A Faithless Generation

Judges 2:6-15
SS Lesson for 10/11/2026

Devotional Scripture: 1 Cor 10:1-14

OUTLINE

LESSON BACKGROUND AND KEY VERSE

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary
Key Verses: Judges 2:11

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An inheritance because of being an heir (Rom 8:17)
An inheritance of the crown of righteousness (2 Tim 4:8)
An inheritance for those who are poor in the eyes of the world (James 2:5)
An inheritance that can never perish (1 Pet 1:3-4)
Faithful in serving God (7)
Serving wholeheartedly (Eph 6:7)
Serving with whatever gifts God has given (1 Peter 4:10)
Serving as a servant (Mark 10:43)
Serving to please and build up others (Rom 15:2)
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COMMENTARY THOUGHTS FROM BOB DEFFINBAUGH
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Lesson Background and Key Verse

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

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 reinforcing 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 Nazirite 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.

Key Verses: Judges 2:11

Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served the Baals

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Faithful While Joshua Lived (Judges 2:6-9)

6 And when Joshua had dismissed the people, the children of Israel went each to his own inheritance to possess the land.
7 So the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord which He had done for Israel.
8 Now Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died when he was one hundred and ten years old.
9 And they buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Heres, in the mountains of Ephraim, on the north side of Mount Gaash.

Faithful resulting in obtaining inheritances (6)

An inheritance of God's kingdom (Luke 12:32)

32 "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.

An inheritance because of being an heir (Rom 8:17)

17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

An inheritance of the crown of righteousness (2 Tim 4:8)

8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

An inheritance for those who are poor in the eyes of the world (James 2:5)

> 5 Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?

An inheritance that can never perish (1 Pet 1:3-4)

> 3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade, kept in heaven for you

Faithful in serving God (7)

Serving wholeheartedly (Eph 6:7)

> 7 Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men,

Serving with whatever gifts God has given (1 Peter 4:10)

> 10 Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

Serving as a servant (Mark 10:43)

> 43 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,

Serving to please and build up others (Rom 15:2)

> 2 Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.

Serving prompted by love and faith (1 Thess 1:3)

> 3 We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Faithful in honoring Joshua (8-9)

Honoring by serving (Matt 20:26-28)

> 26 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave, 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Honoring by giving honor that is due (Rom 13:7)

> 7 Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

Honoring by remembering with great joy (Phil 2:28-30)

> 28 Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. 29 Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor men like him, 30 because he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me.

Honoring those whose work is leading and teaching (1 Tim 5:17)

> 17 The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.

Faithlessness Through Worshiping Other gods (Judges 2:10-15)

10 When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel.
11 Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served the Baals;
12 and they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the Lord to anger.
13 They forsook the Lord and served Baal and the Ashtoreths.
14 And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel. So He delivered them into the hands of plunderers who despoiled them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies.
15 Wherever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for calamity, as the Lord had said, and as the Lord had sworn to them. And they were greatly distressed.

Faithlessness by forsaking God (10-12)

Forsaking God by not seeking Him (Ps 10:4)

> 4 In his pride the wicked does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God.

Forsaking God leads to perishing (Isa 1:28)

> 28 But rebels and sinners will both be broken, and those who forsake the Lord will perish.

Forsaking God by forsaking His word (Jer 9:13-14)

> 13 The Lord said, "It is because they have forsaken my law, which I set before them; they have not obeyed me or followed my law. 14 Instead, they have followed the stubbornness of their hearts; they have followed the Baals, as their fathers taught them."

Forsaking God through idolatry (Deut 4:25)

> 25 After you have had children and grandchildren and have lived in the land a long time — if you then become corrupt and make any kind of idol, doing evil in the eyes of the Lord your God and provoking him to anger,

Forsaking God by participating with demons (1 Cor 10:18-22)

> 18 Consider the people of Israel: Do not those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar? 19 Do I mean then that a sacrifice offered to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? 20 No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons. 22 Are we trying to arouse the Lord's jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

Faithlessness by serving other gods (13)

Serving other gods is a violation of our covenant with God (Josh 23:16)

> 16 If you violate the covenant of the Lord your God, which he commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them, the Lord's anger will burn against you, and you will quickly perish from the good land he has given you."

Serving other gods by worshiping heavenly bodies (Acts 7:42)

> 42 But God turned away and gave them over to the worship of the heavenly bodies. This agrees with what is written in the book of the prophets: "'Did you bring me sacrifices and offerings forty years in the desert, O house of Israel?

Serving other gods by worshiping idols (Acts 7:43)

> 43 You have lifted up the shrine of Molech and the star of your god Rephan, the idols you made to worship. Therefore I will send you into exile' beyond Babylon.

