



February 16, 2014  
Judges 2-3  
“Jesus ONLY”  
Pastor Gary Hamrick

The cycle of sin (see diagram at the end of this study guide) is a recurring pattern for Israel, and every time they slipped into sin and idolatry, the Lord was gracious and raised up a military hero or deliverer, called a judge. In this study, we’ll look at the first two judges: Othniel and Ehud.

### Othniel - Judges 3:7-11

1. The Hebrew meaning of Othniel’s name is “force/strength of God.”
2. Othniel was Caleb’s younger brother and, at the same time, he was also Caleb’s son-in-law!
  - a. **Judges 1:13** - “*Othniel son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother, took it; so Caleb gave his daughter Acsah to him in marriage.*”
3. We read in **Judges 3:7**, that Israel did evil in the eyes of the Lord “*and served the Baals and Asherahs.*”
  - a. Baals and Asherahs (male and female counterparts) were the false gods of the Canaanites.
  - b. Baal and Asherah were the gods of fertility and agriculture.<sup>1</sup>
  - c. The worship of Baal and Asherah included sexual immorality, ritualistic prostitution, self-mutilation, and human sacrifice, and Israel was engaged in these things, so it’s no wonder “*the anger of the Lord burned against Israel.*”<sup>2</sup>
  - d. These were plural gods because there were a number of Baals, including:

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/47227/Baal>

<sup>2</sup> **Judges 3:8**

- i. Baal-gad – The “lord of good fortune.”
  - 1. [Joshua 11:17](#) – *“... from Mount Halak which rises toward Seir, to Baal Gad in the Valley of Lebanon below Mount Hermon.”*
- ii. Baal-hamon – The “lord of the multitude.”
  - 1. [Song of Songs 8:11](#) – *“Solomon had a vineyard in Baal Hamon...”*
- iii. Baal-hazor – The “lord of the village.”
  - 1. [2 Samuel 13:23](#) – *“Two years later, when Absalom’s sheepshearers were at Baal Hazor near the border of Ephraim...”*
- iv. Baal-meon – The “lord of the dwelling.”
  - 1. [Numbers 32:37–38](#) – *“... the Reubenites rebuilt Heshbon, Elealeh and Kiriathaim, as well as Nebo and Balla Meon...”*
- v. Baal-peor – The “lord of the opening.”
  - 1. [Deuteronomy 4:3a](#) – *“You saw with your own eyes what the Lord did at Baal Peor.”*
- vi. Baal-zebul – The “lord of the flies.”
  - 1. [2 Kings 1:2–3](#) – *“Now Ahaziah had fallen through the lattice of his upper room in Samaria and injured himself. So he sent messengers, saying to them, ‘Go and consult Ball-Zebub, the god of Ekron, to see if I will recover from this injury.’ But the angel of the Lord said to Elijah the Tishbite, ‘Go up and meet the messengers of the king of Samaria and ask them, ‘Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going off to consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron?’ ”*

- 4. God turned Israel over to Cushan-Rishathaim, the king of Aram Naharaim (Northern Syria) for eight years.
- 5. Israel’s cry was heard by the Lord, so he raised up Othniel, of whom it was said in [Judges 3:10](#), *“The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, so that he became Israel’s judge...”*
- 6. Under Othniel’s leadership, the people enjoyed peace for 40 years, and served God, at least until he died.
  - a. [Judges 3:11](#) – *“So the land had peace for forty years, until Othniel son of Kenaz died.”*

#### Ehud – [Judges 3:15b–30](#)

- 7. The Hebrew meaning of Ehud’s name is “united.”

8. The fact that Ehud was “*a left-handed man*” will come into play in this account of his leadership.
  - a. There are only three mentions of left-handed people in the Bible, and every reference includes the fact that the “lefties” were from the tribe of Benjamin.
  - b. It seems there was some genetic predisposition to left-handedness in this tribe, although it’s ironic that in Hebrew, Benjamin means, “son of my right hand.”<sup>3</sup>
  - c. Since most people are right-handed, Ehud had the element of surprise on his side, because he’s a left-handed warrior who will draw his 18” sword, which was strapped on his right thigh.
    - i. A right-handed man would have had his sword strapped to his left thigh (drawing across his body), so it’s likely Ehud was checked for a sword on his left thigh only.
9. When Ehud came to meet with King Eglon,<sup>4</sup> he pretended to have a secret message, and when Eglon stepped forward to hear what he had to say, Ehud stuck his sword into Eglon’s ample-sized stomach!
  - a. The Bible tells us that the sword went so far into his body that the point came out the back, and amazingly, the handle of the sword was swallowed up by his belly fat!
10. When Ehud left, he locked the doors to the king’s chambers, which was the time delay he needed to escape.
11. Eglon’s servants didn’t interrupt what they thought was a lengthy stay in the restroom; so they waited to the “*point of embarrassment*,” before they unlocked the door, went in and found him dead.
12. **Judges 3:30** says, “*That day Moab was made subject to Israel, and the land had peace for eighty years,*” which would be the longest run of peace Israel would experience during the time of the judges; exactly twice as long as any other period of peace.

### Application For Today

13. Following the death of Joshua, we read in **Judges 2:10-11**: “*After that whole generation [of Joshua’s] had [died], another generation grew up, who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel. Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord and served the Baals.*”

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-topics/hebrew-bible/left-handed-people-in-the-bible/>

<sup>4</sup> We read in **Judges 3:17**, that King Eglon was whose name means, “little calf,” was a “*very fat man*.”

