Characters of the Old Testament

A Thirteen Lesson Bible Study
by Jeff S. Smith

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6. Why did Daniel distinguish himself among the other governors and the satraps (Daniel 6:1-5)?

8. The apostle Paul describes the greatness of an excellent spirit like Daniel’s in Philippians 4:4-9. Summarize the points of that excellent spirit:
   - verse 4: [Rejoicing in the Lord]
   - verse 5: [Gentleness known to all for the Lord is at hand]
   - verse 6: [Dearth of anxiety due to supplication to God and trust]
   - verse 7: [Peace of God guarding one’s heart and mind through Christ]
   - verse 8: [Meditation upon things that are noble, just, pure, etc.]
   - verse 9: [Copying the approved examples of the apostles]

9. How did Daniel react to the new statute that forbade prayer to Jehovah (Daniel 6:6-10)?

10. Why did Daniel blatantly break the law of the land (Acts 5:29)?

11. How was Daniel able to survive the lions’ den (Daniel 6:11-22)?

12. Lions often pursue the Christian in another way. What was the danger of the imaginary lion in Proverbs 22:13?

13. What lion does Peter describe in First Peter 5:8?

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**Introduction**

The list of great characters from the Old Testament would, no doubt, be a quite lengthy one. Hebrews 11 provides a record of some of the greatest and this series of lessons will focus on a few of them. From the age of Genesis through the long Exodus pilgrimage, into the Judges period and subsequent monarchy, all the way through the exile, God’s people were blessed with men and women of amazing faith and strength. None of these characters is perfect and these lessons will not ignore their shortcomings. It will be our main intent to emphasize the successes of such characters, however. It is our hope that we can gain valuable training in being people of great faith ourselves.

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Lesson 13: Daniel

Daniel is among the group of writers known as the major prophets, although his work is far shorter than those of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Daniel prophesied while a captive in Nebuchadnezzar’s court and provides an example of faith that refuses to back down.

1. How did Daniel end up in Nebuchadnezzar’s court (Daniel 1:1-4)?

2. Why did Daniel object to partaking of the king’s delicacies (Daniel 1:5-16)? How did Daniel’s stand turn out?

3. List some occasions in which Christians might have to take stands.
   - Abstaining from alcohol, tobacco and narcotics.
   - Abstaining from dancing, mixed bathing and fornication.
   - Abstaining from taking God’s name in vain or participating in ribald conversation.

4. What do the following passages say about taking such stands?
   - Romans 12:1-2: Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed into something better.
   - First John 2:15-17: Do not love the things of the world more than you love God.
   - First Peter 4:3-5: Do not run in the same flood of dissipation as worldly people, nor be discouraged if they ridicule a pious lifestyle.

5. How do we see Daniel’s humility in his talks with Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2:27-30, 46-49)? How does Daniel’s ability pay off?
7. What do the following passages say about having a hard heart like his?

- Romans 2:1-5:
  A hard heart rejects the patience of God and uses this gift as a license to continue in sin, thinking that he will never be made to give account.

- Ephesians 4:17-19:
  Worldly people are beyond feeling pangs of guilt or conscience because they have sinned so much that it does not affect them anymore.

- First Timothy 4:1-3:
  The Spirit prophesied that in the latter times, some will leave the truth because of deception and a conscience seared as with a hot iron, beyond feeling guilt over sin anymore.

8. What is the difference between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow (see Second Corinthians 7:8-11)?

   Godly sorrow is from the heart and is for the sin committed; it intends to cease the sin, make restitution and do better in the future. Worldly sorrow is grief at being caught and produces no conversion in the heart and only temporary change anywhere.

9. For what did the people take a stand (Second Kings 23:1-3)?

   The people took a stand for the covenant.

10. Briefly describe the reforms that Josiah instituted (Second Kings 23:4-27). Why wouldn’t these reforms prevent the destruction of Judah?

   Josiah removed all the tools and icons of idolatry, reorganized the temple staff and worship to Bible standards, renewed the Passover and expelled all the spiritists and household idols. Josiah knew and God reiterated that even this great reformation would not avert imminent disaster.

