock to the unaware. The financially wise person reads the policy beforehand, so there are no surprises.

The generation of Israelites in view here had one of two problems: either they weren’t aware of the costly “deductible” present in God’s covenant (the Law of Moses), or they *were* aware of it but chose to ignore it. Either way, the price of their folly was inexcusable. They decided to do what was evil and suffered the consequences.

As modern believers, we also face con-

sequences for disobedience. God is our ultimate insurance and assurance; He is our protector and provider. Thankfully, Jesus Christ purchased God's coverage for you; by Jesus, our "sins are covered" ([Romans 4:7](#)). How much time do you spend studying the terms of that coverage?

—PM

Conclusion

A. Spirals of Life

There may or may not be a valid indictment against the older generation for failure to adequately teach their descendants ([Deuteronomy 6:20–25](#)). Yet, the choice to follow God must be personally accepted and enacted. Unfortunately, humans are inconsistent and bent toward sinfulness. We make bad choices and fail to follow God's rules. Like the Israelites, we struggle to do what is right and often find ourselves stuck in negative spirals.

The book of Judges depicts a series of vicious downward spirals that exemplify the problem (see [Lesson Context](#)). Wherever God's people dwell, there is a temptation to absorb negative aspects of the cultural environment. These cultural pressures tend to pull us away from allegiance to God. The tension clouds our vision and degrades our decision-making.

When God's Word is not kept faithfully in the forefront of our minds and a relationship with Him is not a priority, we fail. What are you doing to protect yourself from the sinful influences of the surrounding culture? How can you support the next generation in resisting as well?

B. Prayer

Father God, our provider, protector, and deliverer—thank You for giving us examples of both what to do and what to avoid. Help us remember who You are and recount the miraculous and wonderful things You have done. Empower us to set aside temptations, false gods, and cultural tendencies that will corrupt us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

C. Thought to Remember

Every person must choose God deliberately and personally.