

connect360

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE
LARGE PRINT EDITION

The Conquerors

HEROES OF THE FAITH

A STUDY OF JUDGES 1–8

John Durham



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*The Conquerors: Heroes of the Faith—
Connect 360 Bible Study Guide*

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How to Make the Best Use of This Issue

Whether you're the teacher or a student—

1. Start early in the week before your class meets.
2. Overview the study. Review the table of contents and read the study introduction. Try to see how each lesson relates to the overall study.
3. Use your Bible to read and consider prayerfully the Scripture passages for the lesson. (You'll see that each writer has chosen a favorite translation for the lessons in this issue. You're free to use the Bible translation you prefer and compare it with the translation chosen for that unit, of course.)
4. After reading all the Scripture passages in your Bible, then read the writer's comments. The comments are intended to be an aid to your study of the Bible.
5. Read the small articles—"sidebars"—in each lesson. They are intended to provide additional, enrichment information and inspiration and to encourage thought and application.
6. Try to answer for yourself the questions included in each lesson. They're intended to encourage further

thought and application, and they can also be used in the class session itself.

If you're the teacher—

Do all the things just mentioned, of course. As you begin the study with your class, be sure to find a way to help your class know the date on which each lesson will be studied. Here are some suggestions to guide your lesson preparation:

- A. In the first session of the study, briefly overview the study by identifying for your class the date on which each lesson will be studied. Lead your class to write the date in the table of contents on pages 9–10 and on the first page of each lesson.
 - Make and post a chart that indicates the date on which each lesson will be studied.
 - If all your class has e-mail, send them an e-mail with the dates the lessons will be studied.
 - Provide a bookmark with the lesson dates. You may want to include information about your church and then use the bookmark as an outreach tool, too. A model for a bookmark can be downloaded from www.baptistwaypress.org under the “Teacher Helps” menu.
 - Develop a sticker with the lesson dates, and place it on the table of contents or on the back cover.
- B. Get a copy of the *Teaching Guide*, a companion piece to this *Study Guide*. The *Teaching Guide* contains additional Bible comments plus two teaching plans. The teaching

plans in the *Teaching Guide* are intended to provide practical, easy-to-use teaching suggestions that will work in your class.

- C. After you've studied the Bible passage, the lesson comments, and other material, use the teaching suggestions in the *Teaching Guide* to help you develop your plan for leading your class in studying each lesson.
- D. Teaching resource items for use as handouts are available free at www.baptistwaypress.org under the "Teacher Helps" tab.
- E. Additional Bible study comments on the lessons are available online. Call 1-866-249-1799 or e-mail baptistway@texasbaptists.org to order the *Premium Commentary*. It is available only in electronic format (PDF) from our website, www.baptistwaypress.org. The price of these comments for the entire study is \$8 per person. A church or class that participates in our advance order program for free shipping can receive the *Premium Commentary* free. Call 1-866-249-1799 or see www.baptistwaypress.org to purchase or for information on participating in our free shipping program for the next study.
- F. Additional teaching plans are also available in electronic format (PDF) by calling 1-866-249-1799. The price of these additional teaching plans for the entire study is \$8 per person. A church or class that participates in our advance order program for free shipping can receive the

Premium Teaching Plans free. Call 1–866–249–1799 or see www.baptistwaypress.org for information on participating in our free shipping program for the next study.

- G. Enjoy leading your class in discovering the meaning of the Scripture passages and in applying these passages to their lives.
- H. You can receive the lesson preview each week by signing up for the Baptist Standard weekly newsletter at no cost. Sign up at—www.baptiststandard.com/subscription/email.

Do you use a Kindle?

This Connect 360 *Bible Study Guide*, along with several other studies, is available in a Kindle edition. The easiest way to find these materials is to search for “BaptistWay” on your Kindle or go to www.amazon.com/kindle and do a search for “BaptistWay.” The Kindle edition can be studied not only on a Kindle but also on your smartphone or tablet using the Kindle app available free from amazon.com/kindle.

