



# 4

# Israel Disobeys God

## Key Theme

- God alone is to be worshipped.

## Key Passages

- Joshua 21:43–45; Judges 2:7–15; Luke 18:18–23

## Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Define Idolatry.
- Explain the consequences for Israel's idolatry.



## Lesson Overview



### Come On In

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Students will place bookmarks at Joshua 21, Judges 2, and Luke 18. Students will put the Memory Verse Strips in order and then practice saying the verse together and/or with a partner.



### Activity 1: Israel Disobeys God Class Notes

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Students will fill out Israel Disobeys God Class Notes as you study the lesson. Pass out the class notes before you begin to teach.



### Studying God's Word

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The nation of Israel under Joshua's rule continued to conquer the land of Canaan. God's promises had been fulfilled. After Joshua's death, however, the people became idolatrous, worshipping the false gods of the nations around them; they turned their back on God. This angered God. He removed His hand of protection from Israel and the people suffered. God alone is to be worshipped and obeyed.



### Activity 2: Possible Idols

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Students will play a game similar to charades which will help them discover a variety of things that can become idols in our lives.

# Lesson Preparation

## WHAT YOU WILL DO

## WHAT YOU WILL NEED



### COME ON IN

- Cut paper into strips for each student to mark today's study passages in Joshua 21, Judges 2, and Luke 18.
- If you haven't done this, print and cut out the Memory Verse Strips from the Resource DVD-ROM, one set for every 2–3 students. Print on cardstock if possible.

- Memory Verse Poster
- Paper strips
- Memory Verse Strips in envelopes or small plastic bags
- If you want to do this as an individual activity, make one set per student. Put complete sets into envelopes or small plastic bags.



### ISRAEL DISOBEYS GOD CLASS NOTES

- Print one Israel Disobeys God Class Notes from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student. Keep the answer key for your use.

- Israel Disobeys God Class Notes for each student
- Israel Disobeys God Class Notes Answer Key
- Pencils



### STUDYING GOD'S WORD

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.
- Print one Promised Land Map from the Resource DVD-ROM.

- Student Take Home Sheets
- Promised Land Map
- Tape or poster putty



### POSSIBLE IDOLS

- Print and cut the Possible Idols Strips from the Resource DVD-ROM.
- Fold strips and put them in a cup or bowl.

- Possible Idols Strips
- Cup or bowl



## Memory Verse

**Joshua 1:9** Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

➤ **Pace your lesson!** Use the clocks to mark the time you want to finish each section. This will help you stay on track and finish on time. You may need to shorten or drop sections as necessary.





# Prepare to Share

## SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Before you begin to prepare for your lesson this week, please prepare your heart and mind by reading Joshua 23:14–16; Judges 1–3; and Colossians 3:4–6 (paying particular attention to the fact that in verse 5, covetousness is identified as a form of idolatry).

Our last lesson described the event of the miraculous conquest of Jericho. Israel, after that victory, endured the consequences of one man's disobedience when it was defeated at Ai, the next city God commanded it to conquer (Joshua 7). After dealing with the problem of this man's sin, Israel conquered Ai; and the principle that God would bless obedience and withhold blessing from disobedience was firmly demonstrated. The rest of the book of Joshua is the history of that generation's conquest of the land of Canaan, culminating in Joshua's description in chapter 23:14 that all of God's promises of blessing and guidance in the giving of the Promised Land were fulfilled.

Judges chapter 1 gives a summary of the last part of the land's conquest and the failure of Israel to completely cast out the idolatrous inhabitants. Judges 2:1–3 records the Angel of the Lord warning Israel that this failure would have bitter consequences: "they shall be thorns in your side, and their gods shall be a snare to you." Joshua's generation seemed to take the warning to heart; Judges 2:7 says that the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua and of the elders of that generation who outlived him. However, after that generation's death, the people became idolatrous and did not know the Lord nor the work that He had done for Israel (Judges 2:10). Their idolatry took the form of worshiping the gods of the conquered people whom Israel had not cast out in the previous generation. These gods were the Baals, usually thought to be gods of fertility and prosperity (Judges 2:11).

