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## Forward

This book contains lessons from the period of Judges. Your class will discover that period of the Judges was a sad period of time in the lives of the children of Israel. The people did not have a strong leader, so they didn't have strong faith in God. Your kids will learn that it is not only important to have a good, strong, courageous leader who can show us the right way to live, but it's equally important to be a good follower – someone that always listens and obeys the leaders, who shows love and respect by always following the rules and not going off to do their own thing. Your students will be reminded that a good leader is one that follows Jesus and encouraged to be a good leader in their families, in their neighborhoods, or at their schools.

I have designed these lessons to enable you to teach the Bible expositionally. The idea is to have the kids read the passages in their own Bibles and the teacher explain the scriptures and give good practical applications that are age-appropriate. My goal is to ensure that children learn that God's Word is exciting and meaningful and that teachers teach sound doctrine!

Even though I've scripted the lessons, I don't expect teachers to read my lesson materials verbatim to the children as they teach. My lessons are meant to provide the details you need to get background information and some suggestions for child-oriented personal application. Once you know and understand the Bible lessons for yourself, you'll be ready to teach your class.

The two-column layout of this book is designed so that you can copy and cut the pages in half to fit into your Bible. When the children observe that you are teaching right out of the Bible, rather than from a curriculum book, it validates God's Word and gives your teaching more authority.

You will discover that there is not always a Craft or Game idea suggested in each lesson. When I've had a good idea that really seems to support the lesson objectives, I've included it. But I have another handbook called *Tips and Tricks — Making Children's Bible Lessons Come to Life* that gives lots of suggestions for activities that

will help reinforce your lesson and teach the memory verse. (This is available from my website:

<https://www.freechildrensministrylessons.com/>)

Use the Teaching Schedule to help you organize your teaching rotation.

I pray that you will use these lessons for God's glory by teaching the Bible as an entire plan by a systematic and connected study of the Word.

*Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. (Mark 10:14)*

*Sheila Scroggins*

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## Teaching Schedule

Date	Teacher	Lesson	Memory Verse
		Introduction to the Period of Judges (Joshua 23, 24; Judges 2)	<i>You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart. (Matthew 22:37).</i>
		Debora (Judges 4, 5)	<i>Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity. (1Timothy 4:12b NLT)</i>
		Gideon (part 1) (Judges 6)	<i>We may boldly say: "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" (Hebrews 13:6)</i>
		Gideon (part 2) (Judges 7)	<i>With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible. (Matthew 19:26)</i>
		Samson (Part 1) (Judges 13 – 15)	<i>Do not share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure. (1Timothy 5:22)</i>
		Samson (Part 2) (Judges 16)	<i>For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength. (Philippians 4:13)</i>
		Ruth (Part 1) (Ruth 1)	<i>A friend loves at all times. (Proverbs 17:17)</i>
		Ruth (Part 2) (Ruth 2-)	<i>Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved. (Acts 16:31)</i>



# Introduction to the Period of Judges

(Joshua 23, 24, Judges 2)

## Pre-Session Warm Up

[Teacher, have the children play *Follow the Leader*, but don't appoint a leader. See how confusing it is without one! Talk about the importance of having a good leader—one that will show them the right way to go. Also, talk about the importance of being a good follower. A leader is impotent without followers!]

How would it be if you were trying to lead some people who suddenly decided to follow their own way? Good followers always listen and obey their leaders; they show their love and respect by always following the rules! They don't go off and do their own thing.

## Opening Prayer

Father, Your word tells us that Jesus is the Way and that no one can come to You except by Him. Teach us this morning how important it is for us to be faithful followers of Jesus. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## Memory Verse

*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart. (Matthew 22:37).*

## Lesson

The children of Israel had finally settled into the Promised Land. Joshua, Israel's courageous leader, who had taken the people from the desert, across the Jordan River and into the land, had died. They had no leader now; they were on their own.

There would be many obstacles yet to be overcome in their new homeland. Joshua had failed to drive out all the Canaanites like God had told him to do; they were now living in among these heathen nations. How they would handle these obstacles would be a test of their faith.

Before Joshua died he reminded the people to always remember to love and obey God.

Joshua 23:11

*So be very careful to love the LORD your God.*

Joshua warned them not to follow after other gods; he told them what would happen if they didn't stay loyal to God.

Joshua 23:12-13

*"But if you turn away from him and cling to the customs of the survivors of these nations remaining among you, and if you intermarry with them, then know for certain that the LORD your God will no longer drive them out of your land. Instead, they will be a snare and a trap to you, a whip for your backs and thorny brambles in your eyes, and you will vanish from this good land the LORD your God has given you.*

And, the people promised to always love and obey God.

Joshua 24:24

*The people said to Joshua, "We will serve the LORD our God. We will obey him alone."*

For the next ten or twenty years after Joshua died, as long as Joshua's leaders were still alive, the children of Israel loved and obeyed God and all went well for them.

Judges 2:7

*And the Israelites served the LORD throughout the lifetime of Joshua and the leaders who outlived him—those who had seen all the great things the LORD had done for Israel.*

However, even though the children of Israel had promised God to love Him with all of their hearts, when their godly leaders had all died, and the next generation came into power, the people eventually broke their promise to God. They became close friends with the Canaanites who didn't even believe in God. Soon the children of Israel began worshiping Baal, a false god.

Judges 2:10-12

*After that generation died, another generation grew up who did not acknowledge the LORD or remember the mighty things he had done for*

*Israel. The Israelites did evil in the LORD's sight and served the images of Baal. They abandoned the LORD, the God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of Egypt. They went after other gods, worshiping the gods of the people around them. And they angered the LORD.*

After all that God had done for them, He no longer had first place in their hearts. Other gods, people, and things became more important.

Often you and I are just like those Israelites. When we first became God's children, we wanted to love and serve Him with all our hearts. But after a while, we let other people and things become more important until He no longer has first place.

Our idols are not made of wood or stone, but they are every bit as sinful. What are some things that take the place of God in our lives? What are some other activities, hobbies, or priorities we can have in our lives besides God? We may watch too much TV; we may become too busy to help people in need; we may want to play with our friends more than spending time reading our Bibles or praying.

If you become close friends with someone that doesn't know and love God, you will find that it may be very tempting to do things that displease God. You may desire to be accepted by your friends at school, for example, but remember, it's important for you to choose good friends – ones that love God, too.