11. What are some cases in which a person may repent of sin but still be faced with its temporal consequences?

   The thief may remain in jail. The murderer may face the electric chair. The homosexual may die from disease. The unwed mother may have a child she is not prepared to raise. The adulterer may lose his spouse and family.

12. How did Josiah fatally disobey God (Second Chronicles 35:20-24)?

   He refused to heed the words of God through his enemy, Pharaoh Necho, who told him not to fight because God was against Judah today. Josiah disguised himself and fought anyway and was wounded severely in the valley of Megiddo.

Lesson 1: Noah

Noah is the first of many Bible characters to illustrate so well the concept of human fallibility. He, who seems so great as the ark is constructed, deeply denigrates his reputation by sin later in life. Still, Noah leaves behind an example of faithful obedience and finding God’s grace.

1. Why was God so angry (Genesis 6:1-8)? What was he planning to do about it? Why was Noah distinguished from the rest of mankind?

2. How did Noah find grace in God’s eyes (Genesis 6:9; see Hebrews 11:6-8)?

3. Was Noah sinlessly perfect? How do you know (see Romans 3:23)?

4. The ideal that Noah upheld in being “perfect” is more accurately described in our modern language by the word “blameless” or “having integrity.” How can a man who commits sins still be described as blameless?

5. What New Testament office specifically requires holders to be blameless?

6. Noah was told to build an ark, an agent of God’s grace toward him, in that he would be saved through the same water that was wiping out the infidels and sinners. How did Noah regard the precision of God’s blueprints (Genesis 6:13-22)?
7. How is Noah’s salvation through water akin to a New Testament command regarding ours (First Peter 3:20-21)?

8. Just as God gave Noah a pattern for building the ark, He has given us patterns also. Describe each of the following New Testament patterns or forms:
   - Titus 2:7:
   - Romans 6:17:
   - Second Thessalonians 2:15:
   - First Peter 4:11:

9. How has man today been divinely warned of things not yet seen (Hebrews 11:7)? How is he to make preparation (Second Corinthians 5:9-11)?

10. What do the Bible say about godly fear in the life of a Christian?
   - Matthew 10:28:
   - Ecclesiastes 12:13:
   - Acts 10:34-35:
   - Hebrews 10:26-31:

11. What was Noah’s new occupation (Genesis 9:21-29)? How did this get him into trouble?


Lesson 12: Josiah
Few would have expected much from King Josiah, considering the decline of the nation into which he was born, the wickedness of his father, and the young age at which he ascended to the throne of all Judah.

1. Children learn a great deal from the example set by their parents (Second Kings 21:19-26). What might Josiah have picked up from Amon in the eight years he spent in his household?

2. What does a parent need to do to set a godly example before his children and impress upon them the importance of spiritual things? (List some specific things as well as noting general principles.)

3. What does it mean when the historian claims that Josiah “did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left” (Second Kings 22:1-2; see Proverbs 4:20-27)? How does the New Testament advise a similar path for Christians (Matthew 7:13-14)?

4. How old was Josiah when the book of the Law was found (Second Kings 22:3-13)? How did Josiah react when he heard the law book being read?

5. What did the prophetess predict for Judah (Second Kings 22:14-20)? For Josiah? Why was Josiah’s fate softened somewhat by God?
7. Saul became very jealous of David because of this upset victory and the appreciation of Israel’s population, especially the women. Throughout the remainder of First Samuel, Saul attempts to kill David. How does David react to this threat (First Samuel 24:1-22)?

8. What was the first sign that David is not the great warrior and brave patriot he was when Goliath threatened Israel (Second Samuel 11:1-5)?

9. Paul often described the good fight of faith that is the Christian life. Summarize what the following passages say about enduring that fight from youth to old age.

   - Philippians 2:17-18:
   - Philippians 3:12-14:
   - First Corinthians 9:26-27:
   - Second Timothy 4:6-8:

10. What should David have done when he saw beautiful Bathsheba bathing across the way? What should he have done when he found that she was a married woman (First Corinthians 10:13)?