Writers for this *Study Guide*

John Durham wrote **lessons one through thirteen**. John has served as the Lead Pastor of the Highland Baptist Church in Waco, Texas since 2013. Previously, he served as the Lead Pastor of First Baptist Church in Irving, Texas and served as the Student Pastor at First Baptist Church in Houston, Texas. John is married to Jennifer, a schoolteacher and Bible teacher. They have two children, daughter Hannah who is married to Kyle Backhus, as well as son Caleb. They are also the proud grandparents of granddaughter Palmer Backhus. John loves the outdoors, traveling, kayaking, reading, history, Cajun food, and climbing...including conquering the 19,341-foot-tall Mount Kilimanjaro a few years ago.

The Conquerors

Heroes of the Faith

A Study of Judges 1—8

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Introducing

The Conquerors: **Heroes of the Faith**

A STUDY OF JUDGES 1–8

We will live this life as conquerors or as the conquered.

If a major movie studio and a highly capable director with several million dollars to spare would ever pick up the book of Judges, we would have one of the most epic movies of all times. For in the book of Judges are stories of battle, of good triumphing over evil, of intrigue and suspense, of family struggle, of love and betrayal, and of the type of person God loves to use in His Kingdom.

All of us will either live this life as conquerors through Christ, or as those who have been conquered by the things of this world. Judges 1–8 gives us a great glimpse of how to live a life of victory, and that the greatest Judge of all victory is Jesus.

Background on the Book of Judges

The Book of Judges is named from the twelve men and one woman who served as judges for over a period of 350 years during the period from Joshua's death to the time of Samuel. In those days, there was no king of Israel. This was certainly a trial period of the theocracy after they entered the land.

All these judges had limitations, but God used those limitations as positive assets under His sovereign leadership. In this book, you will find a recurring theme: God called ordinary people not because they were totally capable, but because they made themselves totally available to Him.

When Joshua was Israel's leader, all the tribes worked together in obeying God. Unfortunately, the new generation failed in this. They experienced defeat after defeat. The people did not want to seek the Lord but rather experiment with the idolatry of the godless beliefs surrounding them. Israel, at this point, plunged into spiritual, moral, and political disaster. The result of this colossal failure was that an entire generation wandered away from God. But soon, Israel cried out to God, turned to God, and repented. God heard their prayers and raised up judges to deliver them again. Then they would relapse again followed by a time of repentance. And the cycle of sin and repentance continued.

God's discipline was meant for the good of His people. He showed mercy by providing these judges who would lead His people back to obedience repeatedly.

Being a Conqueror Today

When you stand at a high-altitude over the Book of Judges, there is something that quickly stands out. God uses people that we might not ever choose. In fact, God almost seems to delight in asking the outsider and the uncertain to be His leader.

You may feel weak. You may feel like a nobody. You may feel insignificant. You may feel unqualified.

Every judge in the Old Testament could probably relate. But God loves to use those who may feel shaky or inferior or incapable. God is not looking for your ability, but your availability. Tell God today that you are His. Tell God today that you are available for any task, any calling, or any mission that He has for you.

And then...watch and listen. God wants you to be a CONQUEROR!

The Conquerors: Heroes of the Faith

A Study of Judges 1–8

Lesson 1	Just One Needed	Judges 1:1-2, 8-13, 20
Lesson 2	Conquering and Conquered Patterns	Judges 2:11-20; 3:5-11
Lesson 3	The Weak Teaching the Strong	Judges 3:12-30
Lesson 4	An Unknown, Known by God	Judges 3:31
Lesson 5	Living in Courage/Living in Fear	Judges 4:4-23; 5:7, 24-27
Lesson 6	Seeing Ourselves Through God's Eyes	Judges 6:1-16
Lesson 7	He's the God of Peace and Possibilities	Judges 6:22-35
Lesson 8	Fleece, Faith, and Fellowship	Judges 6:36-40
Lesson 9	The Selflessness of the Conquering	Judges 7:1-11
Lesson 10	The Sovereignty of God Gives Us Courage	Judges 7:12-22
Lesson 11	Leadership Lessons of a Conqueror	Judges 7:23-24; 8:1-9
Lesson 12	How Quickly From Conqueror to Conquered	Judges 8:18-34
Lesson 13	Lessons Learned From Judges & the Last Judge	Judges 2–8; 1 Samuel 3:1-11