God's Word says, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart" (Matthew 22:37). If you are His child, you should be loyal to God, giving Him first place in your life.

To be loyal means that you are true and faithful to the one who deserves your love and obedience. Why does God deserve your loyalty? [Teacher, discuss who God is and what He has done for you.]

God deserved the loyalty of the Israelites; He had proved Himself to be a mighty God on their behalf. But they were not loyal to Him. Instead they disregarded His command and followed their own ways!

And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel.

#### Judges 2:15

*Every time Israel went out to battle, the LORD fought against them, causing them to be defeated, just as he had warned. And the people were in great distress.*

Why would God become so angry? He was angry because His people were worshiping a lie. They were praying to things that weren't gods at all. He knew that they would only become disappointed and unhappy because the false gods couldn't answer their prayers.

If you are God's child, He desires your loyalty because He loves you and wants only what's best for you. That's why it's so important to be loyal to God. You need to always give Him first place in your life.

How do you stay loyal to God?

1. Stay close to God; spend time alone with Him each day reading His Word and praying to Him. Nothing should be more important than the time you spend with God.
2. Don't become close friends with kids who do not love and serve God. Stay away from the wrong things they try to get you to do.
3. Do what God says in His Word. Find out what God wants you to do, then serve Him by helping others with all your heart.

If only the Israelites had remained loyal to God – God wanted to bless them with good things, but now they were headed for trouble and heartache!

Because of their disloyalty to Him, God allowed the Israelites to feel fear, confusion, and frustration: they were defeated by the Canaanites.

In spite of the Israelites disobedience, God showed His great mercy by raising up judges to save the people from their enemies.

#### Judges 2:16

*Then the LORD raised up judges to rescue the Israelites from their attackers.*

God appointed leaders called *judges*. Judges were not kings; they were more like an umpire in a baseball game. They made decisions that helped bring peace and justice to the people. They were also leaders who led the people in battle against their enemies.

In the next few weeks we are going to learn about some of the judges that God raised up to lead the Israelites.

Judges 2:18

*Whenever the LORD raised up a judge over Israel, he was with that judge and rescued the people from their enemies throughout the judge's lifetime. For the LORD took pity on his people, who were burdened by oppression and suffering.*

God blessed the people when a judge was over them. But even though they promised to love only God, their loyalty never lasted.

Judges 2:19-22

*But when the judge died, the people returned to their corrupt ways, behaving worse than those who had lived before them. They went after other gods, serving and worshiping them. And they refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways. So the LORD burned with anger against Israel. He said, "Because these people have violated my covenant, which I made with their ancestors, and have ignored my commands, I will no longer drive out the nations that Joshua left unconquered when he died. I did this to test Israel—to see whether or not they would follow the ways of the LORD as their ancestors did."*

Israel went through several cycles of rebelling against God, being overrun by enemy nations, being delivered by a God-fearing judge, remaining loyal to God under that judge, and then, again forgetting God when the judge died.

We tend to follow the same cycle. We remain loyal to God as long as we are near those who are devoted to him. But when we are on our own, the pressure to be drawn away from God increases. That is why it is important for you to choose friends that encourage you to remain loyal to God no matter what.

How strong is your loyalty to God? Do you choose to say, "No!" to sin? Have you chosen friends that encourage you to stay loyal to

God? God desires and expects you to be loyal to Him and to give Him first place in your life.

## Closing Prayer

Father, please help us to remain loyal to You no matter what. Bring us friends who love and obey You. And help us to encourage our friends to be faithful to you, too. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## Learning Activities

### Game Center

#### ***Follow the Leader (or, alternate opening activity)***

Find an open space and have the students form a circle, sit down, facing each other.

Choose one student to be the "detective," and have them leave the room.

While the "detective" is in another room, choose a student from the circle to be the "leader" – the rest will be "followers".

Staying seated in the circle, have the "leader" begin leading the students in whatever actions they feel like doing, such as clapping, stomping, making funny faces, waving arms, etc.

Bring the "detective" back in and place them in the middle of the circle.

The detective's job is to determine who the "leader" is.

The "leader" may do as many actions as often as they like until they are discovered.

The trick for the "followers" is to avoid too much eye contact with the "leader," so as to keep the "detective" guessing.

Once the "leader" is found out, they become the "detective" and must leave the room. A new "leader" is chosen, and the game repeats.

**Balloon Score Review**

Prepare ten balloons by blowing them up and putting a piece of paper with a score inside each one. When a child answers a question for his team, he scores 100 points. He also chooses a balloon and bursts it to find his additional score.

Or, use the following questions in a game of your choice:

1. After Joshua died who became the leader of the children of Israel? (No one, they had no leader.)
2. Before Joshua died, what did he remind the people to always remember to do? (Love and obey God.)
3. What did Joshua warn the people would happen if they turned away from God? (God would not drive out their enemies before them. He would allow the people to be conquered by their enemies.)
4. Why didn't the children of Israel remember to love God with all their hearts? (All the godly leaders had died and they became close friends with people who didn't even believe in God. Soon they began worshipping false gods.)
5. Why did God become angry with the Israelites? (His own chosen people started worshipping a lie and God knew they would be disappointed.)
6. What could happen to us if we become close friends with people who don't know and love God? (We can be tempted to sin.)
7. What are some things that we can let take the place of God in our lives? (TV, toys, busyness, activities, hobbies, sports, friends.)
8. What does it mean to be loyal to God? (To give Him first place in our lives; to be true and faithful.)
9. Why does God deserve our loyalty? (He died for our sins. He loves us and only wants what's best for us.)
10. How do you stay loyal to God? (Stay close to Him, stay away from friends that aren't good for us, and do what He says in His word.)
11. How did God show His great mercy to the Israelites? (He raised up judges to save the people from their enemies.)
12. Tell me about the cycles that Israel went through starting with giving Him first place in their hearts.
  - a) **Faithful to God:** They stayed strong in their love and devotion for the Lord for a while.
  - b) **Forsake God:** Eventually, they became close friends with the Canaanites who didn't even believe in God.
  - c) **Trusting false gods (idols).** They began worshipping the false gods of the Canaanites.
  - d) **Conquered by enemies:** This made God angry, so He allowed the Canaanites to have victory over them, just as He had warned the people He would.
  - e) **Cry for mercy:** Then the people cried out to God for help. And in His mercy, God raised up a godly leader called a judge to lead the people in victory against their enemies. They stayed loyal to God under that judge's rule, but after that judge dies, they would lose interest in God again.