11. How did David attempt to hide his sin (Second Samuel 11:14-27)? What does Proverbs 28:13 advise concerning this option?

Lesson 2: Abraham

Perhaps no other man in the Bible faced greater challenges than Abraham, and yet he emerges from them with a great record of success. Abraham was by no means perfect and his failures provide important lessons, too.

1. How old was Abraham when God told him to leave his homeland (Genesis 12:1-9)? Why did he do it (Hebrews 11:8-10, 13-16)?

2. What spiritual challenges are presented when someone (especially a younger person) is compelled to leave his home and family?

3. What lie (or “half-truth”) did Abraham and Sarah concoct (Genesis 12:10-20)? Why? What weakness did this reveal to God?

4. What are some circumstances that can tempt even good people to lie?

5. Who exhibits the better character in this incident, Lot or Abraham (Genesis 13:1-13)? How? What elements of good character does he show?

6. What further service did Abraham provide to Lot (Genesis 14:1-16)?
7. How does God expect Christians to do for their brethren, according to the following passages?

- Romans 12:10-13:
  Be kindly affectionate; give preference to one another; distribute to their needs.

- Ephesians 4:32:
  Be kind and tenderhearted; forgive one another as God forgave us.

- Hebrews 13:1-3:
  Have brotherly love; entertain strangers; remember prisoners.

- First John 3:16-18:
  Love not in word but in deed; lay down one's life for his brethren.

8. Why would human reasoning render this divine promise unlikely? How did Abraham react to it (Genesis 15:1-6)?

9. What is faith (see Hebrews 11:1-2)?

10. How did Abraham and Sarah try to help God fulfill this promise (Genesis 16:1-4)?

11. What is Abraham’s error in dealing with Abimelech (Genesis 20:1-13)? What does this show about Abraham?

12. What challenge is presented to Abraham in this passage (Genesis 22:1-14)? How does he respond?

13. Why was Abraham able to obey this challenge (Hebrews 11:17-19)?

Lesson 11: David

No other Bible character is called by the designation fit for David: “a man after God’s own heart.” David’s life, however, is marked by both greatness and lowness. It was his intent to do good and diligence in righting wrongs that made him a man after God’s heart.

1. After Saul had been promised a dismissal from the throne, God sent Samuel to anoint his successor as king (First Samuel 16:1-13). He went to the house of Jesse in Bethlehem, possibly anticipating a physical specimen like the failed king of the present. Whom did he find instead (verse 12)?

2. What was David’s job in Saul’s household (First Samuel 16:14-23)?

3. How well were Saul and Israel standing up to Goliath’s ridicule of their God (First Samuel 17:1-11)? Why was David not regularly at the battlefront (First Samuel 17:12-19)? Why was he sent there this day?

4. What did David think of a Hebrew champion’s chances against Goliath? (First Samuel 17:20-30) How did his brothers respond to David’s courage?

5. With what was David able to slay Goliath (First Samuel 17:31-51)?

6. Consider Ephesians 6:14-17. List the individual components of the whole armor of God.
   a.
   b.
   c.
   d.
   e.
   f.
7. How did Elisha provide for the poor widow (Second Kings 4:1-7)?

He worked a miracle that gave her enough oil to use and to sell to support her family.

8. How should widows be cared for under New Testament law, according to the following passages?

- James 1:27:
  Individual Christians should practice pure religion by visiting widows in their distress, that is, providing for their needs.
- First Timothy 5:4, 8, 16:
  Family members should provide for widows in their own households, for to neglect them is worse than what an infidel would do.
- First Timothy 5:9-10:
  Widows indeed, who meet these qualifications, can be taken into a list for ongoing support and care.
- First Timothy 5:11-14:
  Younger widows should not be taken into the list, for it will cause them to grow idle. They should endeavor to remarry.

9. Why did Elisha make it possible for this Shunammite woman to have a son (Second Kings 4:8-17)?

He was grateful to her for her hospitality.

10. What effect did Elisha’s refusal to treat Naaman in person have on the Syrian commander (Second Kings 5:1-14)?

His pride was wounded deeply, but this made it possible to excise when only humility could permit him to be saved through obedience to the prophet’s prescription.