Additional Resources for Studying the Book of Judges¹

- Beldman, David. *Deserting the King. The Book of Judges*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017.
- Boda, Mark J., Schwab, George M. *Judges, Ruth. The Expositor's Bible Commentary. Revised Edition*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2017.
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- Martin, James D. *The Book of Judges. The Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible.* Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1975.
- MacArthur, John. *Joshua, Judges & Ruth: Finally in the Land.* Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 2016.
- McGee, J. Vernon. *Joshua and Judges. History of Israel. Thru the Bible Commentary Series.* Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 1997.
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- Pratte, David E. *Commentary on the Book of Judges. Bible Study Notes and Comments.* Virginia Beach, VA: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016.
- Shirer, Priscilla. *Gideon. Your Weakness. God's Strength.* Nashville, TN: LifeWay Press, 2013.
- Swindoll, Charles R. *Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994.
- Wiersbe, Warren W. *Judges. Be Available: Accepting the Challenge to Confront the Enemy.* Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2010.

Notes

1. Listing a book does not imply full agreement by the writers or BaptistWay Press with all its comments.

lesson

Just One Needed

MAIN IDEA

God called up Caleb after the death of Joshua. God needed one person who had faith, one person who would be an example to a nation, and one person who wholeheartedly followed God.

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

Does my heart fully belong to God or is my heart divided?

STUDY AIM

To see how God used the faith, courage, and willingness of Judge Caleb to impact the course of a nation

QUICK READ

Caleb determined in his heart that he was going to follow God fully, and the results were quite astounding. We, like Caleb, need to choose faith over fear.

Introduction

Each of us will either be conquered by life, or we will be conquerors in life through the power of God. Let's do a few thousand years of biblical history in a few sentences. In the book of Genesis, we see the origins of all things, including government, language, humanity, creation, and Israel.

In Genesis, God gave Abraham three promises: a promise of descendants, a promise of land, and a promise of blessing. In Exodus, we see the "great exit" where God rescued His people of promise and gave them the law. In Leviticus, we see the need for God's people to be forgiven because they, nor we, could keep the law. So, God set up in Leviticus a day of atonement (Yom Kippur), a system of sacrifice, and the position of priest, and in those three things we see the foreshadowing of Jesus. Jesus would atone for our sin in one day, He would become the one system of sacrifice, and would become our Great High Priest. In Numbers, the Israelites almost crossed into the Promised Land, but chose disobedience instead, and God allowed them to wander the desert for 40 years. Deuteronomy means the "second law," so it is here that God showed His grace by giving the Ten Commandments once again to His people. Moses died at the end of Deuteronomy, and the next book, Joshua, gave us the name of the new leader. In the book of Joshua, there were 31 battles to conquer the land over the course of 13 years. Joshua died, and Caleb rose up as the first judge of Israel. And here, in Judges, God needed one person who had faith, one who

would be an example to a nation, and one who wholeheartedly followed God. God found that person in Caleb. Can God find that person in you?

Judges 1:1-2, 8-13, 20

¹ After the death of Joshua, the people of Israel inquired of the Lord, "Who shall go up first for us against the Canaanites, to fight against them?" ² The Lord said, "Judah shall go up; behold, I have given the land into his hand."

⁸ And the men of Judah fought against Jerusalem and captured it and struck it with the edge of the sword and set the city on fire. ⁹ And afterward the men of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites who lived in the hill country, in the Negeb, and in the lowland. ¹⁰ And Judah went against the Canaanites who lived in Hebron (now the name of Hebron was formerly Kiriath-arba), and they defeated Sheshai and Ahiman and Talmi.

