



6

God Remains Faithful

Key Themes

- God is merciful toward sinners.

Key Passages

- Judges 3:7–11, 4:1, 8:33–35, 10:7, 10:10, 21:25;
2 Timothy 3:2–4

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe Israel's tendency to wander from God.
- Describe God's mercy toward Israel.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

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Students will practice the memory verse using the Memory Verse Cards.



Studying God's Word

page 5

During the 300-year period of Judges, Israel repeated a cycle: the Israelites sinning against God, God punishing them, the Israelites crying out to God for help, God delivering them, and then God providing rest in the land. For 300 years the Israelites continued to fall into sin and idolatry, repeating this cycle.



Activity 1: Israel's Cycle in Judges

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Students will complete the Israel's Cycle Activity Sheet after you study the lesson.



Activity 2: Cycle Relay Game

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Students will compete in teams to complete a Judges Cycle by answering questions about the lesson.

Lesson Preparation

WHAT YOU WILL DO

WHAT YOU WILL NEED



COME ON IN

- If you haven't done this, print and cut out the Memory Verse Cards from the Resource DVD-ROM for every 2–3 students.
- If you want to do this as an individual activity, make one set per student.

- Memory Verse Poster
- Memory Verse Cards in envelopes or small plastic bags



STUDYING GOD'S WORD

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.
- Print one Lesson Board Work Outline from the Resource DVD-ROM for your use.
- Print and cut out one set of six Judges Cycle Mini-Posters from the Resource DVD-ROM.
- Print and cut out the nine Judges Scripture Strips from the Resource DVD-ROM.

- Student Take Home Sheets
- Lesson Board Work Outline
- Six Judges Cycle Mini-Posters
- Nine Judges Scripture Strips
- Tape or poster putty



ISRAEL'S CYCLE IN JUDGES

- Print one Israel's Cycle Activity Sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student. Keep the answer key for your use.

- Israel's Cycle Activity Sheet for each student
- Israel's Cycle Activity Sheet Answer Key
- Pencils



CYCLE RELAY GAME

- Print the Cycle Relay Game Instructions from the Resource DVD-ROM for your use.
- Print and cut out two sets of Cycle Relay Game Cards from the Resource DVD-ROM.
- Trace the outlines of the Cycle Relay Game Cards on the board. Trace one full cycle for each team (see activity for instructions).

- Cycle Relay Game Instructions
- Two sets of Cycle Relay Game Cards
- Tape



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 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
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 put the Memory Verse Cards in order and recite the verses 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 Cards 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.



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

We heard about Gideon last week. He was the fifth judge that God appointed to His people. God used Gideon to protect the Israelites from the wicked and mean Midianites. Because of Gideon, God brought rest and peace to the land. But it didn't last for long. You see, the people were stubborn and disobedient. And soon after God brought protection and peace to them, they would turn their backs on God again. We are going to talk about this today. It was a cycle they were in. They kept doing the same thing over and over—for 300 years!

I'm going to show you how that cycle went. We'll call it Israel's Cycle in Judges. Listen carefully so you can help me complete these mini-posters by filling in the missing words once we get them on the board. *Place mini-poster 1 on the board.*

Israel would *turn* from God by sinning. The people would disobey Him and worship idols. They *turned* from God. *Put mini-poster 2 on the board.*

- ? What word goes in this first blank? *Read the statement aloud leaving out "turned." Fill in the blank with "turned."*

Yes, the Israelites turned from God by sinning. Then God would get angry and would punish them by bringing an enemy to defeat them. God punished the Israelites. *Put mini-poster 3 on the board.*

➤ 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.

➤ Because of the age and ability of 1st and 2nd graders to read and comprehend, we encourage you to read the Scriptures to the students. However, if you have strong readers, by all means have them participate by reading God's Word.

► You will be putting posters on the board that depict Israel's cycle of disobedience. This will help remind the students of the Israelites' dark time of idolatry and sin.

► Print the Lesson Board Work Outline from the Resource DVD-ROM for easier planning.

► As you explain the cycle of Israel's sinfulness and God's deliverance, you will put the mini-posters on the board. Emphasize the words that are missing so the students will be able to complete the statements.

? **What did God do to the Israelites?** *Read the statement aloud leaving out "punished." Fill in the blank with "punished."*

Yes, God punished the Israelites. After being punished, the Israelites would cry out to God to forgive them. They cried out to God. *Put mini-poster 4 on the board.*

? *Read the statement aloud leaving out "cried." What word goes here?* *Cried. Fill in the blank with "cried."*

The Israelites cried out and asked God for help because they were so miserable. They realized their sin and wanted another chance. Let's see what God would do to answer and help them.