11. What is the worst thing you can do for a conceited and arrogant person (Job 32:21, First Thessalonians 2:5)?

The worst thing you can do is puff him up more with flattery.

12. Gehazi did not share his master’s selflessness and honesty. What got him into trouble with Elisha (Second Kings 5:15-27)?

Lesson 3: Lot

The New Testament speaks glowingly of Lot and the way in which he handled life in an immoral society. Yet, when we examine the decisions Lot made, we find that he often put himself in those very trying circumstances.

1. (Genesis 13:1-13) Why was there strife between the two entourages? Why was Abraham so intent on preventing this strife?

2. Consider the following passages and identify what caused the strife between brethren in each:

   - Mark 10:35-45:
     The other apostles resented the open ambition of James and John in asking for more prominent positions in Christ’s kingdom.
   - Acts 15:36-41:
     Anticipating another journey with Barnabas, Paul did want to take his partner’s cousin, John Mark, along with them again because he had deserted them in Pamphylia.
   - First Corinthians 1:10-13:
     The saints here were splitting into proto-denominations because various sects preferred different preachers and were pressing their preferences to the point of division.
   - First Corinthians 6:1-6:
     Brethren were suing each other in the world’s courts instead of solving their problems inside the church.
   - Galatians 2:11-21:
     Peter was hypocritically avoiding his Gentile brethren when Jews were about. This not only bred strife in the church but also led to Paul’s rebuke of him before all.

3. How did Lot end up living in Sodom?

Abraham permitted him to choose which expanse of land he preferred and Lot chose that part because it looked to be more fertile and lush. He gave up his pilgrimage at Sodom and settled down there.

4. (Genesis 19:1-3) Lot’s character certainly includes a hospitable nature. The Hebrew writer seems to have had this even in mind when writing, “Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels” (13:2). Why is it more difficult to show hospitality to strangers than family or brethren?
5. How did the Samaritan handle his situation (Luke 10:30-37)?

6. What was Lot’s attitude about the sin around him in Sodom (Second Peter 2:7-8)?

7. In what circumstances do we commonly see and hear lawless deeds? What effect does it have on us?

8. How did Lot attempt to protect his guests (Genesis 19:4-11)? What does this show about him?

9. What pressures arise when one’s family does not agree with a Christian’s faith or heed his attempts at conversion (Genesis 19:12-14)? How should the Christian handle the situation?

10. Why do some people linger when they need to be baptized or restored (Genesis 19:15-17)?

11. Why did Lot’s wife die (Genesis 19:18-26)?

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Lesson 10: Elisha

Elijah’s baldheaded successor willingly, but sadly, took up his mantle and carried on as God’s prophet. Like his predecessor, Elisha is a very bold man who tells the truth no matter what trouble it might land him and no matter with whom.

1. How did Elijah signify to Elisha that he wanted him to follow (First Kings 19:19-21)? How did Elisha respond to Elijah’s call?

2. Although Elijah allows Elisha this, Jesus faced a similar question by his potential disciples. Consider Luke 9:57-62. What did each of the following men say and how did Jesus respond?
   - 9:57-58:
   - 9:59-60:
   - 9:61-62:

3. What do we learn of Elisha’s character when he refuses to stay behind as Elijah instructed him (Second Kings 2:1-14)?

4. Why did Elisha tell the sons of the prophets to go ahead and look for Elijah when he knew better?

5. How did Elisha respond to the forty-two young rogues’ ridicule of him (Second Kings 2:23-24)?

6. Most all of us have been the victims of name-calling and probably most of us have been guilty of it as well. What is Christ’s law for name-calling in the New Testament (Matthew 5:22)?
7. Being kind in your estimation of this great man, what does his reaction show about his character?

8. How can Christians today be encouraged when they feel as if they are alone in their faith?

9. What message did Ahab’s enemy bring him in this passage (First Kings 21:20-29)? Why did Elijah stand against his government?