¹¹ From there they went against the inhabitants of Debir. The name of Debir was formerly Kiriath-sepher. ¹² And Caleb said, "He who attacks Kiriath-sepher and captures it, I will give him Achsah my daughter for a wife." ¹³ And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, captured it. And he gave him Achsah his daughter for a wife.

²⁰ And Hebron was given to Caleb, as Moses had said. And he drove out from it the three sons of Anak.

Fear Overrides Faith (1:1-19)

This incredibly epic book opens with the people of God asking God for guidance and direction (Judges 1:1-2). Their previous leader, Joshua, has died, and God's people wanted to seek the Lord for what is next. Seeking the Lord for direction and guidance is not only a good thing to do, it is the right thing to do. God answered His people and told the tribe of Judah to fight (Judges 1:8-11). The tribe of Judah attacked Jerusalem, which was being held by the Jebusites, and the Israelites did well in battle, but then as they moved toward the hill country, they gave up in fear because their enemies had chariots made of iron (Judges 1:19). All the other tribes of Israel gave up as well when they came upon strong opposition (Judges 1:21, 27, 29-31, 33-34). Fear is contagious. All of these tribes of Israel including Benjamin, Manasseh, Ephraim, Zebulun, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan simply did not do what God had commanded them to do. These tribes allowed fear to override their faith.

Faith Shows Up (1:20)

But then one person, the oldest one in the nation of Israel, followed God's guidance and became an example to his nation. This is our first judge. His name is Caleb (Judges 1:20), and he won a victory in a time when a victory was desperately needed. Let's learn more about this remarkable judge.

Caleb will be an example to us as a person who is faithful, courageous, and utterly dependent upon God.

Let's discover some things about our first judge Caleb.

1. Caleb is not a Jew. Does this surprise you? The leader of the nation of Israel, the leader of the tribe of Judah is not a true Jew, not a pure Israelite. We read in Joshua 14:6-8 that Caleb is actually a Kenizzite. And this begs the question, "What is a Kenizzite?" We discover the answer to that question in Genesis 15:18-21; the Kenizzites were pagan Canaanites. Do not miss this—Caleb is a descendant of Esau, not Jacob. He is from a tribe that was an enemy of God's chosen people. Caleb came from the unchosen! However, this is good news for us because it means God will accept and forgive anyone who comes to Him. There is no one outside the realm of God's great salvation. No one is hopeless, no one is too far gone, no one is unsalvageable, and no one is so wretched that God cannot save.

2. Caleb was committed wholeheartedly. When we begin to learn about Caleb in Joshua 14, we see over and over again that Caleb trusted God with all things and with his entire heart and life. In Joshua 14:8, Caleb said of himself that he "wholly followed the Lord my God." In Joshua 14:9, Moses said to Caleb, "you have wholly followed the Lord my God." And in Joshua 14:14, the Holy Spirit said of Caleb, "he wholly followed the Lord, the God of Israel." Caleb did not follow God only when it was convenient and easy. He followed God when he did not agree, under-

stand, feel like it, or only when it was politically correct. He followed God wholly.

What's in a Name?

It is a surprise to many that Caleb's heritage is pagan. In fact, the name Caleb in Hebrew means ferocious, tenacious dog. (My wife and I named our son Caleb for this very reason; we wanted a tenacious son!) The Jews called anyone outside of their heritage a dog. Perhaps that name stuck with Judge Caleb. What a powerful reminder that no matter our past, no matter our family heritage, no matter the shame of yesterday, God will receive anyone who turns to Him through His Son Jesus. Jesus said in John 6:37, "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out." Could it be that Caleb was one of the first outsiders grafted into the nation of Israel?