Israel's quick fall into idolatry may seem far removed from us. In our culture, there is little temptation to actually worship a Baal or to make an idol and bow down to it. The root of the Israelites' idolatry, however, was that instead of trusting and serving the true God, and devoting themselves to His great purposes, they chose to worship gods whose claim to deity lay in their willingness to serve the desires of the people. In this, we are much like the Israelites, and we are warned by Paul in the book of Colossians to "put to death" selfish and impure desires (Colossians 3:5). In this exhortation, we see the common ground of our own sin with the idolatry of Israel: cov-

etousness—selfish, sinful desire for what God has not given. And the Apostle Paul warns that "no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God" (Ephesians 5:5). If we aren't fighting this sin of covetousness—putting it to death—it's evidence that we may not be a true believer.

The rest of Judges 2 describes the anger of the Lord against Israel's idolatry and disobedience as He delivered them into the hands of the surrounding nations (Judges 2:14). But we also see the undeserved compassion that God exercised in raising up judges to deliver Israel from her enemies again and again (Judges 2:16). Judges 2:11–23 gives a broad, general description of the cycle that history records of Israel during the era of the judges. The recurring pattern included the Israelites turning to idolatry, angering the true God; God bringing consequences against them in the form of oppression by idolatrous nations; the Israelites crying out, "groaning" to God for deliverance from oppression; God showing compassion on them and providing a deliverer by way of a judge; and finally after regaining deliverance, Israel turning again to covetous idolatry, beginning the cycle anew. Clearly, this is not a highlight of Israel's history. As the book of Judges closes, the Lord gives insight into the Israelites' condition: "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6).

## HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

Note that the root of the Israelites' disobedience was always their failure to trust that the true God was caring for their best interests. Idolatry—including our bent toward putting pleasure, worldly possessions, and comfort before God—is never a matter of obedience alone. Idolatry reveals a heart that does not have faith and trust in God and all His purposes. Idolatry will put our selfish desires above the one true God. As we read Israel's history, although we see a stream of blessings for obedience and consequences for disobedience, the root issue is always faith. Would Israel trust that the true God is faithful to His promises and that His promises are the true prosperity of His people? Will we trust that the true God is faithful to His promises and that His promises are the true prosperity of His people? Whenever disobedience occurs, the answer to this question is no—whether we are talking of Israel or ourselves.

Luke 18:18–24—the account of the rich young ruler and Jesus—gives us a New Testament illustration of the struggle we often encounter between loyalty toward God and love for the world. Like the rich young ruler, we want the eternal life (and all the blessings) that God provides through Christ’s sacrifice, and yet we often have conflicting desires to hold onto the immediate blessings that we can obtain in this life. God does not demand of His followers that they avoid all worldly blessings, but He clearly commands them to value Christ and a life honoring Him to the extent that worldly blessings have no hold on our hearts. Our failure to be able to “let go” of worldly desires may keep us from Him (Mark 8:34–38). What our hearts trust and value will ultimately lead us to obey or disobey our Lord.

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



## BEFORE THE THRONE

Holy and just Lord, you are gracious and so merciful. As I study the idolatry of the Israelites, help me to examine my own heart. Where there is any hint of something or someone in my life that comes before you, reveal it. In your mercy forgive me. And by the power of your Holy Spirit, help me get my relationship with you right, for you are all that matters. Help me to pass on the truth of this lesson to the children in my class. It is so easy to be entrapped by the things of this world. Give them the strength and discernment to avoid the sin of idolatry. Continue to open their eyes as we study your Word. I pray that each one of them would come to know you as the one true God of their life.



## COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- They will mark their Bibles at Joshua 21, Judges 2, and Luke 18 with strips of paper.
- They will put the Memory Verse Strips in order and recite the verse together and/or to each other. They may work individually or in teams.