Put mini-poster 5 on the board. God would raise up a judge, or a ruler, to deliver them.

? **What would the judge do for the people?** *Deliver them. Write "deliver" in the blank.*

God raised judges up to guide the people and lead them to victory over their enemies.

Put mini-poster 6 on the board. The judge would bring rest and peace to Israel after the victory. The rest and peace remained as long as the people were being obedient to the Lord.

? **So what did the judge bring to the land?** *Read the statement. What word goes in this blank?* *Rest. Fill in the blank with "rest."*

This was their cycle. The Israelites would remain faithful to God for a while after He delivered them from their enemies. But, they would soon forget and return to their sinful ways. This cycle continued for 300 years!

Every time they sinned, God had to punish them. But when they cried out to God, He would deliver them through a judge who could get them out of trouble and lead the nation back to rest. God faithfully raised up many judges for them in spite of their sinfulness and disobedience.

During this time, God was so patient even though they were so disobedient to Him. Let's review the cycle. It went on for 300 years like this. *Point to each phase of the cycle as you list these off.* 1) The Israelites would turn from God by sinning. 2) The Lord would become angry and punish them. 3) Then Israel would cry out to God for relief. 4) God would raise up a judge to deliver the people from their enemies. 5) And the Israelites would again praise God for the deliverance and rest He had given them.

Remember, last week we talked about Gideon and the Midianites. God gave the people a great victory over this wicked, mean nation. They were able to win the battle with trumpets, empty pitchers, and torches. It was amazing! So, you would think the people would be praising God for a long

time after that, right? Well, right after Gideon died, they changed. Listen to what God's true Word tells us. Turn to Judges 8:33–35. *Read the verses emphasizing "they did not remember God."*

- ? What did the people forget after Gideon died? *Judges 8:34. They did not remember the Lord their God.*

That's right. They forgot about God and the things He had done for them through Gideon. They turned back to their idols—worshipping other gods. And it is something they did over and over again.

We are going to read some different verses in Judges. I have the verses on these pieces of paper. I want you to try to read these for the class. I'll help you if you need help. *Pass out the Judges 3:7 and 4:1 Scripture Strips to the students who are comfortable reading.*

These two verses are about one of the steps in the cycle we talked about. See if you can figure out which one. *Have the students read the verses.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? What did the children of Israel do in both of these verses? *Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord.*

Yes. Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord. What a terrible thing! The people turned from God.

- ? Which part of the cycle is this? Who can tell me? Look at the board. *The Israelites turned from God by sinning. Read the mini-poster.*

The people did evil by turning away from God. They were worshipping false gods—they were not worshipping the true God who had saved them.

Now let's read two more verses from Judges. I wonder what part of the cycle this will be? *Pass out the Judges 3:8 and 10:7 Scripture Strips to be read.*

- ? These verses tell us something about the Lord. What is that? *He was angry.*

- ? And who was He angry at? Did you hear it? *Re-read the verses if necessary. Israel.*

Right. The Bible tells us the Lord was angry with the people of Israel. They had turned away from God.

- ? What do you think the Lord did after He got angry? Look up here at our cycle on the board. What did the Lord have to do because they sinned and disobeyed? *God had to punish the Israelites.*

Yes, God had to punish them because of their sin. *Refer to mini-poster 3 on the board.*

Judges 8:33–35

➤ You will pass out the Judges Scripture Strips from the Resource DVD-ROM during the following section.

Judges 3:7, 4:1

Judges 3:8, 10:7

Discover the Truth

Wow! We have read from the book of Judges that the people kept turning away from God. They sinned and disobeyed. And when they did, God had to punish their sin. As punishment God would send armies from other nations—like the Midianites in Gideon’s day—to take over the nation. The people would become slaves to the other nations. *Refer to the mini-posters on the board.*



READ THE WORD

Judges 3:9, 10:10

We are going to read two more verses. Who wants to read for me? What part of the cycle are we going to now? *Pass out the Judges 3:9 (with “creid out to the Lord” underlined) and 10:10 Scripture Strips to be read.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? What were the children of Israel doing in these verses? *Crying out to the Lord. Refer to mini-poster 4 on the board. Yes. When God finally would punish them by sending people to take over, they would cry out to the Lord. They knew that they had sinned against God. They knew that they had forsaken God, and they were sorry for their sin.*
- ? Remember, this cycle happened over and over again. What book of the Bible are we reading all of this from? *Refer to board work. Judges.*

Yes. All of this happened in the book of Judges. And it happened for 300 years!