14. Following the death of Othniel, we read in [Judges 3:11-12](#): *“So the land had peace for forty years, until Othniel son of Kenaz died. Once again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord...”*
15. Following the death of Ehud, we read in [Judges 4:1](#): *“After Ehud died, the Israelites once again did evil in the eyes of the Lord.”*
16. The pattern is easy to spot: The Israelites honored God only as long as their leader was alive and well, but when Joshua, Othniel, and Ehud died, the people forsook the Lord.
17. This tells us something significant: Their faith was only as good as the leader’s life, and as soon as their leader died, so did their faith.
18. Many of us have spiritual mentors or examples of Christ-likeness in someone’s life that we look up to or who have influenced us greatly in the faith, and there’s nothing wrong with that.
  - a. Peter referred to John Mark as his son in the faith.
    - i. [1 Peter 5:13](#) - *“... so does my son Mark.”*
  - b. Paul referred to Timothy and Titus as his sons in the faith.
    - i. [1 Timothy 1:2](#) - *“... Timothy, my true son in the faith...”*
    - ii. [Titus 1:4](#) - *“... Titus, my true son in our common faith...”*
19. Like the Israelites, we need to ask ourselves several questions:
  - a. “What happens when someone we admire dies, leaves, or worse, fails?”
  - b. “Will your faith stand or will it fall because it was built on faith in someone else?”
20. [1 Corinthians 1:11-13](#) - *“My brothers, some from Chloe’s household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this: One of you says, ‘I follow Paul’; another, ‘I follow Apollos’; another, ‘I follow Cephas’; <sup>5</sup> still another, ‘I follow Christ.’ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul?”*
21. We need to get our eyes off of people, because people will fail us, disappoint us, and they will one day die.
22. We need to remember that Jesus will never leave nor forsake us, and he will never fail or disappoint us.

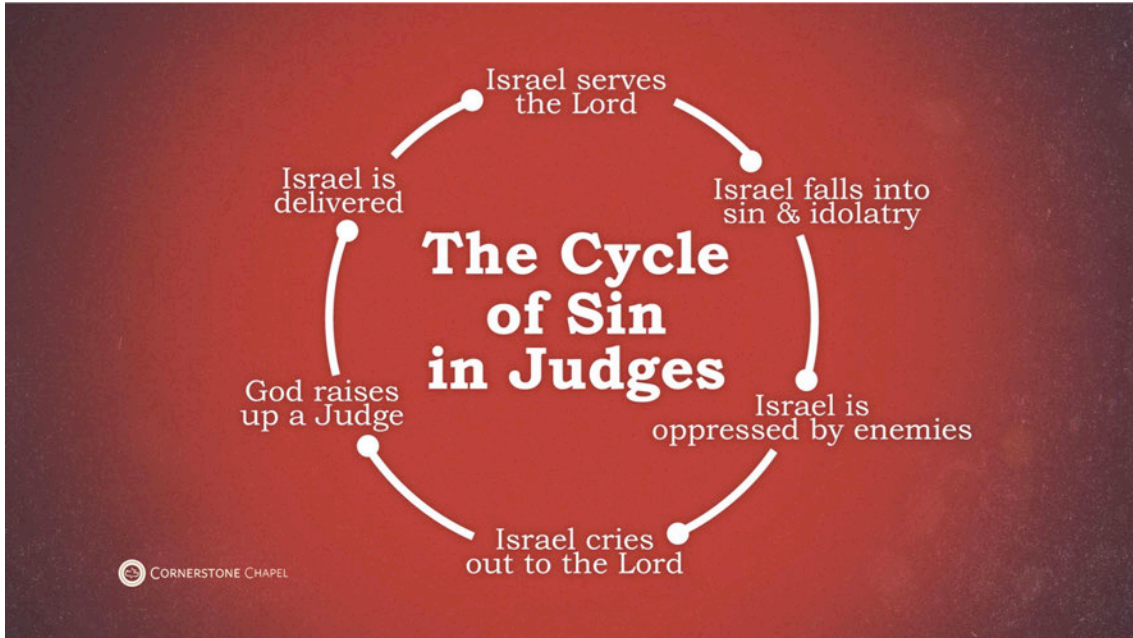
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<sup>5</sup> Peter

23. Our faith should not rise and fall on the backs of leaders; it never worked for Israel, and it will never work for us, because God didn't intend for it to work that way.
24. There was to only be one leader who was perfect; whose life we need to emulate; whose life was given for the sins of the world – Jesus!
25. **Hebrews 12:2-3** – *“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and [finisher] perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him, endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”*

### Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Judges 2:6-19** to provide an overview for this study.
3. How would you answer the question Pastor Gary raised regarding how strong or weak your faith would be if a parent, spiritual mentor, or Pastor Gary himself, were to leave, die, or fail you?
4. Read and discuss **Judges 2:10-11; 3:11-12; and 4:1**.
5. Was there a time in your life when you focused more on a parent, spiritual mentor, pastor, or friend, more than Jesus?
6. Allow the people in the group to share their experiences about relationships they've had with someone they admire in the faith.
7. Read and discuss **1 Corinthians 1:11-13**.
8. Read and discuss **Hebrews 2:2-3**.
9. How have you grown when it comes to your faith in Christ being your own?
10. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: grow in their personal relationship with the Lord, so that there won't be an unhealthy balance when it comes to “following” a parent, family member, friend, spiritual mentor or pastor.



\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).