

Large Group Leader

Session Title: The First Judges

Bible Passage: Judges 3:7-31

Main Point: God's people turned from Him to worship idols.

Key Passage: The LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; it is he who will save us. Isaiah 33:22

Big Picture Question: How does God accomplish His plan? God uses people for His glory and our good.

THE
GOSPEL
PROJECT
FOR KIDS

UNIT 9
Session 1
OLDER

TECH NOTES:

PROPS

- optional sword

- Show Bible Story Slide



- Big Picture question slides



- Bible

- "The First Judges" video

WORSHIP

Worship leaders sing two songs with the children and collect offering.

POINT TO GIANT TIMELINE / INTRODUCE THIS WEEK'S SESSION

LEADER: [Point to the previous Bible stories on the timeline.] The Israelites had spent 40 years in the wilderness before God used Joshua to lead the people into the promised land. Joshua lived a long time, and at the end of his life, he told the people to remember all of God's laws and obey them. Joshua told the people to love and worship only the one true God.

[Point to today's Bible story on the timeline.] For the next few weeks we are going to tell our story from the desert. The desert can be a dangerous place. In Bible times it was always a place of uncertainty and trials. Not the kind of place you want to go on vacation! This is how the Israelite people were living. They had wandered away from God and actually started worshipping some of the false gods that the nations around them served.

LEADER: In today's Bible story, God's people kept doing the wrong thing, but God sent people to help them know what to do. These people were called judges.

BIG PICTURE QUESTION

LEADER: Our big picture question is, **Whom does God use in His plan? God uses people in His plan.** The Israelites forgot about the one true God. The judges helped the people turn back to God, but the judges could not change the people's hearts and make them love God. God had a plan. He sent His Son, Jesus, to change His people's hearts and save them from sin forever.

WATCH BIBLE STORY VIDEO

Open your Bible to Judges 3:7-31. Tell the Bible story in your own words, or show the Bible story video "The First Judges."

BIBLE STORY FOR REFERENCE:

The First Judges

Judges 3:7-31

Joshua had died. Without a strong leader, the Israelites began to disobey God and worship false gods. They forgot about the one true God. **God was angry. He let an enemy king take over the Israelites,** and they served the king for eight years.

Then the Israelites remembered how good they had it when they loved and obeyed God. They cried out to Him, "Save us!" God wanted the people to love and obey Him, so **God raised up Othniel (AHTH nih el) to rule over them as the first judge.**

Othniel led the Israelites into battle against the king of Aram, and God helped the Israelites win. **The land was peaceful for 40 years, then Othniel died.**

Again, Israel forgot about God. God gave the king of Moab power to attack the Israelites and defeat them. The Israelites served the king of Moab for 18 years. **The Israelites were sad. They remembered how good they had it when they loved and obeyed God. They cried out to Him, "Save us!"** So **God raised up Ehud (EE huhd) to save them.**

The Israelites sent Ehud to the king of Moab, who was a very fat man. Ehud had a double-edged sword under his clothes. **Ehud said, "I have a secret message for you." The king dismissed all his attendants so he was alone with Ehud.**

When the king stood up, Ehud pulled out his sword. He pushed it into the king's belly. The sword was swallowed up by the king's fat. Ehud couldn't even pull it out! **Ehud escaped down the porch, locking the doors of**

TECH NOTES:

the room behind him. Ehud was gone when **the king’s servants came in.** The door was locked and they thought he was using the bathroom. They waited, but the king never opened the door. The servants got worried, so they unlocked the door **and found their king dead** on the floor!

When Ehud escaped, he blew a ram’s horn and he became the Israelites’ leader. “God will help us defeat our enemies, the Moabites,” Ehud told them. So the Israelites battled the Moabites and took control over them. **There was peace in the land for 80 years.**

When Ehud died, the Israelites forgot God again. They turned away from Him. When they remembered how good they had it when the loved and obeyed God, they cried out to Him, “Save us!” God sent a third judge, Shamgar (SHAM gahr), to save them.

Christ Connection: The judges saved the people from the consequences of their sin, but not the cause of it. God’s plan was to one day send a true Deliverer—Jesus, His own Son—to be the King of His people. Jesus saves people from sin forever.

TALK ABOUT THE BIBLE STORY

LEADER • What happened for the Israelites to be in such a pickle? **God’s people turned from Him to worship idols.** When God’s people worshiped idols instead of the one true God, He allowed their enemies to attack them. Then the people remembered how God had always taken care of them. They cried out to God for help.

What did God do when His people asked for help? Did God say, “You are on your own now”? No! God raised up judges and used them to rescue the Israelites and help them serve God again. That sounds like the answer to our big picture question! ***How does God accomplish His plan? God uses people for His glory and our good.*** [Invite kids to repeat it one more time.]

After the judge rescued them, everything was fine and the people always obeyed God ... right? Wrong! When the judge died, they fell back into the cycle of sin. The judges saved the people from the consequences of their sin, but not the cause of it. God’s plan was to one day send a true Deliverer—Jesus, His own Son—to be the King of His people. Jesus saves people from sin forever.