10. None of us is a prophet and yet we feel compelled to express disagreement with some of our own government's policies. How can we express our disagreement while remaining subject to the governing authorities and rendering honor to whom honor is due (Acts 5:29)?

11. What did Elijah say to the king’s messengers who went to inquire of Baalzebub (Second Kings 1:1-8)?

12. Elijah’s character led him utterly to disdain every false way, including this attempt by King Ahaziah. What should be our attitude toward the false philosophies and religions of this world (Psalm 119:104, Isaiah 8:19-20)?

Lesson 4: Joshua

Although Moses is better known for leading the nation of Israel on its long pilgrimage, it was Joshua who conducted the final charge through Jericho and Ai into possession of the Promised Land. Joshua led an exciting life, one that kept him close to God and his law. He was a great general and an impartial judge of men.

1. Joshua is introduced to the Bible student in this passage as a competent military leader (Exodus 17:8-16). What lesson might have impressed Joshua in realizing just how he was able to win this particular battle?

2. What was Joshua’s office according to Moses (Exodus 24:12-15)? Where was Joshua when God delivered the law to Moses? What attitude could this position have nurtured in Joshua’s heart?

3. Moses sent twelve spies into Canaan to develop a strategy for conquering it (Numbers 14:6-10). Instead, the spies came back with a pessimistic report about fortifications and giants, causing the population to doubt and complain. Joshua was among the spies; what was his opinion of Israel’s prospects?

4. Many New Testament passages work along the same theme, soothing the fear of saints who think that all may be lost. Consider the following passages and summarize how each of them is an encouragement to us not to fear our adversaries and circumstances.
   - Romans 8:31-39:
   - Second Corinthians 12:7-10:
   - Second Timothy 1:3-7:
5. What role is Joshua about to assume? Why him (Numbers 27:18-21)?

Joshua is about to assume the leadership of Israel upon Moses’s demise because the Spirit is in him.

6. This phrase probably has less to do with a miraculous measure of ability than a willful attitude of obedience and faith. Paul commands Christians to be filled with the Spirit in Ephesians 5:17-21. What elements of godliness accompanied this description?

- verse 17: wisely understand what God's will is
- verse 18: avoid drunkenness
- verse 19: worship God acceptably
- verse 20: express gratitude to God for all blessings
- verse 21: being submissive to one another in the fear of God

7. (Joshua 1:7-8) How did God tell Joshua to speak as the oracles of God?

God told him to be courageous and strong and do according to all the Law of Moses, not to turn aside to the right or the left. He told Joshua that the law should not depart from his mouth, but be a focal point of daily meditation and practical submission.

8. Should the Christian’s relationship to the New Testament bear any similarity to Joshua’s with the Old Testament (see Matthew 7:21-23, First Peter 4:11)? If so, how?

Yes, we should know that those who do God's will are bound for heaven and that those who speak in His name should speak only His oracles, not their own opinions.

9. After overseeing a mass circumcision and the defeat of Jericho, Joshua faces his first crisis, the defeat at Ai (Joshua 7:1, 19-26). Why did Israel lose the initial battle there? What did Joshua do about it?

Israel lost because Achan took from the accursed things against God’s command. Joshua discovered his guilt and demanded his confession, then executed him.

10. What does this event prove in Joshua’s character?

The ability to do difficult things in total compliance to God’s every command.


a.

b.

c.

Lesson 9: Elijah

Elijah is one of the most remarkable characters in the Bible. It is rare to see a man like him these days. Elijah was called upon to stand up against his government because it was evil. Today’s Christian is often put in the difficult position of taking stands against his government as well. Elijah’s character is about boldness, but even he has his weak moments. We must learn from both.

1. How does the New Testament uses this event as an example ((First Kings 17:1-7; James 5:16-18)?

2. What did Ahab call Elijah (First Kings 18:17-40)? Was this justified?

3. Who are the troublers of spiritual Israel today (Romans 16:17-18, Titus 3:10-11, Matthew 23:15, Ephesians 5:11)?

4. What question, similar to Joshua’s final challenge, did the prophet ask the people before the contest began (Joshua 24:15)?

