

May 31 Elementary

Bible Passage: Israel's Unfaithfulness / Judges 1–3

Story Point: God's people repeatedly turned from Him.

Memory Verse: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9

Big Picture Question: What is repentance? Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to Jesus.

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.*

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* **BIBLE STUDY TIPS FOR PARENTS:**

Following Joshua's death, the Israelites were without a leader. They fell into a cycle of sin that can be seen during each reign of the judges. The cycle is marked by an A-B-C-D-E pattern. Let's look at the first judge, Othniel, to see this pattern.

First, the people fell into **A**postasy. They turned away from God and served other gods. (Judg. 3:7) Next, they experienced a period of **B**ondage. God was angry with the Israelites, and He gave them into the hand of the king of Aram. (v. 8) Third, the people **C**ried out to God. (v. 9) Then, God sent a **D**eliverer to save them. (vv. 9-10) Finally, they had **E**ase in the land. (v. 11) Then Othniel died.

This pattern continued with Ehud. The people had again turned from God. Their apostasy made God angry. He sent them into bondage by strengthening the king of Moab to defeat Israel. The Israelites served the king of Moab for 18 years.

The Moabites were well-fed, especially the king. They enjoyed the fruit of the Israelites' labor while the Israelites went hungry. By thrusting a sword into the king's belly, Ehud disemboweled the king and left him dead on the floor of his room. The fat covered over the handle of the sword so that Ehud could not remove it.

After Ehud delivered Israel, the Israelites struck down the Moabites and there was peace in the land for eighty years. But Ehud would die, and they would need another judge to lead them.

The Israelites needed someone better than a judge; they needed a king who would save them not only from the consequences of their sin, but the sin itself. That was all part of God's plan. God sent a true Deliverer; His Son, Jesus, died for our sin and delivered us forever from the oppression of sin and death.

***STORY:**

SAY • Before we get started, listen to the big picture question we will be thinking about the next few weeks. Here it is: ***What is repentance?*** Now that's a great question about a big word. [*Stand facing one way.*] ***Repentance is turning away from sin and [turn to face the other way] turning to Jesus.***

The Bible is made up of many different stories. All of these stories fit together to tell an even greater story—the story of how God rescues sinners through His Son, Jesus. The Old Testament is about God's people, the Israelites. They were the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God promised to bless the whole world through this family!

The Israelites were slaves in Egypt for hundreds of years, but God called Moses to lead the people out of Egypt and toward the promised land. When Moses died, Joshua became the leader of Israel. They entered the promised land and, with God's help, they began driving out their enemies. But eventually, Joshua died. Without a leader ... well, let's just say things went downhill pretty fast.

Use the Bible storytelling tips below to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video, or both!

Israel's Unfaithfulness

Judges 1–3

Joshua had died. Without a strong leader, the Israelites disobeyed God and worshiped false gods. They ignored and forgot about the one true God. God was angry. He let an enemy king take over the Israelites, and they served that 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 ignored God and forgot Him. 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 large 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 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 ignored and forgot God again. They turned away from Him. When they remembered how good they had it when they loved and obeyed God, they cried out to Him, "Save us!" God sent a third judge, Shamgar (SHAM gahr), to save them.

SAY • God's people repeatedly turned from Him. They were stuck in a cycle of sin. When God's people cried out to Him for help, God raised up judges to deliver His people from their enemies. Israel's first judge was named Othniel (ATHH nih el). Othniel delivered the people from their enemies, and they lived in peace for 40 years. When Othniel died, God's people turned from Him again. They were overtaken by the Moabites, and God raised up Ehud to deliver them. When Ehud died ... you guessed it. The people turned from God again. This time, when the people cried out to God for help, God raised up Shamgar to deliver the Israelites from the Philistines.

***Christ Connection:**

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.

SAY • 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.

We might hear this story and shake our heads about how many times the Israelites turned away from God. But we are just like the Israelites. Every day, our sinful hearts want to turn from God. We choose to sin and live for ourselves instead of God.

Like the Israelites, God can lead us to turn from our sin and turn back to Him. This is called repentance. Let's say our big picture question and answer together: ***What is repentance? Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to Jesus.***

***GOSPEL PLAN:**

(Included in the Activity Pages)

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means "good

news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.

God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.

We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God’s punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)

God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It’s something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.

Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God’s family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.

We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He’s already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

***PRAYER**

SAY • Lord God, we confess that just like the Israelites, we have sinned against You. Our thoughts, words, and behavior do not always honor You. We repent, confident that You will forgive. Thank You for loving us and for sending Jesus. Amen.

***KEY PASSAGE / MEMORY VERSE:**

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9

SAY • To *sin* is to think, speak, or behave in any way that goes against God and His commands. Sin separates people from God. But because Jesus died on the cross for our sins, we can have a right relationship with God. When we confess our sins, God will forgive us.

***DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

COMPREHENSION:

- What happened after Joshua died? (*A generation grew up who did not acknowledge the Lord. The Israelites worshiped false gods; Judges 2:10-11*)

- What did the Israelites do that angered God? (*forgot about His commands, worshiped other gods; Judg. 1:11-12*)
- What did God do in response to Israel's sin? (*The Lord let their enemies take over, Judges 2:14*)
- How did Israel respond? (*They cried out to the Lord for help; Judges 3:9,15*)
- Did God abandon the people for their sin? (*No, He provided judges to rescue them when they repented; Judg. 1:16*)
- What happened after each judge died? (*The people returned to worshipping idols; Judges 2:19; 3:7,12*)
- Who were the judges we learned about today? (*Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar; Judg. 3*)

YOUNGER:

Open bibles using the table of contents to find the Book of Judges. Explain that Judges, like Joshua, is in the Old Testament in the History division. Judges contains the history of Israel after they were in the land but before God gave them a human king to lead them.