Ask the following review questions. Invite kids to make an *O* with their arms overhead if the answer applies to Othniel. Kids will make an *E* with their bodies if the answer applies to Ehud and an *S* if the answer applies to Shamgar.

1. Who was the first judge? (Othniel, Judg. 3:9)
2. Who was the second judge? (Ehud, Judg. 3:15)
3. Who was the third judge? (Shamgar, Judg. 3:31)
4. Who defeated the king of Aram? (Othniel, Judg. 3:10)
5. Who gave Israel 40 years of peace? (Othniel, Judg. 3:11)
6. Who hid a sword? (Ehud, Judg. 3:16)

KEY PASSAGE

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Isaiah 33:22.

Leader • Great! This verse tells us four things about God.

Can anyone tell me what those four things are? (*He is our Judge, lawgiver, and King. He will save us.*)

Exactly! So, what do you think of when you hear the word *judge*? [Allow kids to respond.] Very interesting. A judge is someone who has authority

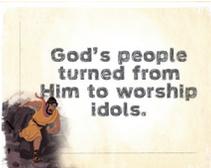
and makes decisions about what is right and wrong. We heard today that God chose people to be judges over Israel. But the judges were not the ultimate authority. This verse says that God is our Judge. Even though God chose people to lead the Israelites, we know that ultimately, He is in charge. ***How does God accomplish His plan? God uses people for His glory and our good.***

PRAYER

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups. Pray, thanking God for being a God who rescues and delivers.

DISMISS TO SMALL GROUP

• Main Point Slide



• Key Passage slide



Small Group Leader

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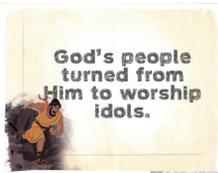
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- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster
- "Review Relay Cards" printable
- tape

- Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.



GAME: BIBLE STORY REVIEW & BIBLE SKILLS

Invite kids to play a review relay. Mix up the review relay cards and attach them face-out on a focal wall. Form three or four teams. Give each team a Bible and guide kids to stand at the far side of the room.

When you say go, the first player from each team will run to the cards and grab a question. He should bring it back to his team, and they should work together to look up the reference in the Bible to find the answer.

Then another player should race to grab the answer card and return it to the team. The team should continue collecting question and answer pairs until teams have collected all the cards.

1. Why did God allow Israel to be defeated by their enemies? (*The Israelites forgot about God and worshiped false gods, Judges 3:7-8*)
2. Who was the first judge to rule over Israel? (*Othniel, Judges 3:9-10*)
3. How long did Othniel rule before he died? (*40 years, Judges 3:11*)
4. What nation defeated Israel after Othniel died? (*Moab, Judges 3:12*)
5. How long did the king of Moab rule over Israel? (*18 years, Judges 3:14*)
6. Who did God raise up to rescue Israel from Moab? (*Ehud, Judges 3:15*)
7. What weapon did Ehud carry? (*a double-edged sword, Judges 3:16*)
8. What did Ehud say he had for the king? (*a secret message, Judges 3:18-19*)
9. Where did Ehud stab the king of Moab? (*in his belly, Judges 3:21*)
10. How did Ehud escape? (*He escaped down the porch, Judges 3:23*)
11. How long was Israel at peace after Ehud rescued them from the king of Moab? (*80 years, Judges 3:30*)
12. Who was the third judge to rescue Israel? (*Shamgar, Judges 3:31*)

LEADER: God's people turned from Him to worship idols, so God let their enemies rule over them. When the Israelites cried out for help, God sent special leaders called judges to help them defeat their enemies.

- Journal Page
- Pencils

JOURNAL AND PRAYER

Distribute pencils and journal pages. Encourage kids to list a few things they want to remember about God. Say • Israel forgot about God, and God allowed their enemies to defeat them. **God’s people needed someone to rescue them from their enemies.** Who did God send to rescue them from their enemies? (*the judges*) What do we need to be rescued from? (*sin and death*) Whom did God send to rescue us from sin and death? (*His Son, Jesus; John 3:16*)

As time allows, lead kids to complete the quiz on the activity page. Guide kids to read Judges 3:7-31 and circle the correct words in each statement. (Answers: 1. *Joshua*; 2. *Othniel*; 3. *forgot about*; 4. *fat*; 5. *sword*; 6. *leader*; 7. *peace*; 8. *Shamgar*)



Pray, thanking God that He sent His Son, Jesus, to break the cycle of sin once and for all. Pray that God would help the kids turn away from sin and trust in Him. Pray that God will also use the kids to spread the gospel of Jesus in your community, city, and throughout the world.

THE GOSPEL: GOD’S PLAN FOR ME

Use Scripture and the guide provided in the classroom to explain to boys and girls how to become a Christian. Assign individuals to meet with kids who have more questions. If this is not possible, encourage boys and girls to ask their parents, leader, or other Christian adults any questions they may have about becoming a Christian.

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