

YOU ARE THERE

NOTES FOR TEACHERS

JUDGES & SAUL: SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTION NOTES

As mentioned elsewhere, these notes are not the “answer key.” They’re suggestions for where the discussion questions in this book can go, but feel free to go in entirely different directions. (In fact, feel free to introduce other questions.) The notes below are deliberately brief, so as to provide suggestions and pointers, but not “official” answers. In some cases, there are follow-up questions you might add to the discussion.

1. DEBORAH

1. Possibles: do what God gives us to do; obey even when it’s counter to social norms (which isn’t to say we should go looking for opportunities to break norms); speak the truth, even when it’s not what someone wants to hear.
2. a. Possibles: teach their children; keep their history in mind; respect God not just with words, but with actions and heart.
b. All of the above. We aren’t very different from the Israelites in this respect.
3. a. There might be disagreement over whether Barak obeys. He does so, but reluctantly, and only after hesitating. His hesitation is understandable if he isn’t sure he can trust in God to deliver ... but he should have that confidence.
b. Possibles: becoming a Christian (the biggest hesitation for many); standing up for God/the right choice when it would be unpopular; making a choice when there’s a more fun alternative (worship services or a fun night out with friends?). Avoid by: becoming aware of the consequences of hesitation (through Bible examples); roleplaying choices (“if I had to choose between this and that, what would I choose?”); experience (in doing the right thing); wisdom.
4. Possibles: do the right thing; don’t be afraid

2. GIDEON

1. Taught: God is powerful; he can save us; we are His people
Not taught: we must obey Him; what His law says (how to obey Him); He will only protect if we keep our side of the covenant/contract; there are consequences to not obeying
2. God gives the victory, not strength of arms.
It doesn’t matter how many are with you and how many are against you, as long as you are with God.
3. Good: obeys God (eventually); believes God can give victory, and puts his belief into action; refuses to be king, since God is king; talks Ephraimites out of their anger (8:1-3).
Bad: hesitates; keeps asking for proof of God; turns an object into an idol and leads others into idolatry.

3. JEPHTHAH

Most important point: God takes vows and promises very seriously; so should we.

1. a. If you’re a Christian, you made promises. (These may not be spoken, but they’re part of your covenant/contract with God.) They include: follow and obey God; try to avoid sin; repent when you sin. These are *lifetime* promises.
If you’re married, you’ve made promises to God (whether you realize it or not): to stay faithful (not breaking your marriage) and to stay committed (working to fix your marriage when it has problems). These are also lifetime promises.
Other promises are possible: “God, if you do X then I’ll do Y.”
b. Possibles: keep a secret; keep a date/meeting; failure to do or give something; failure to get permission; forgetting a promise. You should: apologize; ask forgiveness (which is hard, but gets easier to do the more you force yourself to do it); make it up (ask what you can do to make it right).
c. If you’ve made promises to God, you’ve almost certainly broken some of them — we sin. When we realize our sin, we should ask forgiveness and work to correct it.
2. Possibles: “If you make that shot, I’ll give you \$20!” (this was cited in a class); “Sure, I’ll ...”. Results: almost always a broken promise. It’s much better to keep your mouth shut.
3. a. Possibles: Friend waves; you wave back while driving, and run into something. “He started it!” “I just did what she did.”
b. You want to shift the responsibility, but it’s still your own problem; you’ve got to make it right yourself.

4. SAMSON

1. a. Falls in love with Philistine, rejects parents’ advice, makes bet he can’t afford, tells answer to his bride when he knows what can

happen, kills 30 Philistines for their clothes, gets caught up in cycle of ever-increasing revenge. He has anger-management problems.

- b. While God may use our irresponsibility for good, we are still responsible for what we’ve done. (God uses Assyrians to punish Israel, but they are still sinning because they’re doing it for their own gain and pleasure, not for God; Isaiah 10:5-15.)
2. a. Possibles: what school to attend (or homeschool), how to dress, what we’re going to be when we grow up, what activities fill our time, whether and where we attend worship services, whom to marry, etc.
b. Our parents definitely know what’s better for us when we’re younger, and we must honor our parents. At some point, we must become responsible for our own lives, both by deciding what choices we will make and by assuming responsibility ourselves for what we do (rather than “I do it because that’s what my parents have always done”).
3. a. Possibles: my faith; my resistance to Satan; my confidence in God’s protection and salvation; etc.
b. Possibles: depend on your body’s resistance to shrug off the affects of abusing it with drugs; depend on your charming smile to get you out of trouble; depend on your likeability to keep your friends when you’ve taken advantage of their friendship; etc. These are not a good idea; physical “strengths” won’t last.