# Deborah

(Judges 4:1-16; 5:7)

## Pre-Session Warm Up

What do you think makes a person a good leader? [Teacher, lead the children in a discussion about leadership.] A good leader is someone who will show people the right way to go. So, a good leader must know the way himself. A good leader must be wise, courageous, and trustworthy.

A good leader is one that has faithful followers, too. How would it be if you were trying to lead some people who suddenly decided to follow their own way? Good followers always listen and obey their leaders; they show their love and respect by always following the rules! They don't go off and do their own thing.

Jesus is our leader. He has not only told us how to live our lives in a way that is pleasing to God, but He has also shown us the way to live, too. He is loving and kind. He also has all wisdom and is trustworthy.

Today we are going to look at Deborah, and see what made her such a good leader.

## Opening Prayer

Father, we want to be good leaders in our homes and at our schools. I pray that as we learn what made Deborah a good leader, we would try to be more like her because, Lord, we want our lives to please You. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## Memory Verse

*Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity. (1 Timothy 4:12b NLT)*

## Lesson

Last week we began a new series of lessons from the book of Judges. We learned that after Joshua died, the children of Israel were left without a strong leader.

We learned that during the Period of Judges, Israel went through several cycles of rebelling against God, being overrun by enemy nations, being delivered by a God-fearing judge, remaining loyal to God under that judge, and then, again forgetting God when the judge died.

*Judges* were not kings; they were more like an umpire in a baseball game. They made decisions that helped bring peace and justice to the people. They were also leaders who led the people in battle against their enemies.

This morning we pick up the story in Judges chapter 4, but don't open your bibles yet! First, just listen as I read this story to you. It's very exciting.

Judges 4 (The Living Bible translation)

*...the people of Israel again sinned against the Lord, so the Lord let them be conquered by King Jabin of Hazor, in Canaan. The commander-in-chief of his army was Sisera.... He had nine hundred iron chariots, and made life unbearable for the Israelites for twenty years. But finally, they begged the Lord for help.*

*Israel's leader at that time, the one who was responsible for bringing the people back to God, was Deborah, a prophetess... She held court at a place now called "Deborah's Palm Tree," ... and the Israelites came to her to decide their disputes.*

*One day she summoned Barak... and said to him, "The Lord God of Israel has commanded you to mobilize ten thousand men ... to fight King Jabin's mighty army with all his chariots, under General Sisera's command. The Lord says, 'I will draw them to the Kishon River, and you will defeat them there.'"*

*"I'll go, but only if you go with me!" Barak told her.*

*"All right," she replied "I'll go with you..."*

*When Barak summoned the ... ten thousand men... Deborah marched with them....*

*When General Sisera was told that Barak and his army were camped at Mount Tabor, he mobilized his entire army, including the nine hundred iron chariots...*

*Then Deborah said to Barak, "Now is the time for action! The Lord leads on! He has already delivered Sisera into your hand!"*

*So Barak led his ten thousand men down the slopes of Mount Tabor into battle. Then the Lord threw the enemy into a panic, both the soldiers and the charioteers, and Sisera leaped from his chariot and escaped on foot. Barak and his men chased the enemy and the chariots... until all of Sisera's army was destroyed; not one man was left alive.*

*... So that day the Lord used Israel to subdue King Jabin of Canaan. And from that time on Israel become stronger and stronger....*

Please open your Bibles to Judges 4. [Teacher, in this lesson you may have to do most of the reading as there are many hard names for the children to pronounce.]

Judges 4:1

*After Ehud's death, **the Israelites again did evil in the LORD's sight.***

Before he died, Joshua had reminded the children of Israel to remain loyal to God. He warned them that if they turned away from God it would bring terrible disaster onto them. And that's just what happened.

Judges 4:2

*So the **LORD turned them over to King Jabin** of Hazor, a Canaanite king. The commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-haggoyim*

God was not first place in their hearts and they started worshipping Baal! It made God so angry at them that He allowed Jabin, the king of Canaan, to overcome them and place them under the harsh rule of his army captain, Sisera.

Judges 4:3

*Sisera, who had 900 iron chariots, ruthlessly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years. Then the people of **Israel cried out to the LORD for help.***

After 20 years of Jabin's harsh treatment, the people finally *cried out to the Lord for help.* And, God, in His mercy, sent them a woman named Deborah to be a judge over them.

Let's see what made Deborah such a good leader. As we talk about Deborah, I'll write her leadership qualities on the white board.

Judges 4:4

*Deborah, the wife of Lappidoth, was a **prophet** who was **judging** Israel at that time.*

### **Prophet and Judge**

Verse 4 tells us that Deborah she was both a prophet and a judge.

### **Prophet**

Does anyone know what a prophet is? A prophet is not only someone who can tell you what is going to happen in the future, but a prophet also represents God and speaks forth from Him. When a prophet speaks, you should listen.

Deborah was a good leader because she was inspired by God to tell people what God's plan was; and, she reminded people of God's goodness and encouraged them to live for God!

### **Judge**

Verse 4 also tells us that Deborah "*was judging Israel at that time*". People came to her for advice. They trusted her. If two people were arguing about something, they could come to her and she would settle their disagreement and help them make Godly choices; ones that were pleasing to God.

**Wise**

She was a wise woman.

Do you know how you get wisdom? The Bible tells us that we get wisdom by spending time with God (Proverbs 9:10). She must have spent a lot of time seeking God for His wisdom. I bet she read His word and talked to Him in prayer often. And I bet she didn't gossip. When people came to her and told her about their problems, I'm sure she didn't go spreading their issues around to other people. I'm sure she kept people's secrets confident.

**Respected**

Deborah was a highly respected woman.

Judges 4:5

*She would sit under the Palm of Deborah, between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the **Israelites would go to her for judgment.***

The people respected Deborah's wisdom because they came to her for advice and counsel. She helped them know what to do. They had faith in Deborah's advice. She was so well known that the palm tree was named after her, "the Palm of Deborah." People wouldn't have come to her if they didn't believe that she would help them.