2. Caleb was committed wholeheartedly. When we begin to learn about Caleb in Joshua 14, we see over and over again that Caleb trusted God with all things and with his entire heart and life. In Joshua 14:8, Caleb said of himself that he "wholly followed the Lord my God." In Joshua 14:9, Moses said to Caleb, "you have wholly followed the Lord my God." And in Joshua 14:14, the Holy Spirit said of Caleb, "he wholly followed the Lord, the God of Israel." Caleb did not follow God only when it was convenient and easy. He followed God when he did not agree, under-

stand, feel like it, or only when it was politically correct. He followed God wholly.

William Wilberforce

William Wilberforce, in 1780, was the youngest person ever elected to the British Parliament. He was 21 years old. The slave trade in England at that time was the lifeblood of the British Empire. Around 35,000–50,000 people were captured every year in Africa, then sent and sold around the British Empire. Wilberforce, not a Christian at the time, was a powerful speaker, and strongly urged England to abandon the slave trade. Wilberforce met a former slave trade captain turned preacher named John Newton (who wrote a song you are probably familiar with called Amazing Grace), and Wilberforce was saved by Jesus in 1785, radically saved! With his newfound faith, Wilberforce spoke with more power and more conviction. Against others in parliament, against economic leaders, against the world. For 27 years, Wilberforce hammered away at ending slavery and then on March 25, 1807, slavery was finally outlawed, but just in England. For 26 more years, Wilberforce spoke against the injustice and sin of slavery in the other colonies. Then three days before Wilberforce died, in 1833, slavery was ended in the entire British Empire. That is a person who came out of a non-Christian background, who wholeheartedly loved the Lord, and who accomplished what looked impossible.

3. Caleb trusted God for what looked impossible. It is easy to skip right through Judges 1:20 and miss the massive faith Caleb needed in that one verse. In battle, Caleb took Hebron. And we learn from Judges 1:10 that Hebron was also called Kiriath-Arba. Kiriath in Hebrew means city and Arba in Hebrew means four. But it wasn't just four cities that Caleb took, he took it from the three sons of Anak, the Anakines were the giants! So here is an 85-year-old man, driving out the sons of giants from four cities. God is always looking for even one who will say, "I, in my generation, will follow God even when things look impossible."

Faith Is Contagious (1:11-13)

Caleb became an inspiration to the next generation. His courage became an example to the next judge, a guy by the name of Othniel. Caleb challenged Othniel to attack the city of Kiriath-sepher. Othniel did so, and won a victory (Judges 1:11-13). Of course, with Caleb's daughter on the line as a possible wife to Othniel, Othniel definitely had a strong incentive to win that victory!

So, Caleb became the father-in-law of Othniel. Caleb did what the older generation should do, and that is inspire the next generation to serve God and trust God wholeheartedly. Fear is contagious, but so is faith.

Implications and Actions

Caleb's story stirs us to trust, love, and follow God with all of our hearts. It is so easy to live with divided hearts, but throughout God's Word we read about the joy and the command of loving God with all of our heart, our soul, our mind, and our strength.

Caleb's story inspires us to also trust God for things that seem impossible. With faith in God, all things are possible. In a world that tries to constantly remind us we can't do things; God constantly counters with the promise that nothing is too difficult for Him!

No matter what your past chapters look like, even if you have had a life of great rebellion and shameful sin, God can forgive you through Christ, and God will receive you and accept you into His family. There is no sin so great that God's grace is not greater still. This is the good news, the Gospel of Jesus. God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, and whosoever (even those with terrible pasts) believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. This is the joy-filled promise of John 3:16.

Our lives are going to serve as an example. People are watching and learning to live in faith or live in fear by observing our lives and how we react to the things happening in the world around us.

Questions

1. In what ways have you lived in fear recently and not faith. And in what ways have you lived in faith and not fear recently?
2. Do you think God can forgive any sin in your background? Do you believe His grace, His Son's cross, and His mercy is enough to forgive any and all sin in your life?
3. Does the entirety of your heart and life belong to God? Which parts of your life do you find difficult to turn over completely to the Lord? Relationships? Finances? Hurts? Past? Future?

