



6

God Remains Faithful

Key Theme

- God is merciful toward sinners.

Key Passages

- Judges 3:7–15, 4:1–3, 6:1–2, 8:33–35, 10:10–16, 13:1, 17:6, 21:25

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe Israel's history of wandering from God.
- Describe God's mercy toward Israel.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

Students will place bookmarks at Judges 3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 13, 17, and 21.
Students will practice the memory verse with a partner.

- Cut paper into strips for each student to mark today's study passages.



Studying God's Word

page 5

During the 300-year period of Judges, Israel repeated a cycle of idolatry and disobedience to God. God punished Israel; she cried out to God. And each time, God delivered Israel, proving His faithfulness.

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Read through Judges
- Go Before the Throne.



Activity: Cycles of Sin

page 6

Students will read passages from the book of Judges and examine the cycle of sin/repentance/deliverance that characterized the period of the judges.

- Student Guides
- Pencils



Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Before you begin to prepare for this lesson, please prepare your heart and mind by reading Judges 10–16; Hebrews 11:30–34; and 1 Corinthians 10:1–11. It is a substantial amount of reading, but you will find it helpful to see the continued pattern through Israel’s history in the period of the judges.

This period of the 13 judges extended over about 300 years. It began around 1350 BC with the first judge, Othniel, and ended with the prophet and judge Samuel. It occurred during a very dark time of backsliding in Israel’s history. Within the book we see the repeated themes of the Israelites’ disobedience to God and God’s faithfulness to forgive, reward, and protect the people when they turned in humble contrition. We also see the recurring theme that God uses people—even the wicked, idolatrous enemy nations of Israel, and the imperfect judges—to bring judgment, to promote reconciliation with His people, and to fulfill His perfect will however He deems necessary.

The recurring cycle of the book of Judges is recapped clearly in Judges 2:16–19:

Nevertheless, the Lord raised up judges who delivered them out of the hand of those who plundered them. Yet they would not listen to their judges, but they played the harlot with other gods, and bowed down to them. They turned quickly from the way in which their fathers walked, in obeying the commandments of the Lord; they did not do so. And

when the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the Lord was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed them and harassed them. And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers, by following other gods, to serve them and bow down to them. They did not cease from their own doings nor from their stubborn way.

The moral climate during this time was pitiful. There was no king, and everyone did what was right in his own eyes (Judges 21:25). Yet as we read the book of Judges, it is hard to miss God’s faithfulness and compassion toward His people. Over and over the Lord heard their cry and sent someone who would deliver them from the consequences of their own sin (Judges 3:9). This book provides an amazing picture of just how faithful God is to His people in spite of their lack of faith in Him (see 2 Timothy 2:13). He is always eager to forgive a truly repentant heart (1 John 1:9). He demands obedience and is gracious to discipline us in our disobedience—as a father chastens a son (Hebrews 12:6). It is good to remember that God’s faithfulness to us is based on His character, and will never waver.

| Judge | Reference | Years Judged |
|---------|----------------|--------------|
| Othniel | Judges 3:9–11 | 40 years |
| Ehud | Judges 3:15–30 | 80 years |

| Judge | Reference | Years Judged |
|----------|-------------------|--------------|
| Shamgar | Judges 3:31 | 10 years |
| Deborah | Judges 4:4–5:31 | 40 years |
| Gideon | Judges 6:7–8:35 | 40 years |
| Tola | Judges 10:1–2 | 23 years |
| Jair | Judges 10:3–5 | 22 years |
| Jephthah | Judges 11:1–12:7 | 6 years |
| Ibzan | Judges 12:8–10 | 7 years |
| Elon | Judges 12:11–12 | 10 years |
| Abdon | Judges 12:13–15 | 8 years |
| Samson | Judges 13:2–16:31 | 20 years |

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

In order to make sense of the period of the judges, including the account of Samson, consider what God had been doing ever since Moses pleaded for Him not to forsake Israel (Numbers 14:11–19). Moses asked God to spare Israel, despite their faithlessness in siding with the ten spies who discouraged them from entering the Promised Land. The basis for Moses's intercession was that God should show Himself faithful to Israel, not for their sake, but for His own glory's sake. Otherwise, if Israel were forsaken, the nations would think God was unable to carry out His promises. In response to Moses's plea, God relented. And in Judges, God's glory was once again shown to Israel

in His undeserved faithfulness, which was displayed in the constant cycle of Israel's sin, God's judgment, Israel's cries, God's deliverance, and the Israelites' abuse of that deliverance by lapsing again into sin. God showed both justice in punishing Israel's sin and faithful covenant mercy in repeatedly delivering the people from the oppression of idolatrous nations. By doing so, the Lord continually acted as a just judge and showed Himself as the God who is greater than the idols of the nations who oppressed Israel.