**Listener**

I bet Deborah was also a good listener. She had to listen to both sides of an argument before she could decide the cases she was hearing. She was **fair** and **just**, too.

**Trustworthy**

First of all, we know that God trusted Deborah; He gave her His battle plans and a promise of victory!

Judges 4:6-7

*One day she sent for Barak son of Abinoam, who lived in Kedesh in the land of Naphtali. She said to him, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, commands you: Call out 10,000 warriors from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun at Mount Tabor. And I will call out Sisera, commander of Jabin's army, along with his chariots and warriors, to the Kishon River. There I will give you victory over him."*

God told Deborah to send for Barak, an army general. She told him to mobilize an army of 10,000 warriors. Then she encouraged Barak with God's promise of victory against General Sisera.

And we can tell that Barak trusted Deborah, too.

Judges 4:8

*Barak told her, "I will go, but only if you go with me."*

Barak asked Deborah to go with him to help rally the troops as God commanded. Barak obviously trusted Deborah because he told her he wouldn't go to battle without her.

**Brave**

Deborah was very brave.

Judges 4:9-10

*"Very well," she replied, "I will go with you. But you will receive no honor in this venture, for the LORD's victory over Sisera will be at the hands of a woman." So Deborah went with Barak to Kedesh. At Kedesh, Barak called together the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali, and 10,000 warriors went up with him. Deborah also went with him.*

She bravely went with Barak into battle and marched with the warriors. That is impressive because in those days women didn't go into battle with the men.

### **Confidence in God**

Deborah had confidence in God, not in herself.

Judges 4:14

*Then Deborah said to Barak, “Get ready! This is the day the LORD will give you victory over Sisera, for the LORD is marching ahead of you.” So Barak led his 10,000 warriors down the slopes of Mount Tabor into battle.*

Deborah encouraged Barak to obey God. She cheered Barak on and reminded him that God was going to give them the victory.

What a great leader Deborah was! Why do you think the army was so willing to follow her into battle? She was trusting in God! She believed it when He told her that He was going to give them the victory over their enemies—she had confidence in God!

Deborah did not let the fact that she was a woman, keep her from taking charge as God directed. Deborah listened carefully to God’s instructions and had total confidence in God’s ability to give victory, even in the face of death.

### **Loved God**

Deborah loved God and worshipped Him. Chapter 5 records a beautiful victory song that she composed and sang. We won’t read the whole song, as that would take too long. But I want to draw your attention to one verse where she describes herself.

Judges 5:7

*There were few people left in the villages of Israel—until Deborah arose as a mother for Israel.*

In her song, she describes herself as a “mother to Israel.” What comes to your mind when you think of a mother? A mother is someone who is in authority over others. A mother is someone who is loving and kind; someone who takes care of and protects people;

someone who lays down her life for others. Deborah was like a mother to the people.

God used Deborah as a brave leader to deliver the people of Israel. And after the victory over Jabin and Sisera, Israel had peace for 40 years (Judges 5:31).

How can you grow up to be a great leader that others will respect and follow? [Teacher, review the memory verse and the list of leadership qualities on the white board.]

To be a good leader for God, you must first and always be a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You can ask God to help you be a good leader for Him. Look for opportunities this week to be a good example in all that you think, say, and do. You can be a good example for others as you follow your leader, the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Closing Prayer**

Father, Deborah was a faithful follower of You – she listened for Your voice and did what you commanded. This made Deborah a good leader. Lord, we want to follow Deborah example.

Help us to be good leaders in our homes and at school. Give us opportunities to be good examples to our friends as well as to our brothers and sisters. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

### **Learning Activities**

#### **Game Center**

##### **Buzz Me**

Divide the children into two teams. Place two chairs in front of a table, one for each team. On the table place a buzzer or bell. (If you do not have a buzzer or bell, they can just slap the table.)

Have one contestant from each team sit in the chairs. Ask a question and the first child to hit the buzzer, attempts to answer the question. If he gets a correct answer his team earns 1,000 points. If he answers incorrectly, the other team may attempt to answer. If they answer correctly, they get 500 points. Otherwise, the round is over.

Or, use the following questions in a game of your choice:

1. What did the children of Israel do to sin against the Lord? (They turned their backs on the only true God, and started to worship the false gods of the Canaanites.)
2. What did God do when the people finally called out to Him for help? (God in His mercy sent them a woman named Deborah to be a judge over them.)
3. What is a *Judge*? (Someone like an umpire in a baseball game; she settled people's differences and arguments.)
4. It says in verse 4 that Deborah was a prophetess. What is a prophet? (A prophet is someone who is inspired by God to tell you what God's will is. A prophet encourages people to obey God.)
5. What was the tree called that she sat under? ("The palm tree of Deborah.")
6. What makes you think that Deborah was highly respected? (People came to her for advice.)
7. Why do you think that God gave Deborah His battle plans rather than speaking directly to Barak? (Deborah spent time with God listening to His voice and doing what He commanded; He had confidence in her; she was His chosen messenger.)
8. What did God tell Deborah to tell Barak? (To mobilize an army against Jabin.)
9. When Deborah told Barak that God wanted him to go into battle, what did Barak say? (He wouldn't go to battle without her!)
10. How did Deborah encourage Barak and the army? (She cheered them on and reminded them that God was going to give them the victory.)
11. Why do you think the army was so willing to follow Deborah, a woman, into battle? (Deborah listened carefully to God's instructions and had total confidence in God's ability to give victory.)
12. What did Deborah do after the victory to express her love to God? (She composed and sang a beautiful victory song.)
13. In that song, how does Deborah describe herself? (As a mother to Israel)
14. How could you be a good leader in your home, in school, or here at church? (First of all you need to be a good follower of Jesus. Then look for opportunities to be a good example in all that you think, say and do.)



# Gideon (Part 1)

(Judges 6)

## Pre-Session Warm Up

If someone came up to you and asked you, "Why do you believe the Bible?" What would you say? Would you be able to tell someone why you believe that Jesus is God and that He came to die for their sins?

How important do you think it is to be a bold witness for the Lord? Do you have fears about standing up for your belief in Jesus? What are some of the fears you have? [Teacher, lead the children in a discussion about the importance of being true to God no matter what others may think.]