Serving other gods leads to corruption (Deut 4:15-16)

15 You saw no form of any kind the day the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire. Therefore watch yourselves very carefully, 16 so that you do not become corrupt and make for yourselves an idol, an image of any shape, whether formed like a man or a woman,

Serving other gods through spiritual adultery (Exodus 34:15)

15 "Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the land; for when they prostitute themselves to their gods and sacrifice to them, they will invite you and you will eat their sacrifices.

Faithlessness causing God's anger (14)

God's anger is aroused because of complaining (Num 11:1)

11 Now the people complained about their hardships in the hearing of the Lord, and when he heard them his anger was aroused. Then fire from the Lord burned among them and consumed some of the outskirts of the camp.

God's anger is aroused because of greed (Num 11:32-34)

32 All that day and night and all the next day the people went out and gathered quail. No one gathered less than ten homers. Then they spread them out all around the camp. 33 But while the meat was still between their teeth and before it could be consumed, the anger of the Lord burned against the people, and he struck them with a severe plague. 34 Therefore the place was named Kibroth Hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had craved other food.

God's anger is aroused because of rebellion (Num 32:9-13)

9 After they went up to the Valley of Eshcol and viewed the land, they discouraged the Israelites from entering the land the Lord had given them. 10 The Lord's anger was aroused that day and he swore this oath: 11 'Because they have not followed me wholeheartedly, not one of the men twenty years old or more who came up out of Egypt will see the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob — 12 not one except Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua son of Nun, for they followed the Lord wholeheartedly.' 13 The Lord's anger burned against Israel and he made them wander in the desert forty years, until the whole generation of those who had done evil in his sight was gone.

God's anger is aroused because of disobedience (2 Sam 6:7)

7 The Lord's anger burned against Uzzah because of his irreverent act; therefore God struck him down and he died there beside the ark of God.

God's anger is aroused because of wickedness (2 Kings 17:11)

11 At every high place they burned incense, as the nations whom the Lord had driven out before them had done. They did wicked things that provoked the Lord to anger.

Faithlessness causing calamity (15)

Calamities because of being rebellious (Ezek 21:24)

24 "Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: 'Because you people have brought to mind your guilt by your open rebellion, revealing your sins in all that you do — because you have done this, you will be taken captive.

Calamities because of joining rebellious people (Prov 24:21-22)

21 Fear the Lord and the king, my son, and do not join with the rebellious, 22 for those two will send sudden destruction upon them, and who knows what calamities they can bring?

Calamities because of rejection of God (Prov 1:24-27)

> 24 But since you rejected me when I called and no one gave heed when I stretched out my hand, 25 since you ignored all my advice and would not accept my rebuke, 26 I in turn will laugh at your disaster; I will mock when calamity overtakes you — 27 when calamity overtakes you like a storm, when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind, when distress and trouble overwhelm you.

Calamities because of wickedness (Prov 14:32)

> 32 When calamity comes, the wicked are brought down, but even in death the righteous have a refuge.

Calamities because of God's judgment of conduct (Ezek 7:24-27)

> 24 I will bring the most wicked of the nations to take possession of their houses; I will put an end to the pride of the mighty, and their sanctuaries will be desecrated. 25 When terror comes, they will seek peace, but there will be none. 26 Calamity upon calamity will come, and rumor upon rumor. They will try to get a vision from the prophet; the teaching of the law by the priest will be lost, as will the counsel of the elders. 27 The king will mourn, the prince will be clothed with despair, and the hands of the people of the land will tremble. I will deal with them according to their conduct, and by their own standards I will judge them. Then they will know that I am the Lord."

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

A New Generation (Judges 2:6-10)

The generation that was so victorious in defeating the Canaanites and taking the land under Joshua has now passed away, and a whole new generation has arisen. Our author tells us plainly that it was the godly leadership of those former days that had greatly influenced that former generation. But it was now a new day. That old generation is dead and gone, and a new generation has arisen that does not know God and that does not know the greatness of His power.[7] This is sad indeed, for God had promised that previous generation that the manifestation of His power in driving out the Canaanites would surpass the manifestations of His power in delivering the Israelites from Egypt.

Forsaking the Faith (Judges 2:11-13)

With the Joshua generation now gone, the new generation – which has not known and experienced God as did the former generation – chooses to coexist with the Canaanites, rather than to conquer them. Worse yet, the Israelites forsook the Lord and began to worship the Canaanite gods, Baal (the male Canaanite god) and the Ashtars[9] (his female counterparts). This generation has demonstrated the truth of God's Word, spoken earlier – their willingness to live among the Canaanites has led to their apostasy from the God of their fathers.

