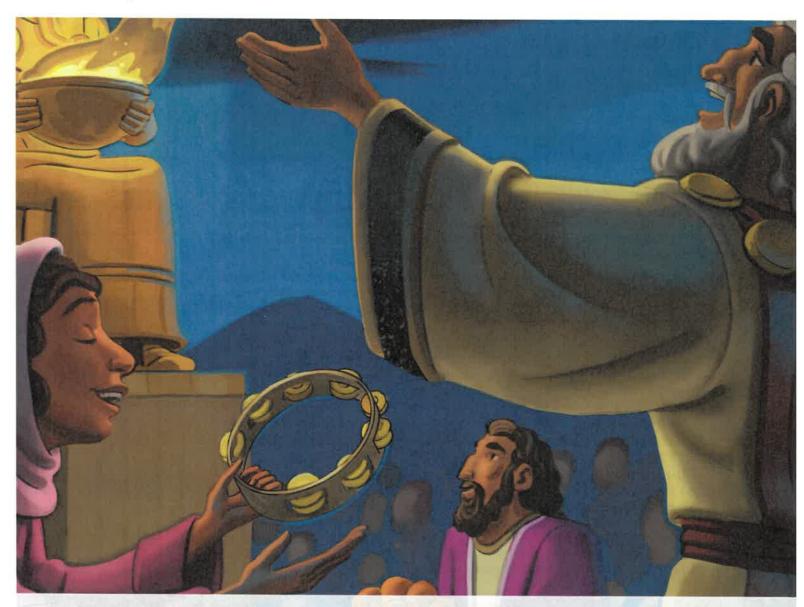
UNIT 8 | SESSION 1

Pre K 5/11/25

THE FIRST JUDGES

JUDGES 3



CHRIST CONNECTION: 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.

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is repentance? Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to Jesus.

KEY PASSAGE: If my people pray and turn from sin, I will forgive them. 2 Chronicles 7:14

STORY POINT: God provided His people with judges.



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.

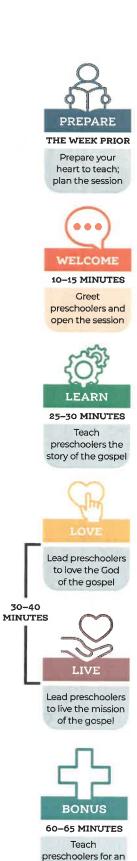
What pattern began to unfold in the lives of the Israelites? How did God prove Himself faithful and gracious in the lives of the Israelites, despite their sin?

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.



additional hour



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

GATHER Supplies

Keep a supply of the following items available during all teaching sessions: Allergy Alert, Bibles, washable markers, crayons, scissors (adult use), blunt-tipped scissors, construction paper, copy paper, glue sticks, glue, tape, baby dolls, blocks, play dough, and a beanbag.

WELCOME	LIVE
Find a J for judges Big Picture Question Poster index cards, 1 per child painter's tape	Make paper chains 3-inch paper strips, 13 per child Missions Activity "Send Portland" missions video
LEARN Play a listening game gift bag plastic crown plush or paper heart	Snack and Transition hand sanitizer (optional) "Trace the Letters O, E, S" activity page, 1 per child Big Picture Cards for Families
picture of Jesus	BONUS
Tell the Bible story "The First Judges" video (optional) Review the Bible story Bible Story Picture Poster Learn and practice the key passage phrase Key Passage Phrase Marker	Say the key passage phrase Key Passage Phrase Marker Dot sticker JESUS dot stickers, assorted colors
LOVE	
Toss beanbags beanbags, 3 poster board Make play dough letters page protectors, 1 per child painter's tape	



WELCOME Preschoolers

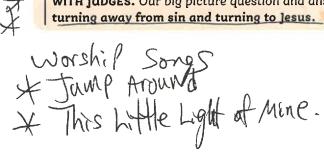
Provide as many learning activities as possible from the Love and Live sections to give preschoolers choices to learn. Incorporate the Bible story, the Christ Connection, story point, and key passage phrase in your conversations as the preschoolers engage in learning activities throughout the session.

Use the following activity to greet children as they enter the classroom. Talk about the big picture question and answer. After each child completes the welcome activity, encourage him to participate in the activities provided from the Love and Live sections of the leader guide.

FIND A J FOR JUDGES

Display the Big Picture Question and Answer Poster. Write the letter] on index cards and hide them around the room in easy sight of preschoolers using painter's tape. Instruct children as they arrive to find a letter I card and bring it to you. Say the big picture question and answer as children bring the letter cards to you.

I'm so happy to see you today. You did a great job finding the letter Is hidden around the room. God's people needed help when others didn't follow the rules. GOD PROVIDED HIS PEOPLE WITH JUDGES. Our big picture question and answer asks, What is repentance? Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to Jesus.



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LEARN the Bible Story

PLAY A LISTENING GAME

Place the crown, heart, Bible, and picture of Jesus into the gift bag. Set the bag in front of the group. Look into the bag and describe each item one at a time, starting with the crown. See if children can guess the item. Remove each item and set it out for children to see once the item is guessed correctly.

