

Unit 8, Session 1

The First Judges (Judges 3)



Dear families,

This week'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 your 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.

Check out *The Gospel Project At Home* for resources designed to help you lead a family worship experience as well as suggestions for morning and evening prayer times and family activities.

FAMILY TALKING POINTS

CHRIST CONNECTION

This is the big idea of how this week's Bible story points to Jesus.

- Babies & Toddlers: God loved His people and sent judges. God loves us too and sent Jesus to save us from our sins when we trust in Him.
- Younger Preschool: Like God sent judges to help His people, He also sent Jesus to help us. Jesus saves us from our sins when we trust in Him.
- Older Preschool: God provided judges to rescue His people from their enemies. God provided Jesus to rescue us from our sin. When we choose to trust in Jesus and follow Him, we are forever saved from our sin.
- Kids: 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.

BIG PICTURE QUESTION & ANSWER

This is an important biblical truth that your child will encounter each week of this unit.

- Younger Preschool: What is repentance? Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to Jesus.
- Older Preschool: What is repentance? Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to Jesus.

- Kids: What is repentance? Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to Jesus.

KEY PASSAGE

This is a Bible verse that relates to what your child will encounter each week of this unit.

- Babies & Toddlers: If we pray, God will hear and forgive our sins. 2 Chronicles 7:14
- Younger Preschool: If my people pray and turn from sin, I will forgive them. 2 Chronicles 7:14
- Older Preschool: [If] my people pray and turn from their evil ways, then I will forgive their sin. 2 Chronicles 7:14
- Kids: [If] my people, who bear my name, humble themselves, pray and seek my face, and turn from their evil ways, then I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land. 2 Chronicles 7:14

**** Next week:** Deborah Led Israel (Judges 4-5)