



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

LEADER Bible Study

Today’s story ushers in a new chapter for God’s people: the era of the judges. These short-term rescuers pointed to the need for an eternal Rescuer and Savior with the power to redeem and transform the hearts of God’s people once and for all.

What pattern began to unfold in the lives of the Israelites? How did God prove Himself faithful and gracious in the lives of the Israelites, despite their sin?

The generations of Israelites who fought to conquer the land and renewed their commitment to God’s law had died. Judges 3:4 tells us how God left some nations to test His people and determine if they would walk in obedience to His commands. Unfortunately, the Israelites began to worship the gods of the nations around them.

The same phrase is repeated throughout Judges: “The Israelites did what was evil in the Lord’s sight.” They forgot the Lord who swore to never forget His people. God allowed His people to be ruled and oppressed by foreign nations as a consequence for their sin. The cycle of apostasy was at work: Israel sinned, received consequences, and cried out to God for help; He sent a judge or deliverer, the people repented, and the cycle began anew.

In this chapter, we are introduced to three judges: Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar. Through their leadership, God continued to prove Himself faithful by intervening and delivering His people, always preserving and setting them apart from the world. These earthly judges, however, could never save the people from their sins or produce new hearts with the desire to obey God. The peace these judges provided could not offer lasting change.

Lead kids to see that only Jesus has the power to give us new hearts and transform us into His image. While judges provided temporary peace, Jesus has established an eternal peace for those who place their faith in His finished work on the cross. Even the mightiest earthly hero pales in comparison to the Prince of Peace who was resurrected to bring us new life! Pray that awe would mark children’s hearts as they reflect on God’s provision to secure everlasting peace and salvation.



PREPARE

THE WEEK PRIOR

Prepare your heart to teach; plan the session



WELCOME

10-15 MINUTES

Greet kids and open the session



LEARN

25-30 MINUTES

Teach kids the story of the gospel



LOVE

15-20 MINUTES

Lead kids to love the God of the gospel



LIVE

15-20 MINUTES

Lead kids to live out the mission of the gospel

**1 ACTIVITY PAGE** (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete “Hidden Objects” activity page.

SAY “ Today, we will learn that the Israelites repeated a cycle of sin as they worshiped the idols of the nations around them. ”

2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

SAY “ Last week, we learned that before Joshua died, the Israelites promised to obey God and worship Him alone. Yet, we learned today how they failed to keep this promise. The book of Judges helps us understand the sinfulness of the human heart and how each person ‘did whatever seemed right to him’ (Judges 21:25). As we read about the Israelites’ idolatry, we are reminded how we need the grace of God to save us and give us changed hearts that desire to love Him above all else.

What cycle did the people fall into? Look at Judges 3:7-11. **[Choose a volunteer to read Judges 3:7-11 aloud.]** The people did what was evil. So, God brought consequences on them because of their sin. They became slaves and served a foreign king. Then the people cried out to God. So, God raised up a judge to rescue His people, and they had rest for a time. While we may not experience this exact cycle, the Bible tells us that without Jesus, we are slaves to sin. Yet, when we cry out to Jesus to save us, we are rescued from the ultimate consequence of sin: eternal death. We are forgiven and experience rest, knowing Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection has bought our freedom from sin.

Who were the three judges we read about and what eventually happened to them? **[Allow responses.]** The judges Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar eventually died. They saved the Israelites for a time, but once they died, the Israelites went back to their same cycle. Jesus is the true Judge because He lives forever and is able to completely save those who trust in Him.

God brought consequences to His people for their sins, but He also raised up judges to save them from their enemies. We also have consequences for our sins, but God sent Jesus to save us from our sins once and for all. ”

3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

SAY “ God displayed His grace each time the Israelites cried out to Him, and He sent a judge to save them. The people had done nothing to earn God’s love, favor, or forgiveness. In a similar way, when we turn away from our sin and turn to Jesus, we experience God’s grace. The free gift of salvation is available to anyone who trusts in Jesus! Have you accepted this free gift? ”

(Tip: Use Scripture and the Gospel Plan Poster to explain how to become a Christian. Create an environment where kids are welcome to ask questions about what it means to follow Jesus.)

4 QUESTIONS FROM KIDS (3 minutes)

Prompt kids to discuss:

1. If Jesus died on the cross for our sin, why do we still sin?
2. How does Jesus save us from our sin once and for all?



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

5 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

Show the Key Passage Poster. Lead kids in reading aloud 2 Chronicles 7:14 together.

SAY ““ When the Israelites cried out to God, He sent a judge to rescue them. When we repent, or turn away from our sin and turn to Jesus, God saves us. ””

Invite kids to discuss how God’s people “bear His name,” or what “humble themselves” means. For example, to bear God’s name means to represent God to others and to be humble means to think of God’s ways as most important, which in turn means thinking of others before ourselves. Encourage kids to meditate on this meaning while they say the key passage aloud three times.