You can know that God's Word is true and that He wants you to be bold enough to take a stand for Him. God doesn't want you to be afraid.

In today's lesson we will learn that Gideon was afraid and he needed help to be bold for God.

## Opening Prayer

Father, You always want us to choose to say and do the right thing, no matter what other people may think. Sometimes it's hard to take a stand for You, but You want us to be bold and always do what is right and pleasing to You. We don't ever want to be ashamed of You. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## Memory Verse

*"The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"  
(Hebrews 13:6 NIV).*

## Lesson

For the past 2 weeks we have been studying the book of Judges. This is the time period for the children of Israel after Joshua had died and the people were left with no leader.

They would go through cycles of trusting and obeying God, then after a while they would forget about Him. Soon, the Israelites would even start to worship the false gods of their enemies. That would make God angry, so He would allow the heathen nations around them to conquer them. And, the heathen nations would treat the children of Israel harshly until finally they would cry out to the Lord for mercy. And, even though they didn't deserve it, God, in His mercy, would send the children of Israel a judge.

Judges were not kings; they were more like an umpire in a baseball game. They made decisions that helped bring peace and justice to the people. They were also leaders who led the people in battle against their enemies.

Last week we learned about a judge named Deborah. She was a great leader. She was trustworthy, brave, fair and just. The people loved her. They would come to her for advice and she led them into battle.

In Judges 5:31 it says that with Deborah, "...*there was peace in the land for forty years.*"

But now we pick up the story after Deborah had died and the people were left with no leader once again.

Judges 6:1

*The Israelites did evil in the LORD's sight. So the LORD handed them over to the Midianites for seven years.*

God used His enemies to discipline His chosen people!

Judges 6:2

*The Midianites were so cruel that the Israelites made hiding places for themselves in the mountains, caves, and strongholds.*

The Midianites were so cruel that the children of Israel took to the mountains, to hide in caves and dens.

Judges 6:3-4

*Whenever the Israelites planted their crops, marauders from Midian, Amalek, and the people of the east would attack Israel, camping in the land and destroying crops as far away as Gaza. They left the Israelites with nothing to eat, taking all the sheep, goats, cattle, and donkeys.*

The poor Israelites! Every time they planted their seed, robbers came and destroyed their crops, leaving nothing to eat, and taking away all their farm animals.

Judges 6:6

*So Israel was reduced to starvation by the Midianites. Then the Israelites cried out to the LORD for help.*

For seven years the Midianites had destroyed the crops and stolen the people's farm animals. They left the Israelites to starve. The Israelites were frightened and many had fled from their homes. They were forced to hide out in the mountains and live in caves. The Israelites had lost everything. Finally they cried out to the Lord for mercy.

How much suffering they could have avoided if they had turned to Him sooner! Turning to God should not be our last resort; we should look to him for help every day!

Do you think God heard their prayers? God always hears the prayers of those who love Him. He heard their prayers just as He hears your prayers when you pray.

Not long after this, Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress in order to hide it from the Midianites.

Normally, you thresh wheat out in the open. Threshing is the process of separating the grains of wheat from its useless outer shell called chaff. First a farmer beats the wheat, and then he tosses it in the air so the wind will blow away the chaff and the heavier wheat seeds can fall to the ground. Normally, a farmer does this out in a large area, often on a hill. If Gideon had done this, however, he would have been

an easy target for the bands of raiders who were overrunning the land. Therefore, he was forced to thresh his wheat in a winepress where he was hidden from view.

Gideon was frightened. Have you ever been afraid to take a bold stand for God? Being bold for God means doing or saying what is right with strength and courage no matter what other people may think. You may be the only one in your class who believes in Jesus. But you don't have to be ashamed to tell others what you believe. God wants you to be bold for Him.

Gideon was fearful so he worked in hiding.

But, while Gideon worked, suddenly a being appeared before him.

Judges 6:12

*The angel of the LORD appeared to him and said, "Mighty hero, the LORD is with you!"*

This is kind of funny in that the Angel of the Lord found Gideon hiding out in a winepress. It doesn't seem like he's a brave and mighty man!

Judges 6:13

*"Sir," Gideon replied, "if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? And where are all the miracles our ancestors told us about? Didn't they say, 'The LORD brought us up out of Egypt'? But now the LORD has abandoned us and handed us over to the Midianites."*

Gideon is blaming God for the bad situation the children of Israel have gotten themselves into. How easy it is for us to blame God for our problems! The Israelites had no one to blame but themselves. They were the ones that had forgotten God and had started worshipping the false gods of the Midianites.

Judges 6:14

*Then the LORD turned to him and said, "Go with the strength you have, and rescue Israel from the Midianites. I am sending you!"*

The Lord encouraged Gideon to go in the strength of the Lord, to have confidence that God was sending him and would give him the power and strength to accomplish His will.



## Judges 6:15

*“But Lord,” Gideon replied, “how can I rescue Israel? My clan is the weakest in the whole tribe of Manasseh, and I am the least in my entire family!”*

Gideon is saying, “Who am I to deliver Israel? My family is poor and I am just a simple man.”

## Judges 6:16

*The LORD said to him, “I will be with you. And you will destroy the Midianites as if you were fighting against one man.”*

Once again the Lord encouraged Gideon not to trust in himself, but to trust in the Lord who was sending him.

God promised to give Gideon the strength he needed to overcome the Midianites. But, in spite of this clear promise from God, Gideon made excuses. He was only looking at himself. He saw only his own inabilities and weaknesses; he failed to see how God could work through him. He wasn't trusting and believing in God, was he?

How different Gideon was from Deborah. Deborah had great faith and trust in God; Gideon didn't.

## Judges 6:17

*Gideon replied, “If you are truly going to help me, show me a sign to prove that it is really the LORD speaking to me.”*

So Gideon goes off and prepares a meal for the Angel of the Lord and brings it to Him.

## Judges 6:19

*Gideon hurried home. He cooked a young goat, and with a basket of flour he baked some bread without yeast. Then, carrying the meat in a basket and the broth in a pot, he brought them out and presented them to the angel, who was under the great tree*

## Judges 6:20

*The angel of God said to him, “Place the meat and the unleavened bread on this rock, and pour the broth over it.” And Gideon did as he was told.*

## Judges 6:21

*Then the angel of the LORD touched the meat and bread with the tip of the staff in his hand, and fire flamed up from the rock and consumed all he had brought. And the angel of the LORD disappeared.*

Now that would have been enough to convince most people that this person talking to Gideon was no mere human being. This Angel of the Lord was an appearance of God Himself!