Two more verses. What part of the cycle are we on? *Refer to the board work. God chose a judge to deliver the Israelites.*

Judges 2:16, 3:9

That’s right. I need two more volunteers to read. I’ll help you if you have trouble. *Pass out the Judges 2:16 and 3:9 (with “Lord raised up a deliverer” underlined) Scripture Strips to be read.*

- ? What does the Bible tell us God did when the people cried out to the Lord? *The Lord provided a judge or a deliverer.*
- Yes. The Lord raised up judges to deliver the people—just like our chart on the board says. Over and over, God would choose a judge to rule over the people and lead them to victory. God responded to His people with mercy and love even though they continued to turn from Him in sin. He is a very faithful God. *Refer to the board work.*
- ? There is still one more step in this cycle to read about. Which one is that? *God would give them rest. Refer to the mini-poster.*

One more verse from Judges that tells us what God did for the Israelites.

Who can help me with this? *Pass out the Judges 3:11 Scripture Strip to be read.*

- ? In this verse we see that something happened for 40 years. What was it?
The land had rest; the country was quiet.

God is amazing! After all of Israel's disobedience, He still would finally bring the people rest and quiet when they cried out to Him and told Him they were sorry. The people should have known that the Lord was on their side.

Discover the Truth

Refer again to the mini-poster board display. The Bible tells us all about the cycle of sin Israel was in during the time of the judges. The people turned from God again and again. God punished them for their sin, but when they cried out to Him, He would raise up another judge to help them. The judge would lead them in victory over the enemy and bring them out of the trouble and oppression they were in. The people were unfaithful to God, yet God remained faithful to them. This cycle went on for 300 years.



Israel's Cycle in Judges

MATERIALS

- Israel's Cycle Activity Sheet for each student
- Israel's Cycle Activity Sheet Answer Key
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Now you are going to complete these activity sheets about the cycle of Israel's history we just talked about. You can take these home and explain how faithful God was to His people for 300 years! All you need to do is match the shapes and write the correct words in the correct shape. That will help you complete the cycle.

After everyone has completed their activity sheets, have the students re-read the statements in the cycle together or call on individual students to read it.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

God sure is faithful. We know that He must punish sin, and He did punish the people when they forgot about Him and were disobedient to Him. But when they asked for forgiveness, God showed His mercy and kindness to forgive them and provide someone who would be able to lead them out of the trouble they were in. God provided judges for the people. We serve the same God as the people so long ago. And, God will be merciful to forgive us if we ask for His forgiveness.





Cycle Relay Game

MATERIALS

- Cycle Relay Game Instructions
- Two sets of Cycle Relay Game Cards
- Tape for a starting line on the floor and on the backs of the Cycle Relay Game Cards

INSTRUCTIONS

Please see the detailed instructions on the Cycle Relay Game Instructions.

Now we are going to play a relay game to help recognize the different phases Israel

repeated in the book of Judges. One at a time, you'll listen to a Scripture, choose the cycle card that goes with it, and tape it on the board. The first team to complete the cycle wins! *Explain how the game works—see the Cycle Relay Game Instructions on the Resource DVD-ROM.*

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

You did a good job recognizing the different parts of Israel's cycle in Judges. It was a sad cycle the people repeated for over 300 years.



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

Refer to the Lesson Theme Poster. So today we saw that Israel continued in the cycle of disobedience to God. Remember, this period of history lasted over 300 years! The people turned away from God to false gods, and so God would punish them by sending nations to conquer them and make their lives very difficult. The people would then cry out to God, and God would show His mercy and love by sending a judge who would deliver them from their enemies. And finally, God would give the land peace. Let's read through each of the steps in the cycle Israel repeated during the time of the judges. *Choose students to read each of the five steps.*

The five phases of Israel's cycle went on for over 300 years. And yet, God continued to be patient with the people and continued to show His mercy by delivering them over and over again from their enemies.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

In spite of God's willingness to forgive and show mercy and love to His people, the book of Judges does not end on a happy note. The very last verse of the book, 21:25, says, "In those days [there was] no king in Israel; everyone did [what was] right in his own eyes."

? What does the Bible mean by everyone was doing what was right in his own eyes? *Allow answers.*

It means that the people continued to do whatever they wanted and did not remain obedient to God. They continued in their ugly, self-centered sin.

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 1 Timothy 3:2–4. Review and explain some of the descriptions of men listed—lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.*

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 merciful toward sinners. He has shown His mercy through His Son Jesus Christ, who died on the Cross so 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 3:2–4

➤ Pass out the Student Take Home Sheets and remind the children 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 is good and loving and wants what is best for us.
- Thank God because He sent Jesus to die for our sins.
- Ask God to give us the strength and the power to obey His Word and turn away from our own evil desires.