Divine Judgment (Judges 2:14-15)

As God had promised (and as Joshua had so recently warned – see Joshua 23:14-16), divine judgment would follow Israel's unbelief, disobedience, and apostasy. No more would God strike terror in the hearts of Israel's enemies. Instead of giving Israel miraculous victories over their enemies, He would give the Israelites into the hands of their enemies. When the Israelites engaged them in battle, their enemies would prevail. They had turned from God and now God would cease to bless them as He had before.

Divine Mercy (Judges 2:16-18)

The author's description of divine judgment in verses 14 and 15 comes as no surprise to the reader, for this is exactly what God had promised. What does come as a complete surprise is what we now read in verses 16-18. God does discipline His people for their sin, but He also remains faithful to His character, and thus He sends them deliverers. We tend to think of either judgment or mercy, but the two may be accomplished at the same time. I am reminded of the words of Habakkuk when he pleads, **"In wrath remember mercy"** (Habakkuk 3:2, NASB).

Here indeed we find God's incredible mercy. God brings judgment upon His sinful people, as His righteousness requires. Thus God hands His people over to cruel taskmasters. But at the same time, He raises up judges to deliver His people. In spite of this, we are told that the Israelites refused to listen to these judges (2:17).

Here's where I have a bit of a problem. Who were those judges to whom the Israelites were not listening, and what were they saying? I have trouble thinking of Ehud or Jephthah or Samson speaking to Israel about their relationship to God or calling them to repentance. I see several possible explanations. First, the judges "spoke" to Israel of God's concern and of His salvation by what they did. They spoke in deed, more than in word. Second, it could be that while our author chose to focus on their military actions, they may have done more speaking regarding spiritual things than what is recorded for us in Judges. It is not hard to think of Deborah as a judge who called Israel to repentance and obedience, for example. Also, although we have difficulty thinking of Gideon, Barak, Samson, and Jephthah as spiritual men, the author of the Book of Hebrews includes them in his "hall of faith" (Hebrews 11:32). They must have been more spiritual than they appear in Judges, where we see their dark side.

There is a third option. There may have been many more "judges" in Israel at that time than just those named in the Book of Judges. For example, I was intrigued to read these words in the Book of Numbers:

1 When Israel lived in Shittim, the people began to commit sexual immorality with the daughters of Moab. 2 These women invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods; then the people ate and bowed down to their gods. 3 When Israel joined themselves to Baal-peor, the anger of the Lord flared up against Israel.

4 The Lord said to Moses, "Arrest all the leaders of the people, and hang them up before the Lord in broad daylight, so that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel." 5 **So Moses said to the judges of Israel, "Each of you must execute those of his men who were joined to Baal-peor**."

6 Just then one of the Israelites came and brought to his brothers a Midianite woman in the plain view of Moses and of the whole community of the Israelites, while they were weeping at the entrance of the tent of meeting. 7 When Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he got up from among the assembly, took a javelin in his hand, 8 and went after the Israelite man into the tent and thrust through the Israelite man and into the woman's abdomen. So the plague was stopped from the Israelites.

… 14 Now the name of the Israelite who was stabbed – the one who was stabbed with the Midianite woman – was Zimri son of Salu, a leader of a clan of the Simeonites (Numbers 25:1-8, 14, emphasis mine).

So, from this text in Numbers we learn that at that time there were many **"judges"** among the Israelites. As these judges "executed" God's instructions through Moses, sin was dealt with among the leaders of the nation, and in so doing, the whole nation learned an important spiritual lesson about God. And so while we read of men like Gideon and Barak and Samson – men who were military **"judges"** – there may also have been other judges, who functioned more like Deborah, leading, teaching, exhorting, and rebuking the Israelites.

The idolatry and disobedience that characterized this generation of Israelites distinguished them from their **"fathers"** (NAU, CSB, ESV, NIV) or **"ancestors"** (NET Bible, NJB, NLT). Personally, I prefer **"fathers"** over **"ancestors"** because, in general, their ancestors were not that godly (see Acts 7:51-53).[13] It was only the "Joshua generation" (their actual fathers) who was faithful and obedient, so as to conquer the Promised Land. This is the generation that brought up these Israelites.

Now in verse 18, the author calls attention to the fact that God's deliverance came in the form of someone He appointed to deliver (**"judge"**) His people. The deliverance God provided through a judge was life-long, that is for as long as the deliverer lived. This was not due to the faithfulness of His people, but rather was due to the tender mercies of God. In one sense, it was sad that God's deliverance was not prompted by Israel's repentance, but it is also grounds for rejoicing because God's salvation was dependent upon His own character and not upon man's conduct. If we will learn anything from the Book of Judges, it is that our faith and trust must be in God and not in man.

(Adapted from URL:https://bible.org/seriespage/3-say-it-again-samuel-second-introduction-judges-judges-26-34)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

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. 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?