Later that night the Lord spoke to Gideon and told him to pull down the altars that his father had built to the false gods. And he obeyed.

## Judges 6:27

*So Gideon took ten of his servants and did as the LORD had commanded. But he did it at night because he was afraid of the other members of his father's household and the people of the town.*

So, here again, Gideon shows himself to be a coward, doesn't he?

The next morning when everyone woke up, they found the altars to the Midianite gods destroyed and the men of the city were outraged. They wanted to kill Gideon.

## Judges 6:33

*Soon afterward the armies of Midian, Amalek, and the people of the east formed an alliance against Israel and crossed the Jordan, camping in the valley of Jezreel.*

The enemies were preparing for battle.

## Judges 6:34

*Then the Spirit of the LORD clothed Gideon with power. He blew a ram's horn as a call to arms, and the men of the clan of Abiezer came to him*

What verse 34 says is that “*the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon; then he blew the trumpet*” to call the children of Israel to action. Gideon started to assemble his army. But Gideon wanted to be absolutely sure he was doing God's work exactly in God's way. He wanted to be sure God was with him. So, he prayed and asked God to give him a sign.

**Judges 6:36-37**

*Then Gideon said to God, "If you are truly going to use me to rescue Israel as you promised, prove it to me in this way. I will put a wool fleece on the threshing floor tonight. If the fleece is wet with dew in the morning but the ground is dry, then I will know that you are going to help me rescue Israel as you promised."*

God was faithful to do just as Gideon requested.

**Judges 6:38**

*And that is just what happened. When Gideon got up early the next morning, he squeezed the fleece and wrung out a whole bowlful of water.*

The next morning the fleece was very wet. Gideon could wring water from it! Still Gideon was not completely sure. He prayed that God would give him another sign.

**Judges 6:39**

*Then Gideon said to God, "Please don't be angry with me, but let me make one more request. Let me use the fleece for one more test. This time let the fleece remain dry while the ground around it is wet with dew."*

Again, God was faithful to do just as Gideon asked. God wants us to have faith and trust in Him.

**Judges 6:40**

*So that night God did as Gideon asked. The fleece was dry in the morning, but the ground was covered with dew.*

The next day the ground was wet and the fleece was dry. Now Gideon knew for sure that God would be with him and that God had chosen him to lead an army against the Midianites. God wanted Gideon to know that He was his strength.

But Gideon didn't show his faith and trust in God very quickly, did he? We don't have to guess or wonder if God loves us and will keep His promise to never leave us or forsake us. We can have faith that God will always enable us to do His will. God will help you to be bold for Him. You can know that He is with you everywhere you are and will help you do or say the right thing. [Teacher, review today's memory verse.] God wants you to be bold and do what is right.

Gideon was learning to be bold and God was going to use him greatly. Next week we will learn about the exciting battle Gideon has with the Midianites.

**Closing Prayer**

Father, there are going to be times in our lives when we need to take a bold stand for You. But we don't want to be ashamed of believing in You. Help us learn, as Gideon learned, that you are our strength. Help us to say as Isaiah said, "I will trust and not be afraid." We want to become bold witnesses for You. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

**Learning Activities****Craft Corner****Game Center**

Use the following questions in a game of your choice:

1. When the Israelites did evil in the sight of the Lord how many years did God give them into the hands of the Midianites?
  - a) seven
  - b) fourteen
  - c) twenty
2. The Midianites
  - a) Were kind to the Israelites
  - b) Ruined their crops and took all their animals
  - c) Killed their children

- 
3. When the Israelites cried to the Lord, His response was:
    - a) "Too bad, I'm not going to help you."
    - b) "Since you've obeyed Me, I'll help you."
    - c) "Do not worship the gods of the Amorites."
  4. Who did the Angel of the Lord appear to and say, "The Lord is with you, mighty man of valor!"
    - a) Gideon
    - b) John
    - c) Moses
  5. When the Lord told Gideon He was sending him to save Israel, Gideon said:
    - a) "Yes, I am well able."
    - b) "I don't believe you."
    - c) "Give me a sign."
  6. Which of these things did the Lord NOT command Gideon to do?
    - a) Tear down his father's altar to Baal
    - b) Build an altar to the Lord
    - c) Offer a pigeon for a burnt offering
    - d) Offer a bull for a burnt offering
  7. What did the town's people want to do to Gideon when they saw he had pulled down the altars to their false gods?
    - a) They rejoiced and wanted to make him their leader.
    - b) They were mad and wanted to kill him.
  8. What sign did Gideon ask from God before he fought the Midianites:
    - a) Dew on a wool fleece
    - b) Fire on the altar
    - c) A pot of gold



# Gideon (Part 2)

(Judges 7)

## Pre-Session Warm Up

Can God do mighty things? [Teacher, help the children discover what a mighty God we have.] He created the whole universe; He put the sun and the moon and the stars in place with the flick of His fingers (Psalm 8). Can God do miracles? [Teacher, lead the children in a discussion of what miracles are and let them give you examples from their own lives.] Every time God heals a scraped knee or a broken bone, it is a miracle.

Today we are going to learn how God used Gideon, a cowardly man, and his tiny army to deliver the people of Israel from the hands of mighty enemy forces.

## Opening Prayer

Father, You are a mighty God and You want us to know that we can depend on You to do mighty things in our lives and through our lives. Show us how trustworthy You are this morning, so that we will put our faith in You, no matter what. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## Memory Verse

*With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.  
(Matthew 19:26).*

## Lesson

For the past 3 weeks we have been studying the book of Judges. This is the time period for the children of Israel after Joshua had died and the people were left with no leader. During the times of the Judges, the people would go through periods of trusting and obeying God, then after a while they would forget about Him. Soon, the Israelites would even start to worship the false gods of their enemies. That would make God angry, so He would allow the enemy nations around them to conquer them.

And, the enemy nations would treat the children of Israel harshly until finally they would cry out to the Lord for mercy. And, even though they didn't deserve it, God, in His mercy, would send the children of Israel a judge.