These accounts in Judges are written as an example to us (1 Corinthians 10:11). In our lives, God's honor is at stake, and His faithfulness to us—His flawed, sinful, yet redeemed people—displays His greatness. This is a precious truth that we must handle carefully. Romans 6 warns that we must not abuse the grace of God. If we do, it may show that we are not truly His (1 John 3:4–9). Nonetheless, God's faithfulness and forgiveness toward His own are indeed unconditional. Praise Him!

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



BEFORE THE THRONE

Merciful Savior, I humbly enter your throne room today. I praise you because you are faithful to sinners like me. You are just as faithful today as you were to the Israelites. Help me to teach my students to see your faithfulness. Bless them, Lord. Help them apply this lesson to their own lives.



COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- They will mark their Bibles at Judges 3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 13, 17, and 21 with strips of paper.
- They will practice the memory verse with a partner. Students will take turns reciting the verse while the other student listens and checks for accuracy. Consider offering a small treat for those who can repeat the verse correctly.

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.



Review

Last week we saw how God used Gideon to accomplish deliverance from the oppression of the Midianites.

- ? **Who can recall how Gideon was used to defeat the Midianites?** *God sent him to battle with only 300 soldiers facing an army of over 135,000. With a simple shout and some trumpet blasts, God turned the enemy army against itself and 120,000 were killed by their own soldiers. Actually, Gideon was not the hero—God was.*

God chose Gideon and the soldiers for the battle. He turned the enemies against one another. God was faithful to strengthen and encourage Gideon and His tiny army and to give them the victory. However,

God still used these men to bring about deliverance from their oppressors. In all of these things, it was God—not the men in the battle—who was worthy of praise for the deliverance.

Today we are going to continue looking at the period of the judges with a big overview. But, rather than teaching through the passages, you are going to do the work in groups. We have been learning about how to examine passages of Scripture and draw out the truths of the passages, so you'll get some practice today.





Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

You are going to work together in groups to examine some passages in the book of Judges. To give you some direction, you will find an activity titled Cycles of Sin in your Student Guides. As you go through the passages, be thinking about why God remains faithful to His promises to Israel and why He continues to act as He does. We will discuss that at the end of the class as we wrap things up.

➤ Write on the board, "Why does God remain faithful?"

Judges

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

Students will be examining the text in small groups and completing the Cycles of Sin activity in their Student Guides. Help groups who have questions or get stuck. See the Answer Key on the next page.

Discover the Truth

- ? **What clear pattern of behavior did you find in the Israelites?** *They turned to idols, they were oppressed by someone, they cried out for help from God, God raised up a judge to deliver them, they praised God for His deliverance.*
- ? **What pattern did you find in the behavior of God?** *God sent oppression to the Israelites as chastisement for their rebellion and idol worship, and then responded to their cries for deliverance by sending a judge to deliver them.*
- ? **Which attributes of God are on display in the passages you studied?** *Merciful, loving, faithful, gracious, sovereign, wise, holy. Refer to the Attributes of God poster.*
- ? **Let's think about God's mercy toward the Israelites. Who can define mercy?** *Mercy is not getting a punishment that is deserved.*
- ? **How did God demonstrate mercy to the Israelites?** *He continually restored them even though they continually rebelled against Him.*
- ? **What is the difference between mercy and grace?** *Mercy is not getting a deserved punishment; grace is receiving something good that is not deserved, so it is distinct from mercy.*
- ? **How did the Israelites receive grace from God?** *Not only did they have the discipline of oppression removed (mercy), but they also received His grace as there was peace in the land for extended periods (3:11, 8:28, etc.). They did not deserve to be delivered, but, at their repentance, God was gracious to set them free.*
- ? **God was faithful to the Israelites even when they were found faithless. What passages did you find that describe God's faithfulness including His faithfulness to Christians??** *The clearest passage is 2 Timothy 2:10–14 where we find the glorious truth that God is faithful even if we are faithless. Other passages include Numbers 23:19, Romans 3:3–4, 1 Corinthians 1:9, Titus 1:1–3, and Hebrews 6:17–18.*