*This time at the beginning of class should be used to review the memory verse. We have provided a template on the Resource DVD-ROM you can use to make Memory Verse Strips to be put in order each week. You may have other ideas and ways to encourage your students to memorize the verse.*



After all the students arrive, pray with them before beginning the lesson.



## REVIEW

Using the Lesson Theme Posters provided with each lesson, quickly review the previous lesson(s) with your students. Take 5 to 10 minutes to reinforce the important truths the students have heard so far in your class.

Ask the children questions about the previous lessons as you display the Lesson Theme Posters. Reflect briefly on the passages you read, bringing the objectives and themes back into focus. This will refresh the truths in your students' minds and maintain continuity as you teach through the lessons.



# Israel Disobeys God Class Notes

## MATERIALS

- Israel Disobeys God Class Notes for each student
- Israel Disobeys God Class Notes Answer Key
- Pencils

## INSTRUCTIONS

*Print the class notes for each student. Pass them out at the beginning of class. Have students fill in the blanks as you study the lesson.*

We will be completing the class notes as we study the Bible today. Try not to

work ahead. Fill in the blanks as we come to them. I'll let you know when to fill in something.

## CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

As we complete the class notes today, we will learn that we should worship God alone. After Joshua died, the Israelites turned to false gods—idols. This angered God. He warned the people that this was sin!



# Studying God's Word

## READ THE WORD

► Use the History of Israel Poster included with your teacher kit to show your class where the biblical accounts you study chronologically fit into this timeline.

*Refer to Lesson 3 Theme Poster.* Jericho was the very first city to be taken by Joshua and his men. And they did it exactly as God had commanded. Not one arrow was shot! The city fell with a trumpet blast and the shouts of God's people. It probably seemed to the Israelites that if they could defeat Jericho, they could easily defeat all the other cities that still stood in the way. The Israelites were on their way to winning many battles that would gain them the land God had promised them so long ago. *Show the Promised Land Map. Stick it to the wall or board with tape or poster putty.*

Shortly after their victory at Jericho, the Israelites planned to take a small town named Ai. *Pronounced "ay-eye." Refer to Ai on the map.* They were confident they could overcome the few people who lived there. But sadly, they suffered a terrible defeat. Joshua wondered why they had been defeated. God answered. It was because of the sin of one soldier named Achan. Achan had disobeyed God. He had stolen riches from Jericho that God had commanded them not to take.

Their loss at Ai reminded all the Israelites that God demands obedience. He had blessed their obedience with victory at Jericho. And He punished the disobedience of Achan with defeat at Ai. After Achan was punished, Joshua and the Israelites continued to conquer the land that God had promised them. They were able to do this because God was with them!

Now we'll move on. Let's read Joshua 21:43–45 together. *Choose a student to read aloud.*

Joshua 21:43–45

## EXAMINE THE WORD

Good. That passage is a really good one to study in depth. Let's observe what it is saying to us by asking some questions.

### Observe the Text

? **What had the Lord given to Israel?** *Joshua 21:43. All the land that He had sworn to give them.*

? **How will you answer #1a on the class notes?** *Land. Have students fill in land on #1a of the class notes.*

So as the book of Joshua ends, we read that time had passed and cities had been conquered. Now the Lord was verifying that His promise to Israel was fulfilled. That was some really great news!

? **What does Joshua 21:44 go on to tell us?** *The people had rest; peace; their enemies had been taken.*

► As the students complete the class notes, you may want to write the words on the board so those who don't write and/or spell well, can copy easily.

- ? How will you answer #1b on the class notes? *Peace. Have students fill in "peace" on #1b of the class notes.*
- ? Yes. Good. They had rest and peace now. How about Joshua 21:45? What does it say about the Lord? *The Lord had been faithful to Israel. All He had promised had come to pass.*

## Discover the Truth

The Israelites had the victory; they had peace. They were dwelling in the Promised Land.