5. DELILAH

1. a. Let them discuss it, but make sure they realize that it’s a betrayal if she’s manipulating his feelings and taking advantage of *his* friendship/love.
b. The answer’s obvious, but let them consider the possibility for awhile, so that they’ll be more likely to make the right decision when faced with it. You might tease a bit: “Are you *really* sure you’d never do that? Not for money, or popularity, or to feel good?” The more often they say “No,” the more committed they become to doing the right thing.
2. Possibles: sin is sin; betraying a friend is particularly vile; small acts can have big consequences (he loses his strength, his eyes, and (most importantly) his relationship with God).
3. a. Possibles: attractiveness, fun, pleasure, status, popularity
b. Possibles: selfishness, shallowness, how this person treats people who aren’t useful, immodesty, immorality, inappropriate behavior, trying to take you past your personal boundaries, etc.
c. Possibles: experience — watching how they treat others, how they treat others’ trust, how truthful they are, etc.
You can prove yourself trustworthy by acting the way you want a trusted friend to act.

6. RUTH

1. An argument could be made for just about any of them. Use this as a springboard to discuss how students can exhibit these qualities in their own lives.
2. a. Some of what we know about Naomi is deduced from how Ruth acts toward her. When Naomi goes back to Bethlehem, Ruth and Orpah both want to go with her, leaving their homeland. How she lives and how she treats her daughters-in-law has created strong love and loyalty from them. Her advice to Ruth may end up helping Naomi herself, but the advice is primarily aimed at helping Ruth find a good husband and a secure marriage.
b. The common factor in Naomi’s relationship and advice is that she seeks the best for Ruth, not herself — she puts Ruth ahead of herself. (That’s what Paul is talking about in Ephesians 5:21.) It’s easy to say, but sometimes hard to do. Naomi also shows consistent respect for God, and Ruth recognizes that in their relationship.
3. a. Possibilities include: he is respected (Ruth 2:1), polite (2:4), godly (2:12), kind (2:20)
b. It doesn’t specifically say so, but he probably first notices her because she’s attractive (Ruth 2:5). However, he already knows much more about her (2:11-12) and is aware of her good character (3:10).

7. HANNAH

1. a. Various possibilities, but make sure they discuss that she has Samuel for 3 years and that he is still her son, even if he’s living away from home.
b. This one seems like a contradiction; make sure they get to the realization that we can gain our life/save our soul from sin only if we give our life/our soul up to God.

2. a. Possibilities: she is sincere and persistent; she has faith in God; her promise to dedicate Samuel meets God's purpose; her promise to not cut his hair (making him a Nazarite?) pleases God; etc.
b. Various answers, but ideally, they should be able to apply most (if not all) of Hannah's factors to their own prayers.
3. a. Possibilities — both: praise God, love God, exalt God; describe God's power and control over the world; (etc.)
b. They aren't upset because they accept their situation and their relationship to God (their humility in relation to God); in fact, they rejoice that God is using them for His purposes.
c. Possibilities: acknowledge God's power and accept His role in our life (that what He wants should direct our decisions, more than what we want); rejoice when we are doing what God wants us to do, especially when something happens that is more useful to God's purposes than to our own purposes (e.g., a day of entertainment might get cancelled, giving you a chance to study the Bible with someone).

8. ELI

1. a. This can be argued either way, but the decisive point is probably that when his sons and God disagree, he lets them do what they want, rather than what God wants.
b. He talks to them, but doesn't take it any farther. God condemns them for their sin. You don't want to hurt or disappoint your child, but if you don't correct him or her, the lesson learned will be that you can get away with what you want.
2. a. This can also be argued either way. Note his worry for the ark in battle (4:13, 18). He's coming close to treating God's ark as more important than God, if he hasn't crossed that line.
b. Is it more important to keep the church building sparkling clean and shiny than to spend that time and energy on other service to God? Is it more important to keep your Bible like new than it is to use it to teach others? The objects are important, but only as tools to help accomplish God's will.
c. In the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37), the Levite and the priest walk around rather than risking touching a corpse (which would be unclean). They avoid their responsibility to their brother because God's law says to stay clean. We can do the same thing — putting habitual (traditional) service to God ahead of helping someone in need (for example, not stopping to help fix a flat tire because it would make us late to services), or refusing to bend even if it would help teach someone God's word (1 Corinthians 9:19-23). You might discuss how you can be like a sinner without sinning.
3. a. Possibles: ark = God; God must help if His ark is present; the ark lead to victory at Jericho; etc.
b. They don't understand that the ark is just a symbol; as long as their hearts are not with God, it doesn't matter where the ark is. (Possibly noteworthy is that there is no mention of consulting God in this story.)