6 PRAY (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before transitioning to Love.

SAY ““ Thank You, Lord, for faithfully loving us and providing the way of rescue from our sin. Help us turn from sin and turn to Jesus. In Jesus’ name, amen. ””

Transition from **LEARN** to **LOVE**





THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

LOVE God by Applying the Story

1 REVIEW & BIBLE SKILLS (5 minutes)

Distribute Bibles Guide kids to open their Bibles to Judges 3. Explain that the book of Judges is found in the Old Testament and records the history of the Israelites in the early days of living in the Promised Land. Tell kids that the book's name comes from the type of leaders Israel had during this time period. Share how a major theme in the book of Judges is how "everyone did whatever seemed right to him." (Judges 17:6).

Choose a volunteer to read aloud Judges 3:3-7 or ask the kids to follow along as you read the verses aloud.

SAY *“God tested His people’s faithfulness through the surrounding nations. Would Israel be loyal to God and obey His commands? Or would they turn away from God and worship other false gods? As we learned today, the Israelites turned away from God.”*

Every person turns away from God because of sin. Yet, God has not left us without hope. He sent His Son, Jesus, to save those who repent of their sin and trust in Him. Like God sent judges to rescue His people, Jesus is the only One who can save us from sin and eternal death.”

2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

| **SAY** *“The Israelites turned to false gods. What might we turn to instead of worshipping God?”*

Answers will vary. Discuss how the world has many things we might be tempted to turn to rather than God. Tell kids that we might seek after popularity, grades, success, sports, or even people above God. Remind kids that God gives us opportunities every day to turn from sin and turn to Jesus. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Heb. 3:12-13.)

| **SAY** *“How can we turn away from a cycle of rebellion?”*

Remind kids that we will constantly fight sin in our life. Share how the Bible tells us that one of the best ways to fight sin in our life is by putting on the armor of God. We must be aware of sin and areas in our lives where we are tempted to sin. Tell kids that the Holy Spirit empowers Christians to turn away from sin. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Eph. 6:10-13.)

| **SAY** *“Why is Jesus a greater Rescuer than the judges from our story?”*

Discuss how Jesus never sinned and was able to defeat sin and death through His sacrifice on the cross. Remind kids that Jesus has always existed and lives forever. Tell kids that the judges from our story could not completely save people. That is, they could not take away sin, offer forgiveness, and give people new life through the Spirit. Jesus completely saves those who trust in Him. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Heb. 7:25.)

Transition from **LOVE** to **LIVE**





THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LIVE the Mission

1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: SWORD OF THE LORD

Provide kids with Sword of the Spirit Templates and a piece of cardboard, some aluminum foil, and Gold Cardstock. Put the stick on Gems in the center of the table for them to use as needed. Follow the directions for the sword of the spirit craft. Then invite kids to share their creations with the entire group.

SAY “*God provided Israel with judges to rescue them. Ehud, the second judge we learned about, defeated the foreign king with a sword. The Bible tells us that we don’t wage war with flesh and blood but with evil powers in the heavens (Eph. 6:12). God has given us a weapon the apostle Paul called the ‘sword of the Spirit.’ This sword is the Word of God. When we know the truth of God’s Word, we can cut down the lies of the enemy and stand firm in our faith. Jesus has rescued those who trust in Him, and He will be faithful to help us turn away from sin through the truth of His Word.*”

OPTION 2: MARKED SAFE



Play a game similar to four corners. Label or assign four corners of a room with the numbers 1–4. Choose one kid to be *It* and invite him to stand in the center of the room. Tell *It* to close his eyes while the other kids run to a corner of the room. With *It*’s eyes still closed, direct all kids to close their eyes. Choose one kid in a corner to be the “judge” by tapping her on the shoulder. Tell the kids that everyone but *It* can open their eyes. Direct *It* to call out a number. If the “judge” is in the corner *It* called out, the kids remain safe. If not, the kids are out. Play as time allows, choosing a different “judge” and *It* each time.

SAY “*When a ‘judge’ was in the corner, you all remained safe. God provided Israel with judges to rescue them. God brought consequences to His people for their sins, but He also raised up judges to save them from their enemies. We also have consequences for our sins, but God sent Jesus to save us from our sins once and for all.*”

2 JOURNAL AND PRAYER (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page. As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas.

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God’s glory and my good?
- Are there promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

Review the gospel and encourage kids to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions. Then pray, praising God for His great rescue plan through His Son, Jesus. As time allows, lead kids to complete “Cycle of Sin” on the activity page.