SAY It can be difficult to guess what something is without seeing it. Learning to listen carefully is very important. God's people, the Israelites, stopped listening to God when Joshua died, and they got into some trouble. In the Bible, we read how God stayed faithful to His people, even when they started worshiping made-up gods. **GOD PROVIDED HIS PEOPLE WITH JUDGES** to help lead His people. Listen carefully to hear the names of the first three judges.

2 TELL THE BIBLE STORY

Open you Bible to Judges 3. Tell the Bible story using the following summary. You may choose to review the Bible story by showing the video.

THE FIRST JUDGES

SAY ••• After Joshua, the leader of the Israelites, died, the people stopped listening to God. But God wanted His people to be happy and safe, so He sent special leaders called judges.

The first judge with Othniel (AHTH nih el). He led the people into battles, and God helped them win. Everything was peaceful for many years, but then Othniel died. The people forgot about God again. They started to worship pretend gods instead. This made God sad, so He let the king of Moab make trouble for them. The Israelites had to serve the king for 18 years.

The people remembered that they were happier when they loved God. They asked God for help, so God sent a new judge named Ehud. Ehud had a clever plan. He went to the king of Moab with a sword hidden under his clothes. Ehud told the king he had a message. When Ehud and the king were alone, Ehud used his sword to free God's people.

After that, Ehud led the Israelites to fight against the army of Moab. The Israelites won, and the land was peaceful for a long time.

When Ehud died, the people forgot about God. They got into trouble again, and they asked God for help. So God sent another judge named Shamgar.

Christ Connection: 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.





3 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY Video

Display the Bible Story Picture Poster as you review the Bible story. Prior to the session, print the names Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar, each on a separate piece of constructions paper and display within view of preschoolers. Play a "Who Am I?" game by listing facts for each judge. Encourage preschoolers to call out their answers. Sample statements: I used my sword to free God's people. Who am I? (Ehud) I was the first judge God gave His people. Who am I? (Othniel) When God's people got into trouble again, God made me the third judge. Who am I? (Shamgar)

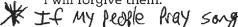


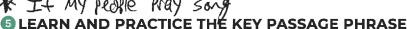
SAY III GOD PROVIDED HIS PEOPLE WITH JUDGES, but they kept sinning against Him and each other. God wanted His people to obey Him and turn away from their sin. He wanted them to repent. God wants us to repent when we sin, too. What is repentance? Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to Jesus.

SING A SONG

Sing the song to the familiar tune of "Oh My Darling, Clementine":

If my people Pray and turn from sin I will forgive them. If my people Pray and turn from sin I will forgive them.







Place the Key Passage Phrase Marker at 2 Chronicles 7:14. Invite a child to open your Bible to the key passage. Learn the key passage phrase while folding hands as if praying. Repeat the key passage phrase several times together.

SAY III God's people had stopped listening to God and were worshiping pretend gods instead. They needed to turn from this sin and turn to God like the key passage phrase says. They remembered they were happier when they loved God, so they prayed to God for help. GOD PROVIDED HIS PEOPLE **WITH JUDGES.** The judges helped the people turn to God. ""

6 PRAY

Pray, thanking God for hearing our prayers and forgiving us when we turn from our sin.





LOVE God because of what we learned

PLAY FOLLOW-THE-LEADER



Guide children to play a game following the instructions of the leader. Remind children to listen closely to the directions as they are given.

SAY It's hard to do well with this game if we don't listen to the leader. If the leader says to do something and we don't, we are out. If the leader says not to do something and we do it, we are also out. God's people had a difficult time because they stopped listening to God. GOD PROVIDED HIS PEOPLE WITH JUDGES to help them. The people often forgot to listen to God and would become unhappy because of it. But the Bible says when God's people pray and turn from sin, He forgives them.

TOSS BEANBAGS

Cut a large crown shape from poster board. Write King of Moab on the crown. Tape it to the floor. Write on three strips of masking tape: Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar. Tape one name on each of three beanbags. Allow children to take turns tossing the beanbags onto the crown while repeating the names of the first three judges as they play.

The first three judges had names that sound unfamiliar to most people today. Tossing beanbags while we say their names will help us remember these special helpers God sent to help His people follow Him. The people needed the judges to help them listen to God and to deal with the king of Moab and other enemies. Let's say our story point together now: GOD PROVIDED HIS PEOPLE WITH JUDGES.

MAKE PLAY DOUGH LETTERS

Prior to the session, write O, E, and S onto copy paper and slide into a clear page protector to create play mats, one per preschooler. Tape the play mats to the table using painter's tape. Distribute play dough to each preschooler and encourage them to the make the letters displayed on their mats.