- ? Do you think God still required obedience from them? Or could they just relax now that the promise had been fulfilled? *God still demanded His people to honor Him with complete obedience.*

God still desired obedience. That did not change, and it will never change. God demands and deserves the obedience of His people!



## READ THE WORD

While Joshua and those who had served with him in conquering the Promised Land were alive, the people remembered the mighty works of God. God had fulfilled His promise. They were at peace and prospered. But this was not to be the state of their lives for long. Let's move on to the book of Judges and see what happened next. We'll read Judges 2:7–13. *Choose students to read the verses aloud.*

Judges 2:7–13

## EXAMINE THE WORD

Some of those verses are hard to read. You did a good job. Let's see what we can learn by asking questions about this text.

### Observe the Text

- ? How old was Joshua when he died? *Judges 2:8. 110 years old.*
  - ? Yes. Joshua lived a long life obeying God. Then he died and was buried. What does Joshua 2:10 say about the generation that came after Joshua? *These people did not know the Lord or His works.*
- Right. Sadly, the new generation did not know about the works the Lord had done through Joshua.
- ? So how did the people begin to act? *Joshua 2:11. They did evil in the sight of the Lord.*
  - ? How will you complete #2a on your class notes? *Evil. Have students fill in "evil" on #2a on the class notes.*
  - ? They did evil. And who did they begin to serve? *Joshua 2:11. They served the Baals.*

? How will you complete #2b on your class notes? *Have students fill in "Baals" on #2b on the class notes.*

? What does the Bible mean when it uses the term Baals? *Allow discussion.*

Baals refers to false gods. The Israelites had conquered many nations. Those nations did not know the true God. They worshipped many other gods. And this verse tells us that Israel began to worship these other gods as well. They were not worshipping God alone. They were worshipping the false gods of the people all around them.

? How will you complete #2c on the class notes? *False. Have students fill in "false" on #2c of their class notes.*

## Judges 2:14–15

Now, I'm going to read Judges 2:14–15. Follow along as I read. *Read verses.*

? So what was God's reaction to Israel's worship of these false gods? Look in Judges 2:14. *He got angry.*

? Yes. God got very angry. And what did God do to His people? *He handed them over to their enemies all around.*

? Whose hand was against them while they were being defeated? *Judges 2:15. The Lord's hand was against them.*

? How will you complete #3 on the class notes? *Lord. Have students fill in "Lord's" on #3 of the class notes.*

### Discover the Truth

While Joshua and those who had served with him in conquering the Promised Land were alive, the people remembered the mighty works of God. Sadly, as we read, the next generation didn't follow in the footsteps of Joshua's generation and started worshipping the false gods of the people they had conquered. They were bowing down and praying to other gods. That is called idolatry. Idolatry is worshipping something other than the true God.

? What is the answer to #4 on your class notes? *Idolatry. Have students fill in "idolatry" on #4 of their class notes.*

? And how does God feel about it when we worship a false god? *Angry.*

Yes. God must deal justly with those who commit idolatry. He will punish those who worship things other than Him. In this case, His punishment was to turn the other nations against the Israelites. The hand of the Lord was against them. The Israelites were conquered, they were taken over by their enemies, and their enemies stole all their things and oppressed them. God does not tolerate idolatry. His people must never worship anything but Him!



## READ THE WORD

Now let's move to the New Testament—to the book of Luke to see what Jesus has to say about idolatry. Remember idolatry is putting anything in our lives above God. We will read Luke 18:18–23. *Have someone read the verses.*

Luke 18:18–23

## EXAMINE THE WORD

### Observe the Text

- ? **What was the young ruler's question to Jesus?** *Luke 18:18. What shall I do to inherit eternal life?*
- ? **Good. Now look at Luke 18:21. What did the rich young ruler think of himself?** *He thought he was a pretty good person. He believed he had kept all the laws and commandments.*
- ? **Yes he did. But what did Jesus tell him he still needed to do in Luke 18:22?** *Sell all that he had and give it to the poor. Then follow Jesus.*
- ? **Did the man want to do what Jesus asked him to do?** *Luke 18:23. No. Jesus's command made him sad.*

### Discover the Truth

This man had made money his idol. He was unwilling to give it up to follow Jesus. Idolatry is when we put anything we love above the love we have for Jesus. Jesus may ask us to give up the very thing that is the most important to us—the very thing we love the most. Jesus wants to know that He is truly our Lord and that we love Him more than anything else.

