

[Lesson 19](#): The Reign of the Judges (See L19 [Study Guide](#))

Purpose: To encourage class members to seek influences that will strengthen them in living the gospel in a challenging world. †1. Background

1. The strength of righteous parents and the consequences of forsaking their ways

- Read and discuss [Judges 2:6-23](#).

“In the book of Judges, the children of Israel experienced several cycles of righteousness and apostasy (see the “Cycle of Apostasy in Judges” diagram).” (*Lesson Manual*)

- [Judges 2:10, 12, 17, 20, and 22](#). How did the rising generation of Israelites begin the cycle of apostasy? Why do children sometimes forsake the righteous teachings of their parents?

†2. President Gordon B. Hinckley

How can parents help their children be faithful?

How have your parents or other family members strengthened you in righteous living?

How can we recognize the early signs of apostasy?

How might we appropriately help a family member or friend who seems to be falling away from the truth?

†3. Elder Orson F. Whitney

2. Deborah—the strength of a righteous friend

- Read and discuss [Judges 4:1-16](#). †4. Benjamin Spackman

Why do you think Barak was willing to face Sisera if Deborah would go with him?

What qualities did she have that Barak may not have had?

True “friends inspire us to obey the Lord and give us the strength to do what is right.” (*Lesson Manual*)

How have your friends helped you face difficult challenges or obey the Lord’s commandments?

Are we like Deborah to our friends? Are our friends like Deborah to us?

3. Gideon—the strength of faith in God

- Read and discuss [Judges 6-7](#).

• Judges 6:14-15. The Lord said, “Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel ... have not I sent thee?”

• Judges 6:16-23, 36-40; 7:9-15. “And the Lord said unto him, Surely I will be with thee”.

How did the Lord assure Gideon that He would be with him and help him?

• Judges 7:2. There “are too many ... lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.”

How can we learn to trust God and recognize His power in our lives?

• Judges 7:16-23. Why do you think Gideon had his men shout, ‘The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon’?

What can we learn from Gideon?

How has the Lord helped you do something that he asked you to do that was difficult?

4. Samson—the strength of covenants and the consequences of breaking them

- Read and discuss [Judges 13-16](#). Briefly review the story of Samson.

• Judges 13:2-5. An angel said “thou shalt conceive, and bear a son... the child shall be a Nazarite”.

“Nazarites made covenants with the Lord to separate themselves from the things of the world and become holy unto him. The Nazarite vow is set forth in [Numbers 6:2-6, 8](#).” (*Lesson Manual*)

• Judges 15:14-15. “And ... the Philistines shouted against him: and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him”.

†5. Broken Covenants †6. Consequences

What covenants do we make with the Lord? How have these covenants strengthened you?

What happens when we break our covenants?

“Samson had great potential. The angel who announced his birth said he would begin to deliver Israel from the Philistines. The Lord blessed him with many gifts, including great physical strength.” (*Lesson Manual*)

What inner weaknesses caused his downfall? (See [Judges 15:7](#); [Judges 16:1](#); [D&C 3:4](#).)

How can we overcome weaknesses that may hinder us from fulfilling our potential?

†7. Elder David O. McKay

Next Week: L20 “All the City ... Doth Know That Thou Art a Virtuous Woman”;

See L20: [Class Member Study Guide](#).

(You can download a free LDS Institute manual at: [Old Testament Student Manual: Religion 301 and 302](#).) † •

†1. Background: “Led by Joshua, the Israelites conquered much of the promised land. After Joshua died, Israel was not united under a single leader until the days of the prophet Samuel and King Saul. During this interval, 12 judges served as Israel’s rulers and military leaders. Most of their reign was tragic as Israel went through the cycle of apostasy, bondage, repentance, and delivery many times.

