

THE FIRST JUDGES

Judges 3



After Joshua died, the Israelites began to do what was evil in the Lord's sight. The people failed to obey God's law to worship Him alone. They worshiped the gods of the people who lived near them, and God was angry with their sin. So, God sent a foreign king to capture the people as a consequence.

The Israelites cried out to the Lord to save them. God raised up Othniel (AHTH nih el) to save them. Othniel was the first judge of Israel, a leader who led Israel to follow God and saved them from their enemies. The Spirit of the Lord was with Othniel, and he defeated this foreign king in battle. God's people turned away from sin and had peace for 40 years. Then Othniel died.

After Othniel's death, the people went back to worshiping other gods and doing evil in the Lord's sight. So, God sent King Eglon of Moab to attack and defeat His people as a consequence for their sin. Then the Israelites cried out for God to save them from slavery. So, God raised up another judge—Ehud—who would save the people from King Eglon.

Ehud made a short sword and hid it on his thigh under his clothes. He went to visit King Eglon with a gift. When no one else was around, Ehud used his hidden sword to defeat the king, and then Ehud secretly

escaped. King Eglon's servants returned and found him dead on the floor.

After Ehud escaped, he sounded the ram's horn and all of Israel met him. Ehud said, "The Lord has handed over your enemies, the Moabites." The Israelites fought against Moab and won. Then Israel had peace for 80 years.

Later, God raised up a third judge named Shamgar. He delivered Israel from their enemies, the Philistines.

Christ Connection: 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.



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY

The Bible tells us what is true about God and about ourselves. All of the stories in the Bible fit together to tell us the big story of how God rescues sinners through His Son, Jesus.

Today, we are going to hear about the first judges God chose to lead His people. Through our Bible story we will learn that **GOD PROVIDED ISRAEL WITH JUDGES TO RESCUE THEM**. Whether this is your first time or your tenth time hearing this story, there is always something new to learn in God's Word.

Read from Judges 3:7-31.

•What does this story teach us about God?

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. **In the book of Judges, we see that God is both just and gracious.** He is just because He brings punishment for sin. But He is also gracious because He sent a judge to rescue His people, even though they did not deserve to be saved.

•How does today's story point us to our need to be rescued?

While we may not experience the exact cycle found in Judges, 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.** When we trust in Jesus, we are forgiven and experience rest, knowing Jesus' life, death, and resurrection have bought our freedom from sin.

AT this time, you can get out the Learner Guides and go through the questions as a group or let the students answer them individually.

Once they are finished with the guides move on to the next session.



THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

1 THINK ABOUT THE STORY

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

2 GROUP DISCUSSION

Distribute Bibles. Guide preteens to open their Bibles to Judges 3. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Judges 3:3-7. Remind preteens that God tested His people's faithfulness through the surrounding nations. 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.

Choose another volunteer to read aloud Judges 3:3-7 again. Then lead the group to discuss the following questions.

1. **The Israelites turned to false gods. What might we turn to instead of 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. 4:12-13.)

2. **How can we turn away from a cycle of rebellion?**

Remind kids that we will constantly fight sin in our lives. Share how the Bible tells us that one of the best ways to fight sin 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.)

3. **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)

BIG PICTURE QUESTION

What is repentance?

Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to Jesus.



THE MISSION OF THE GOSPEL

1 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY

Instruct kids to open their Bibles to 2 Chronicles 7:14. Lead them in reading the key passage aloud together. Invite kids to discuss how God’s people “bear His name,” or what “humble themselves” means. Encourage kids to meditate on this meaning while they say the key passage aloud three times.

2 PRAY

Invite volunteers to share prayer requests. Then pray, praising God for His great rescue plan through His Son, Jesus.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

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.

Discuss how the kids were safe when a “judge” was in the corner with them. Remind kids that 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. Tell kids that we also have consequences for our sins, but God sent Jesus to save us from our sins once and for all.