5. How did Elijah treat the Baalists when their god failed to appear? What was the great effect of God’s victory in this contest (verse 37)?

6. How did Jezebel repay Elijah for executing her prophets (First Kings 19:1-18)? How did Elijah react?
7. Today’s preachers are called upon through the New Testament to have similar character. What do the following passages reveal about that requirement?

- Second Timothy 4:1-5:
- Ephesians 6:19:
- First Peter 4:11:

8. What did Samuel call on Israel to do (First Samuel 7:1-17)? What was the result of his leadership against the Philistines?

9. How did Israel repay him and God for this peace (First Samuel 8:1-9)? Why did Samuel take it so personally?

10. What do we learn of Samuel’s character (First Samuel 12:1-5)?

11. What did Samuel promise to do for the people (First Samuel 12:18-25)?

12. Why did Saul perform the sacrifice (First Samuel 13:7-14)? What did Samuel think of his reasoning?

13. List some instances in which we are tempted to lie, cheat or steal and justify it as reasonable under the circumstances.

Lesson 5: Caleb

One of the greatest, but most overlooked, characters of the Old Testament is Caleb. He dwells perpetually in the shadow of his fellow spy, Joshua, who was to lead the nation after Moses’s demise. Caleb, however, has his day in the limelight, as he inspires Israel to fight the good fight of faith and not shrink from a mountain of apparent adversity.

1. Which of the twelve tribes did Caleb represent among those who spied out Canaan (Numbers 13:3-15)?

2. After hearing his fellow spies report on the formidable challenge posed by the Canaanites, how did Caleb respond (Numbers 13:26-33)?

3. What is the source of Caleb’s rare optimism (Numbers 14:6-9)?

4. What lesson does Caleb provide those who decide right and wrong based on majority opinion?

5. What was promised to those of the minority and majority opinions in the following scriptures?
   - Matthew 7:13-14:
   - First Peter 3:20-21:
   - Revelation 3:1-5:

6. What does Peter say about the power of peer pressure (First Peter 4:3-4)?
7. What does Paul say about the power of peer pressure (First Corinthians 15:33)?

Paul adds that evil companions corrupt good morals.

8. How were the people ready to reward Caleb’s optimism and courage (Numbers 14:10)?

They were ready to stone him.

9. List some New Testament characters that were killed for their godly beliefs.

John the immerser, Jesus, James, the brother of John; Antipas.

10. What does Caleb say was the effect of the ten spies’ report on the people (Joshua 14:1-12)?

It caused their hearts to melt.

11. How can our optimism or pessimism affect new Christians or young Christians or even older ones?

Pessimism can be infectious, causing people to think that everyone has given up and that there is no reason to press on if it will be a lonely effort. It can be a self-fulfilling prophecy. Optimism, however, is also infectious and can rouse people into doing things they thought impossible. It magnifies hope.

12. How old is Caleb here? What inheritance does he request? What does this show about Caleb’s character?

Caleb, 85, asks Joshua for a mountain, knowing that he will have to conquer those giants that cowed his fellow spies forty-five years earlier. He believes he can still succeed because God is leading him.

13. What characteristics does Paul want in older male Christians (Titus 2:2)?

They should be “sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience.”

14. What characteristics does he want in older female Christians (Titus 2:3-4)?

They should be “reverent, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things” and diligent to admonish the younger women to be godly.

Lesson 8: Samuel

Samuel’s character is molded in a rather unusual way. He is blessed with two godly parents who dedicate him to the service of God, in which he is practically reared by Eli the priest, who failed to train his own sons properly. Samuel becomes an honorable man despite the presence of Phinehas and Hophni.

1. Describe what is revealed about Samuel’s parents, Hannah and Elkanah (First Samuel 1:1-18). What promise did Hannah make God?

2. How did Elkanah handle Hannah’s promise now that his son was born (First Samuel 1:19-28)?

3. One would think that Eli’s sons would have a great influence on Samuel (First Samuel 2:12-21). What kind of influence would that have been? Why?