“Offsetting the tragic parts of this history are stories of people who remained true, setting powerful examples of how to exercise faith and courage in an apostate world. Deborah and Gideon were both righteous judges whom the Lord raised up to deliver Israel. Deborah’s faith was largely responsible for delivering Israel from a Canaanite army. Gideon’s reliance on the Lord allowed his 300-man army to miraculously defeat the Midianites.” (*LM*)

†2. President Gordon B. Hinckley: “The first of many trees that I planted was a thornless honey locust. . . . I put it in a place at the corner where the wind from the canyon to the east blew the hardest. . . . It was only a wisp of a tree, perhaps three-quarters of an inch in diameter. It was so supple that I could bend it with ease in any direction. I paid little attention to it as the years passed.

“Then one winter day, when the tree was barren of leaves, I chanced to look out the window at it. I noticed that it was leaning to the west, misshapen and out of balance. . . . But the trunk was now nearly a foot in diameter. My strength was as nothing against it. I took from my toolshed a block and tackle. Attaching one end to the tree and another to a well-set post, I pulled the rope. The pulleys moved a little, and the trunk of the tree trembled slightly. . . .

“Finally in desperation I took my saw and cut off the great heavy branch on the west side. The saw left an ugly scar, more than eight inches across. I stepped back and surveyed what I had done. I had cut off the major part of the tree, leaving only one branch growing skyward.

...
“When it was first planted, a piece of string would have held it in place against the forces of the wind. I could have and should have supplied that string with ever so little effort. But I did not, and it bent to the forces that came against it.” (“[Bring Up a Child in the Way He Should Go](#),” *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 59.)

†3. Elder Orson F. Whitney: “You parents of the willful and the wayward: Don’t give them up. Don’t cast them off. They are not utterly lost. The shepherd will find his sheep. They were his before they were yours—long before he entrusted them to your care; and you cannot begin to love them as he loves them. They have but strayed in ignorance from the Path of Right, and God is merciful to ignorance. Only the fulness of

knowledge brings the fulness of accountability. Our Heavenly Father is far more merciful, infinitely more charitable, than even the best of his servants, and the Everlasting gospel is mightier in power to save than our narrow finite minds can comprehend.” (Conference Report, [April 1929, 110](#). Note: There is more wonderful wisdom in this talk.)

†4. Ben Spackman: “Prophecy is a gift of the spirit, not an office. Nor, in the Old Testament, was prophecy associated with priesthood; priests simply ran the temple. Modern LDS tend to conflate all of these things together.” (“[Gospel Doctrine 19- Judges](#)”.)

†5. Broken Covenants:

- a. Married outside the covenant of Israel ([Judges 14:1-3](#)).
- b. Immoral with a harlot ([Judges 16:1](#)).
- c. Let his hair be cut ([Judges 16:4-20](#)).

†6. Consequences: “(See [Judges 16:17-21](#).) He lost his spiritual and physical strength, and the Philistines blinded him and bound him. . . . Samson’s hair was not the source of his physical strength. Rather, his hair was a sign of his covenant with the Lord, and when his hair was cut, the Lord took away his physical strength because the covenant was broken.” (*Lesson Manual*)

†7. Elder David O. McKay: “I wish to name as the second principle a little simple thing which even in the naming this morning will indicate to you perhaps how many have wandered from it, the simple principles of prayer. There are men in our midst who say that prayer is not efficacious. Unfortunately some of our young people believe such fallacious remarks. Prayer is a fundamental principle of religion, the Christian religion particularly, and prayer is a force for good. **A praying man is a growing man.** He is a powerful man, as we have heard throughout this conference already.” (Conference Report, [April 1929, 101](#).)

Recommended Reading:

1. Kristin E. Litchman, “[Deborah and the Book of Judges](#),” *Ensign*, Jan. 1990, 59.
2. Stan E. Weed, “[Values, Transmission of](#),” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*.
3. Ted L. Gibbons, “[OT Lesson #19](#)”.
4. Lenet Read, “[The Delivering Judges](#)”.
5. Nancy Jensen, “[Old Testament Lesson #19](#)”, May 8, 2010.
6. Meridian Staff, “[Lesson 19](#),” *Meridian Magazine*, April 29, 2014.

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