The first three judges were named Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar. God used them to bring the people back to worship Him and to deliver the people from the king of Moab and other enemies. Othniel was first. While he was judge, the people had peace. When Othniel died, the people stopped listening to God again. Ehud was the second judge. He led the army to free the people from the king of Moab. When Ehud died, the people stopped listening to God again. They prayed to God for help. God sent Shamgar to help them. God provided His people with judges to help them. He also sent Jesus to help us. Jesus saves us from our sins when we trust in Him.

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





LIVE for God out of love

MAKE A KEY PASSAGE PHRASE CHAIN

Cut 13 strips of paper to create a key passage paper chain. Write one word from the key passage phrase on each strip of paper, including the reference. Lead children to say the key passage phrase together as they work together to add links to the chain using tape. Display in the classroom.

SAY The people of Israel were often in trouble with the king of Moab because they refused to listen to God. They remembered how happy they were when they listened to God, so they prayed and asked God for help. **GOD PROVIDED HIS PEOPLE WITH JUDGES** to help them.

2 MISSIONS ACTIVITY



Point to the state of Oregon on a world map. Show the "Send Portland" missions video.

SAY Many people live in or near Portland, Oregon. Only a few of these people believe in Jesus. Many churches are needed to pray and give money so missionaries can start new churches in Portland to reach the large number of people who live there. [Lead a prayer.]

® SNACK AND TRANSITION



Post an Allergy Alert. Serve the snack. As children eat, review and talk about the Bible story. When children finish their snack, lead them to complete the activity page. As they work, continue talking about the Bible story and emphasize the Christ Connection.

SAY II 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.

Remember to communicate helpful information to the bonus teaching hour leaders. If parents are picking up children at this time, tell them something their child did well during the session. Distribute Big Picture Cards for Families. Encourage parents to engage with the family discussion starters and family activities during the week.



BONUS Teaching Hour Group Time

10 USE LISTENING EARS

4 1 1

Before the session, cut strips of construction paper and adhere at the ends with tape creating a headband for each child. Cut out ear shapes in sets of two for each child and adhere with tape to the headband. Greet the children in group time. Discuss Israel's pattern of listening to God, then not listening to God, then asking God for help. Instruct children to use their listening ears during today's Bible story.

TALK ABOUT THE BIBLE STORY

Open the Bible to Judges 3. Use the summarized points below to talk about the Bible story:

THE FIRST JUDGES

- · After Joshua died, the people stopped listening to God. God sent leaders called judges.
- •The first judge was Othniel. Everything was peaceful until Othniel died. The people forgot about God. God let the king of Moab make trouble for His people.
- The people were happier when they loved God. They asked God for help, so God sent a new judge named Ehud. Ehud used a sword to rescue God's people from the king of Moab.
- Then Ehud led the Israelites to fight against the king's army. God's people won, and the land was peaceful until Ehud died. The people forgot about God and got into trouble again. They asked God for help, so God sent another judge named Shamgar.

3 SING A SONG

Sing the song to the familiar tune of "Oh My Darling, Clementine":

If my people
Pray and turn from sin
I will forgive them.
If my people
Pray and turn from sin
I will forgive them.

SAY THE KEY PASSAGE PHRASE

Place the Key Passage Phrase Marker at 2 Chronicles 7:14. Invite a child to open your Bible to the key passage. Learn the key passage phrase. Whisper the key passage phrase together several times. Explain that the people in the Bible story would stop listening to God, they would get into trouble with their enemies, and then they would turn back to God, asking Him for help. God would send a judge to help them. God provided His people with judges.

5 PRAY

Pray, thanking God for listening to His people when they prayed to Him.



BONUS Teaching Hour Activities

6 MAKE GROUPS OF THREE



Gather an assortment of three similar items from around the classroom such as three blocks, three crayons, three markers, and so forth. Mix up the items and lead children to sort the items into groups of three by type. Talk about the Bible story as children work.

SAY The Bible story today names the first three judges. The first judge was Othniel. The second judge was Ehud, and the third was Shamgar. Let's count to three with each item and name the three judges together. **GOD PROVIDED HIS PEOPLE WITH JUDGES.** God used the judges to free the people from the king of Moab and other enemies. These enemies would make trouble for the people whenever they stopped listening to God and worshiped made-up gods.

PASS A PAPER HEART



Cut a large paper heart from construction paper. Lead children to sit in a circle. Pass the heart around the circle and say together, "The people were happier when they loved God."

SAY When the people worshiped made-up gods and were living under the king of Moab's rule, they were very unhappy. They remembered how happy they were when they listened to God and worshiped Him. They prayed to God and asked Him for help. God listened to the people's prayers. **GOD PROVIDED HIS PEOPLE WITH JUDGES.**

10 DOT STICKER JESUS

Write JESUS in large letters on construction paper, one for each child. Provide each child with dot stickers. Lead children to put stickers on the letters.

SAY GOD PROVIDED HIS PEOPLE WITH JUDGES when they were being mistreated by their enemies. God loved the people. Our Christ Connection reminds us of God's love for people: '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.'

Release preschoolers to parents according to your church's security procedure. Tell them something that their child enjoyed doing or did well during the session.