4. God is also very concerned about evil influences in the church. Consider First Corinthians 5. What was the dangerous influence in the church at Corinth? How did the brethren feel about the situation?

5. What did Paul instruct them to do about it? With what reasoning?

6. What kind of character and determination would have been required for Samuel to tell Eli this awful truth (First Samuel 3:1-21)?
7. How did Samson get into trouble with his wife’s people? How did she “help”?

8. Samson was very reckless. What do the following passages reveal about the goodness of a sense of moderation or temperance (also self-control in some translations)?
   - Galatians 5:23-26:
   - First Corinthians 9:25-26:

9. Without making a judgment about Samson’s desire for vengeance under the Old Testament law, what does the New Testament teach about vengeance in the following passages (Judges 15:1-8)?
   - Matthew 5:38-39:
   - Matthew 5:43-48:
   - Romans 12:17-21:
   - Colossians 3:12-14:

10. How did Samson overcome his Philistine enemies (Judges 15:9-20)? How long did he judge Israel?

11. In reality, what was the source of Samson’s strength (Judges 16:1-31)? When do you think he truly understood this?

Lesson 6: Gideon

The book of Judges has long been known as a concise example of the way in which man and the world at large seek God, receive His blessing, and then summarily express ingratitude by pursuing the intoxicant of excess and iniquity from the world. The reign of Gideon, the fifth of the judges, displays one such period in the cycle and teaches us today how to break it.

1. In what kind of society did Gideon reside (Judges 6:1-10)?

2. What was Gideon doing when the angel of the Lord called him (Judges 6:11-16)? What did the angel call him? How does Gideon respond to the angel’s promise that God is with Israel?

3. What is Gideon’s misunderstanding about God’s covenant with Israel?

4. In God’s covenant with Christians, he promises not to forsake his people just as he promised Israel. Yet, this promise is also just as conditional. Summarize what the following passages indicate about that conditionality of the new covenant. Look for the word “if” which indicates a condition.
   - John 8:29-32:
   - First John 2:3:
   - Second Peter 1:5-9:
   - Second Peter 1:10-11:
   - Galatians 6:7-9:
   - Hebrews 3:14:
5. What mission did the angel present to Gideon? What did God tell Gideon to do next (Judges 6:25-32)?

6. Gideon’s character caused him to do right even though he anticipated his family would object. What did Jesus say about obeying the gospel in the face of such objection in Matthew 10:34-39?

7. How did Gideon’s father foil the idolater’s plan to kill his son?

8. Why is it unwise for us to put God to the test the way Gideon did (Judges 6:33-40; see Matthew 4:5-7)?

9. What two methods did God use to whittle down Gideon’s army (Judges 7:1-8)? Why did God reduce the size of Gideon’s fighting force? Who won the battle (Judges 7:9-25)?

10. Gideon says one noble thing and then does one stupid thing (Judges 8:22-27). What are they?

11. What was Gideon’s legacy (Judges 8:33-35)?

**Lesson 7: Samson**

One of the most romantic and human characters of the Old Testament is Samson. Like Homer’s Odysseus, we read of Samson being built up, but the end of his tale is marred by sin and tragedy. What lessons can we learn from Samson? The fuller the cup, the more easily is it to spill the contents.

1. Describe Hebrew society when Samson was conceived (Judges 13:1)?

2. A person generally took the Nazirite vow for 30-100 days, but the Bible does tell of a few men who were under that vow permanently (Judges 13:2-5). Name two others.

3. What were the four parts of the Nazirite vow (Numbers 6:1-8)?
   - Numbers 6:3-4:
   - Numbers 6:5:
   - Numbers 6:6:
   - Judges 13:4:

4. (Judges 13:6-8) What was Manoah’s concern? How should this attitude be reflected in all fathers (Ephesians 6:4)?

5. Why did Samson’s parents object to his choice for a mate (Judges 14:1-19)?

6. Unfortunately, Samson’s character would not lead him to attempt to convert this woman. In the New Testament, marriages between races are not forbidden. The apostle Peter even gave advice on how Christian women could attempt to convert their unbelieving husbands. What advice did he give (First Peter 3:1-6)?