Ask the following questions:

- Why do you think the people kept turning from God? *Guide the kids to discuss the sin nature we are all born with. We naturally drift away from God. We think we know what is best for us, and we tend to distrust God. We cannot save ourselves.*
- What makes Jesus different from the judges in the Old Testament? *Guide the kids to discuss the fact that Jesus is not just a man; He is also the Son of God. Jesus lived a perfect life and died for us to make the way to live with God. Jesus can change our hearts to repent, love God, and obey Him. The judges could not change people's hearts but only remind them of God's laws.*
- How do we know God still loves us even when we sin? *Guide kids to discuss the fact that God sent His Son to die for sinners. Remind them that, in Jesus, God declares us righteous. Jesus' perfect obedience is given to us because He took on our sin. Our sin will not stop God's love. We repent because we love God, not to earn God's love. Sin is not best for us—God is.*

Say • **God's people repeatedly turned from Him.** They did not have new hearts. The judges could not change their hearts. In Jesus, we have new hearts that want to repent, love God, and obey Him.

OLDER:

Open Bibles to Judges 2. Explain that today's Bible story comes from Judges 1–3. Explain to kids that the Book of Judges is the second of twelve books of Old Testament History. No one knows for certain who wrote down the words of Judges, but these words are God's words.

Read Judges 2:18-19 together.

Say • Each time the Israelites ignored and forgot about the one true God, God allowed Israel's enemies to overtake them. God raised up Othniel to deliver Israel from the king of Aram. [*Point to Aram (B9) on the Old Testament Kingdoms Map.*] He raised up Ehud to deliver them from the king of Moab. [*Point to Moab (K7).*]

Ask the following questions:

- What cycle of behavior were the Israelites in? *Guide kids to recall that every time another nation ruled the Israelites, the Israelites would cry out for the Lord to deliver them. God would then raise up a judge to save them from the enemy. As the years went by, they forgot, went back into sin, and were captured by their enemies. This cycle of loving God, forgetting Him, doing evil, being captured, and then being delivered was repeated.* (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Ps. 50:15.)
- What did the Israelites need to be rescued from their enemies? *Lead kids to discuss how the Israelites needed a Savior who could deliver them once and for all. They needed a Savior who would deliver them from their sin, not just their enemies.* (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Rom. 7:20.)
- How does Jesus deliver sinners? *Help kids understand that Jesus is the only person who can free us from our sin. The Israelites continued to battle their enemies and the sin within until God sent the true Deliverer—Jesus. We are controlled by sin until we trust Jesus to deliver us from it. Jesus sets us free from sin, so we can stand against sin and can become more like Jesus.* (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Rom. 7:24-25a.)

***ACTIVITY:**

ACTIVITY PAGE & COLORING PAGE

Invite kids to complete the “Try Your Hand” activity page. Instruct kids to copy the picture of Ehud twice, once with each hand.

Say • A lot of people are right-handed, but some are left-handed. Today we will hear about a man who was left-handed, and that helped him to rescue God’s people from their enemies.

OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS GAME

SUPPLIES: Old Testament Book Game cards, Bible

Print and cut apart the Old Testament books cards. Mix up the cards and challenge child(ren) to arrange the cards in the order they appear in the Old Testament. Provide Bibles for kids to check their work with the table of contents.

Prompt kids to point out the books of Old Testament Law. (*Genesis–Deuteronomy*) Explain that the next Bible division is called Old Testament History. It is made up of 12 books from Joshua–Esther.

Say • Have you ever read from the Book of Judges? The Book of Judges shows what happens when God’s people turn away from Him and worship false idols. It also shows God’s mercy to guide His people back to Him.

CLOTHESPIN PEOPLE REMINDER

SUPPLIES: Clothespin, adhesive magnet (if you have it), markers or paint, heavy weight paper, yarn, glue, scissors

Explain that kids will turn the clothespins into figures of themselves. Instruct them to color one side of the clothespin to be clothes. If you have adhesive magnets at home, you can add these to the back to make a magnet for your fridge.

Have children draw their face on a piece of paper (if you have heavier weight paper use that) and cut it out. Tell kids to glue the circle to the long end of the colored side of the clothespin. Let kids cut lengths of yarn and glue them to the circles as hair (if you have it).

If you put a magnet on your clothespin, kids can stick their magnets to a locker or refrigerator and clip notes or index cards with the clothespin as a reminder. If you do not have a magnet, you can still use it to hold a note or reminder. Suggest kids make written reminders of prayer requests or Bible verses.

Say • In our Bible story today, **God's people repeatedly turned from Him**. We can be so forgetful! We forget what is true about God and about ourselves. This is why it's important for believers to meet together regularly and encourage one another. If we have turned from God, we can repent and He will forgive us. Let's say our big picture question and answer together. ***What is repentance? Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to Jesus.***

PAINT STICK SWORD

SUPPLIES: Paint Stick or other stick, aluminum foil, painters tape or masking tape

Provide child with a paint stick or a stick, some aluminum foil, and tape. Allow them to cover the top part of the paint stick/stick with aluminum foil and hold it in place with tape. They can also wrap tape around the handle to act as a grip.

Say • Those are some cool toy swords! Today we learned about a man named Ehud who used a sword to save God's people from the king of Moab who did not follow God.