9. SAMUEL

1. Functionally, they're similar — they both lead, make decisions, etc. — but a key difference is that a judge guides, while a king rules. You can choose to disobey a judge, but it's illegal to disobey a king. Also, God chooses each judge; a king's sons reign after him.
2. a. (*Get answers regarding an earthly king before moving into the second half of the question.*) Various possibles, but the more you have to report your actions to someone else, especially someone in authority, the more constrained your actions are — you can do less that you want to do, and (probably) keep a tighter rein on your unwise/irresponsible/sinful impulses.
b. Of course, Christians do have a king — Christ. The point is to get them to conclude (above) that a king who keeps track of our actions daily is going to be very involved in our lives; and then make the connection that Christ *does* keep that close a track of us, and is very involved in our lives, even when we aren't thinking about it. We are answerable to a very involved king.
3. a. Possibles: wise, fair (doesn't play favorites or make random judgements), thoughtful (can see your side of things), firm when needed, etc. (This is specifically about fathers, not mothers.)
b. The class might disagree on this. A father more directly affects his children than most leaders, but leaders affect far more people than most fathers. The point is for them to realize that you should make sure you don't fail at one while succeeding at the other; and that the best leaders/fathers are often good at both roles.

10. SAUL (RELUCTANT)

1. a. Both God and earthly kings make the laws and enforce them. Neither can be overruled.
b. Unlike earthly kings, God is perfect; He can't make mistakes. He is eternal; He knows everything. He always loves you.

2. a. The Bible doesn't specifically say, but the impression is that God chooses a man that the people think would make a good king (judging more by external appearances than internal qualities). Saul is tall and handsome; he looks very kingly.
b. Wisdom and experience are more important than appearance.
c. Paul describes the qualities of elders and deacons in 1 Timothy 3:1-10 and Titus 1:6-9. In general, leaders (both men and women) should be wise and experienced, rather than tall and attractive, and should have a good grasp of God's Word.
3. Possible answers: you can decline opportunities to lead; you can hide when leaders are being chosen; you can hide your leadership abilities. *Follow-up question:* is it wrong to avoid leadership opportunities? (In general, it is if you can help more than someone else, but the time needed for your other responsibilities — especially to your family — must also be considered.

11. SAUL (ANXIOUS)

1. a. God's law should always be the most important consideration. A good choice that violates God's law is **not** a good choice. In addition, you should consider what is best for everyone (not just yourself).
b. The Bible doesn't mention any attempt to ask God for direction, or that Saul consulted with anyone else. Both would have been good choices. Saul faces a difficult decision, but it seems like he's trusting the strength of his army rather than the strength of God.
2. a. God has given powers to some who chose to misuse it, and some with God's power have turned away from Him (for example, the apostle Judas, who betrayed Jesus).
b. We must each put ourself on the path to heaven (just as those mentioned above did), and then must make sure we stay focused on God. We will all sin, but we must maintain a faithful heart.
3. Except for prophecies about the final days, all of God's general promises have come true. He has promised heaven to each of us (a promise that won't be fulfilled until we pass from this life), but that promise is conditional on our staying on the path He has given us.

12. JONATHAN

1. This is debatable. Initiative is good, but two men against an army is ... ambitious. Perhaps the determining factor is that he asks God for a sign — if God is with him, Jonathan can be unstoppable.
2. It can be argued that Jonathan can't sin if he isn't aware of the prohibition, but he has violated a vow that Saul makes for the whole army. As we have seen with Jephthah, God takes vows very seriously (He withholds a response because of Jonathan's actions). The most accurate way to describe this is that Jonathan hasn't sinned, but (in breaking the vow), he should suffer the punishment that Saul has vowed (just as Jephthah's daughter suffered).
3. a, God calls blood the "life" of a creature, and says that it is wrong to eat the life. Obviously, no creature can live without its blood, and it seems that eating blood is (at least symbolically) taking a part of the creature that God forbids. Note that we symbolically take Christ's blood as part of the Lord's Supper, a meal that is required for all Christians — this is life that Christ freely gives us.
b. God forbids it in the beginning (Genesis 9:3-4) and the same prohibition is given under Christ's Law (Acts 15:20, 29). It appears to be forbidden today.
c. Blood is included in some sausages, stews and sauces.

13. SAUL (DISOBEDIENT)

1. Encourage discussion before you resolve this question. Saul is more obedient than many of the most faithful people in the Bible. His problem is that he is obedient only as far as he is willing to be. God requires us to put *His* will before what we want to do.
2. a. You don't want to make decisions too quickly, but failing to make decisions (or deciding back and forth, without sticking to a decision) can be just as much of a problem. If you can't decide, you can't commit, and God requires commitment.
b. We won't go into general tactics for making decisions; focusing on spiritual decisions, it might help to review the parable of the talents (Matthew 25) and to remember that God requires commitment, not indecision.
3. a. God is against evil, but He will always accept sincere repentance, even from those who have earned condemnation (for example, Nineveh in Jonah's time). We have no hope if God is against us, but we each choose whether to oppose God or follow Him.
b. It can seem overwhelming when you believe God is punishing you. The only path out of this darkness is to walk toward God's light; it's important to remember that God will accept you, even if you deserve punishment. You might also suffer punishment, as well, but know that God loves those He reproveth. (Proverbs 3:12)