MERCIFUL

GRACIOUS

FAITHFUL





Cycles of Sin

MATERIALS

- Student Guides
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Students will work in groups to examine the book of Judges. The majority of the class will be spent on this activity. See the Read the Word section above for details. The table below has the basic answers, but many of the details are missing.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

| Judges Passage | Israel's Action | The Oppressor | Israel's Reaction | God's Response | Deliverer/Judge |
|-----------------------|---|----------------------------------|-----------------------|--|-----------------|
| 3:7–11 | Evil in the sight of the Lord, serving the Baals | Cushan-Rishathaim | Cried out to the Lord | Sent a deliverer | Othniel |
| 3:12–15 | Did evil in the sight of the Lord | Eglon, king of Moab, sent by God | Cried out to the Lord | Raised up a deliverer | Ehud |
| 4:1–3 | Did evil in the sight of the Lord | Jabin, king of Canaan | Cried out to the Lord | Promised to deliver Jabin's army to Barak | Deborah/Barak |
| 6:1–2, 8:33 | Did evil in the sight of the Lord | Midianites and Amalekites | Cried out to the Lord | Sent a prophet and a deliverer | Gideon |
| 8:33–35 | Played the harlot with the Baals | Abimelech, son of Gideon | — | — | — |
| 10:1–2 | — | — | — | — | Tola |
| 10:3–5 | — | — | — | — | Jair |
| 10:6–18, 11:29–33 | Did evil in the sight of the Lord, serving false gods | Philistines and Ammonites | Cried out to the Lord | Reminded them of past deliverance; told them to seek help from the idols; sent a deliverer | Jephthah |
| 12:8–10 | Married the pagans | — | — | — | Ibzan |
| 12:11–12 | — | — | — | — | Elon |
| 12:13–15 | — | — | — | — | Abdon |
| 13:1, 15:20, 16:28–30 | Did evil in the sight of the Lord | Philistines | — | — | Samson |
| 17:6 | Everyone did what was right in his own eyes | — | — | — | — |
| 21:25 | Everyone did what was right in his own eyes | — | — | — | — |



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

As we read the account of the period of the judges, two things are clear: people are sinful and God is merciful and gracious. As the Israelites rebelled against God, He sent other nations to deliver the punishment they had earned. But He did not leave them long. As they cried out for deliverance, God was pleased to send them deliverers to bring them out of their oppression.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

- ? **What have you learned, or had affirmed, about God's character and attributes in this lesson?** *Discuss various ideas, focusing on God's mercy in delivering His people from their own sin. Another important concept is that God is faithful even if we are faithless.*
- ? **What lessons can we learn from the behavior of the Israelites?** *Discuss various ideas including that when we sin, we should expect discipline from God (Hebrews 12:3–11), and that judgment will come to people who do what is right in their own eyes.*
- ? **In what ways were the judges like Jesus?** *The judges were sent by God to deliver the Israelites from their own sinful rebellion. In the same way, Jesus was sent by God to deliver sinners from their rebellious state. We see God's grace and mercy toward sinners displayed in Jesus Christ.*
- ? **In what ways were the judges unlike Jesus?** *The judges were sinful, and they couldn't offer permanent deliverance, as shown by the people falling back into sin after the judges died.*
- ? **How can we connect the period of the judges to the message of the gospel?** *God has shown mercy to all who have sinned by sending Jesus Christ as the deliverer from the bondage to sin just as He sent the judges to free the Israelites. While we were still in sin, Christ died for us so that we could have peace with God. All of those who will cry out to God in recognition of their sin will be saved from the judgment that they deserved. God's mercy and grace are demonstrated in the work of Christ.*

I don't think things have changed much since then. Let me read these verses to you. Listen carefully. It was written long after the book of Judges and I believe it applies to us today. *Read 2 Timothy 3:1–5.*

The Bible says we are all sinners. We are still like the Israelites. Every time we sin we turn away from God. Yet, God is always ready to forgive us when we turn to Him. God is merciful toward sinners. He has shown His mercy through Jesus Christ, His Son, who died on the Cross that those who believe in Him may be forgiven and have eternal life. He is a great and wonderful, merciful and loving God.



2 Timothy 3:1–5



MEMORY VERSE

Joshua 1:8–9 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. 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

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Thank God for examples of His character in Scripture.
- Praise God for saving us from our own sinfulness.
- Ask God to give each person a better understanding of His mercy and grace.