Judges were not kings; they were more like an umpire in a baseball game. They made decisions that helped bring peace and justice to the people. They were also leaders who led the people in battle against their enemies.

First we learned about a judge named Deborah. She was a great leader. She was trustworthy, brave, fair and just. The people loved her.

Last week we learned that the armies of Midian, Amalek and other nations from the East united in one vast army against Israel. When the people cried out to the Lord for help, He sent them a judge named Gideon.

Gideon was not a brave man. But God promised Gideon that He would use him in a mighty way to deliver the Israelites out from under the harsh rule of the Midianites. However, Gideon wasn't willing to believe God's promise right away. Gideon had to keep asking God for proof of His love and care.

Gideon decided to test the Lord to see if He was really telling Gideon the truth. He laid out a fleece overnight and told the Lord that if the fleece was wet, but the ground around it was dry, then he would believe the Lord. So, the Lord did as Gideon asked. But Gideon wasn't convinced. So, he asked for just the opposite the next night, he laid out the fleece a second time and told the Lord that if the fleece was dry, but the ground around it was wet, then he would believe the Lord. So the Lord did as Gideon asked the second time. And Gideon had no choice but to trust God.

Remember that when God asks you to do something difficult, He will help you do it. God wanted Gideon to trust Him and He wants you to trust Him, too.

Gideon then gets his fighting force together. And we pick up story in Judges 7

## Judges 7:2

*The LORD said to Gideon, "You have too many warriors with you. If I let all of you fight the Midianites, the Israelites will boast to me that they saved themselves by their own strength."*

Gideon was probably shocked to hear God tell him that he had too many soldiers in his army. Gideon only had 32,000 men compared to the 135,000 Midianite soldiers! Gideon probably thought he needed more men, but God told him he had too many men!

God wanted to make sure that it was very unlikely Gideon could win the war without His help. Why? Because God didn't want Gideon or the children of Israel to take credit for the victory.

## Judges 7:3

*Therefore, tell the people, "Whoever is timid or afraid may leave this mountain and go home." So 22,000 of them went home, leaving only 10,000 who were willing to fight.*

Many of the soldiers were glad to hear Gideon's words because they were afraid and wanted to go home. In fact, twenty-two thousand men went home, leaving only 10,000 men. After those soldiers left camp, Gideon was probably sure he needed every soldier that was left to fight the vast army of the Midianites.

## Judges 7:4

*But the LORD told Gideon, "There are still too many! Bring them down to the spring, and I will test them to determine who will go with you and who will not."*

## Judge 7:5

*When Gideon took his warriors down to the water, the LORD told him, "Divide the men into two groups. In one group put all those who cup water in their hands and lap it up with their tongues like dogs. In the other group put all those who kneel down and drink with their mouths in the stream."*

## Judges 7:6

*Only 300 of the men drank from their hands. All the others got down on their knees and drank with their mouths in the stream.*

## Judges 7:7

*The LORD told Gideon, "With these 300 men I will rescue you and give you victory over the Midianites. Send all the others home."*

The men who put their face in the stream could have easily been ambushed by the enemy. The men who drank from their hands were able to keep a lookout for the enemy. Those were the men that God wanted in His army. And there were only 300 in all!

## Judges 7:8

*So Gideon collected the provisions and rams' horns of the other warriors and sent them home. But he kept the 300 men with him. The Midianite camp was in the valley just below Gideon.*

That night while the troops were sleeping, God told Gideon to take one of his servants and spy out the Midianite camp.

## Judges 7:9

*That night the LORD said, "Get up! Go down into the Midianite camp, for I have given you victory over them!"*

Gideon obeyed and saw that there were more tents in the enemy camp than he could count. It would be a miracle if he could win the battle with an army of only three hundred men.

In the darkness as Gideon sneaked into the enemy camp, he could hear two men talking in their tent. One of the men had just awakened and was telling the other man about a dream he'd just had.

## Judges 7:13

*Gideon crept up just as a man was telling his companion about a dream. The man said, "I had this dream, and in my dream a loaf of barley bread came tumbling down into the Midianite camp. It hit a tent, turned it over, and knocked it flat!"*

## Judges 7:14

*His companion answered, "Your dream can mean only one thing—God has given Gideon son of Joash, the Israelite, victory over Midian and all its allies!"*

God gave Gideon assurance that He was going to give the Israelites the victory! When Gideon heard this, he had confidence; he was ready to fight the Midianites with the three hundred men.

Gideon then divided the soldiers into three groups. To each man he gave a trumpet, an empty clay jar and a torch. Then he explained the battle plans. They were to surround the enemy camp on three sides in the darkness. They were to light their torches and hide them inside the clay jars. Then when Gideon gave the signal, they were to blow their trumpets, break the jars and show their torches and shout, "The sword of the Lord and Gideon!"

The Midianites awoke with a start at the sound of the trumpets, the breaking pitchers and the shouting. When they saw the flare of torches all around them, they thought a huge army had come against them. They were terrified and started fighting each other. Many soldiers were killed in their own camp.

Judges 7:21

*Each man stood at his position around the camp and watched as all the Midianites rushed around in a panic, shouting as they ran to escape.*

Gideon's army simply watched as the Midianites fell into panic, confusion, and disorder. Not one of Gideon's men had to draw a sword to defeat the enemy. Gideon's small army could never have brought about such a victory in their own strength. God wanted to show Israel that victory depends not on human strength or numbers, but on trust and obedience in God.

Gideon and his men won the battle because God had been with them and helped them. God didn't need a huge army to be successful. All he needed was people who trusted and obeyed him, even when the battle plan didn't make sense to them.

It didn't make any sense to Gideon that God would reduce the size of his army from 32,000 to 300 men. But God wanted to be sure that Gideon and all of the children of Israel knew that their victory against the Midianites wasn't because of their strength. God wanted them to know that they were totally dependent upon the Lord, that God was their strength!

That's the same for us today. God wants us to trust and obey Him completely, even when we think we might have a better way. Gideon thought he needed a much bigger army. But God gave him the victory with only a few men.

Anything that any of us does well is because God has given us the ability. Do you do well in school? Are you good at sports? Can you play the piano? Or sing? Everything that you have accomplished in life is because of God! Remember, we are all dependent on God for every breath that we take, for every moment we're awake. God will give you what you need to be successful in life. You can depend on Him.