- ? **If we are fully devoted to Christ, would we be willing to give up anything He asks us to?** *Yes.*

In this case, Jesus asked the rich young ruler to give up his riches. But he could not. His riches meant more to him than Jesus did. Riches were his idol.

- ? **So what is the answer to #5 on the class notes?** *Riches. Have students fill in "riches" on #5 of their class notes.*





# Possible Idols

## MATERIALS

- Possible Idols Strips
- Cup, bowl, or other container

## INSTRUCTIONS

*Print and cut one copy of the Possible Idols Strips. Put strips in a container for the students to draw from. Have students take one strip and act out the item mentioned using motions like charades. When someone guesses the idol being illustrated, have the next person act out an idol.*

*Your class may only have time for two or three of these to be acted out. When you run out of time, have the students read the rest of the slips out loud.*

The rich man in Luke had made riches his idol. He did not want to give up his riches to follow Jesus. The Israelites were worshipping false gods above God. They had forgotten all the things God had done for them.

An idol is something—anything—that we love more than God. It's what we think about, spend our money on, talk about, and spend lots of time on. If we aren't careful, we can get caught up in idolatry ourselves.

We're going to play a game like charades to get us thinking about some of the different things that can become idols in our lives. I'll call on someone to draw a slip of paper from the cup. Without speaking, act out what is written on the paper. The rest of the class will try to guess what you are acting out. Remember, these are things that can become an idol. That means they are things we may love more than God. Choose the first volunteer to begin the game.

## CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

? We just played a game that showed us different things that can become idols in our life. What is an idol? *Anything we love more than God.*

God should be our treasure. And we need to be careful that our life—what we do, watch, read, how we spend our money—doesn't put anything else ahead of God in our lives. Whenever we do that, we are committing idolatry.





# Applying God's Word

## WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

The good news that we heard this week was that God fulfilled His promise completely and Israel dwelled in peace after conquering the people of the Promised Land. The sad news was how quickly Israel forgot about God. Shortly after Joshua's death, the people started to practice idolatry. They worshipped false gods—the Baals—not the one true God. And they paid the consequences. God became angry and removed His hand of blessing. The hand of God turned against Israel in judgment.

God demands that we worship Him alone. God does not tolerate idolatry. We commit idolatry when we have anything in our lives that we put before God. God has made it clear to us that we are to love Him with ALL our hearts, ALL our souls, and with ALL our minds. God wants us to love Him more than anything else.

? How should we complete #6 on the class notes? *God. Have students fill in "God" on #6 of the class notes.*

## GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

In our lives idolatry can be different things. It can be our friends, if the friends are more important to us than God. It can be school work, if that school work is more important to us than God. It can be sports, if that sport is more important to us than God. It can be money and riches (as was the case of the rich young ruler we read about), if the money and riches are more important to us than God. Idolatry can be sleep, if we are too tired to get out of bed on Sunday. It can be clothes, toys, video games, phones. These things are not bad. In fact, they are blessings from God. But we have to be careful not to turn these blessings into idols—things that we worship more than God.



► Pass out the Student Take Home Sheets and remind the students to practice the memory verse this week.



### MEMORY VERSE

**Joshua 1: 9** Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.



### GROUP PRAYER TIME

- Praise God because He alone is worthy of our worship.
- Ask God to show us any idols we have in our life.
- Ask God to help us love Him with all our heart, mind, and soul.

