

Read the eighth chapter from The Story (pgs 85-98) or Judges 2-4, 6-8, and 13-16 in one sitting. Consider doing the reflection questions on three separate days to put space between your learning and allow for better and deeper retention. If three separate reflection times aren't practical, you may choose to read and answer all three days' questions in one extended personal devotional time.

Day One

1. This era of Israel's history was full of sin and darkness (pages 85-86 or Judges 2:10-23). The sin most commonly committed was idolatry, which almost always included sexual promiscuity as "worship." What comparisons can you make to how sex was misused in that culture and in our own today? How can sex and/or romantic attention—good gifts from God when properly expressed—turn into idols for you?

2. God chose to withhold His protection as a way to discipline and test the Israelites (page 86 or Judges 2:20-23). While that action may seem harsh, God's intention was to bring them back to walking in His ways. How has God done a similar thing in your life when you (or someone you know) were engaged in a sinful pattern? What lessons did you take away from that experience?

Day Two

1. One of the bright spots in this era was the life of Deborah (page 87 or Judges 4-5). Knowing it was primarily a patriarchal society, what might God have been teaching people about His ideal plan for men, women and leadership?

2. Another bright spot was Gideon. God deliberately chose a "nobody" from an unlikely family to lead the people. God then trimmed Gideon's army from 32,000 men to 300. What reason did God give for doing so (page 90 or Judges 7:2)? In light of God's explanation, what is the difference boasting about or relying on them?

Day Three

1. Samson's physical strength was obvious, but how was he morally weak (pages 93-97 or Judges 14-16)? What cautions from his life story can you take away for yourself?

2. The women in Samson's life, like Samson himself, were mostly bad examples. The Bible teaches by showing both negatives to be avoided and positives to be emulated. What lessons about being a woman of God can you draw from the text?