After this successful battle, Gideon was the judge in Israel for the next forty years.

## Closing Prayer

Father, You want us to learn that we are dependent on You for everything. Help us to trust and obey You, even when we think that we know better than You. Help us to remember that we are totally dependent on You for everything in life. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## Learning Activities

### Object Lesson

#### *Fear Fights Our Faith*

*Supplies:* 2 empty plastic water bottles, one with a cap. Rubber glove with **F E A R** written on each of the 4 knuckles of the fingers.

**Say:** See these two bottles? They both look the same, but one is different. The one with the cap is full of faith! You can't see it right now, but it's there. The other bottle is empty; it has no faith.

**Do:** Put on the glove making a fist to show the word **FEAR**.

**Say:** Gideon was a man who was afraid; he did not have much faith. He even hid when the Angel called his name. Fear fights our faith.

**Do:** Raise your gloved hand; show them that you are about to hit the empty bottle without the cap.

**Say:** What do you think will happen if FEAR grips someone without faith? [Let the children respond.]

**Do:** Squeeze the bottle.

**Say:** The bottle was crushed; that's because we need faith to fight fear back.

**Say:** What do you think will happen if FEAR grips someone that is full of faith? [Let the children respond.]

**Do:** Squeeze the bottle with the cap.

**Say:** FEAR could not crush it. In fact, it doesn't even look like it hurt it at all.

You see, with faith we get strength from God. Jesus once said to His disciples, "*Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?*" (Mark 4:40) We cannot see faith itself, but we can see what faith produces in us. It gives us strength, courage, peace of mind, and self-control. We do not need to worry or be afraid of anything when we have faith in Jesus. Why? Because we have faith that God will give us the victory!

### Game Center

Use the following questions in a game of your choice:

1. Gideon had 32,000 men willing to fight the Midianites but God said:
  - a) "There are too many men."
  - b) "There are not enough men."
2. How many left when God told Gideon, "Anyone who is afraid can leave"?
  - a) Nobody left
  - b) 22,000 left.

c) 2,000 left.

3. When God said, "There are still too many" Which ones got to stay? Those that:
  - a) Lapped water like a dog
  - b) Kneeled down and drank
4. What did Gideon's men NOT have to do win the battle?
  - a) Blow their trumpets
  - b) Break their jars so the light would shine
  - c) Shout
  - d) Draw their swords and charge
5. True or False: The Midianites throughout the camp turned on each other with their swords.

### Other Game Questions

1. First, Gideon's army had 32,000 men in it. Why did 20,000 men go home? (The Lord said that the army was too big so Gideon told all of those who were afraid to go home.)
2. Why didn't God allow Gideon to take all 32,000 of his men into battle? (He didn't want the Israelites to boast that they saved themselves by their own strength.)
3. Which soldiers were allowed to leave and go back home? (Anyone that was timid or afraid to fight the Midianites.)
4. How did Gideon choose the final 300 that would fight the Midianites? (By the way they drank water. If they cupped the water in their hands and lapped it up they stayed in the army. If they put their faces down in the water, they had to go home.)
5. Why was it better for a soldier to lap water from his hands than to bend over the river? (He could still keep a look out for the enemy.)



6. What happened when Gideon went down to the Midianite camp to spy on them? (He heard two Midianites talking about a dream.)
7. How did God give Gideon assurance that He was going to give the Israelites the victory? (The Midianite man dreamed that a loaf of bread rolled down and smashed his tent.)
8. What did Gideon's army take with them into battle? (A trumpet, a clay jar, and a torch.)
9. Explain the battle plans. (1. Divide into 3 groups and surround the Midianite camp; 2. light the torches and hide them in the clay jar; 3. At Gideon's signal, (a) blow the trumpets, (b) break the jars, (c) show the torches, and (d) shout, "*The sword of the Lord and Gideon.*")
10. Why didn't Gideon and his men have to draw their swords? (When the Midianites heard the trumpets and saw the torches, they started fighting and killing each other and then they ran away.)



# Samson (Part 1)

(Judges 13 - 15)

## Pre-Session Warm Up

Do you want to live your life in a way that pleases the Lord? Every day you are faced with choices to do right or do to wrong. What do you do to make sure that you don't think or say or do anything that is displeasing to God? [Teacher, lead the children in a discussion of how to make right choices.] If you were on your way to school and a friend said, "Hey, let's go over to the grocery store and see if we can steal some candy!" What would you do?

In today's lesson we are going to learn about a man named Samson, who made wrong choices that got him into real trouble. He didn't even try to live his life in a way that pleased God. He made bad choices.

## Opening Prayer

Father, it is so important for us to learn how to make right choices. Give us a heart to always please You in everything that we think, say, and do. Help us to learn from Samson's mistakes how important it is to keep ourselves pure for You. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## Memory Verse

*Do not share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure. (1Timothy 5:22).*

## Lesson

Israel went through several cycles of rebelling against God, being overrun by enemy nations, being delivered by a God-fearing judge, remaining loyal to God under that judge, and then, again forgetting God when the judge died.

God had told Joshua and the children of Israel to wipe out all the peoples that lived in the Promised Land – every man, woman, and child. He didn't want them to have anything to do with the Canaanites because they worshipped false gods and did many detestable things. He wanted the Promised Land to be a land free of idolatry, a place where His will was done and people only worshipped Him.

But the Israelites failed to wipe out the Canaanites! And whenever they had no strong leader, they became too friendly with the people living in the land and began to follow their ways and drift away from following God and did evil in the sight of the Lord.

Judges 13:1

*Again the Israelites did evil in the LORD's sight, so the LORD handed them over to the Philistines, who oppressed them for forty years.*

The Israelites were in trouble again! Once again, they were doing something that was evil. They started worshipping the gods of the Canaanites. So, God let their enemies, the Philistines, conquer them!

But, as always, because of His great love for the children of Israel, God planned a way to help them get out of trouble. His plan involved a woman living in Israel who was barren – she was old and she never had any children. God sent an angel to talk to her.

Judges 13:3-5

*The angel of the LORD appeared to Manoah's wife and said, "Even though you have been unable to have children, you will soon become pregnant and give birth to a son. So be careful; you must not drink wine or any other alcoholic drink nor eat any forbidden food. You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and his hair must never be cut. For he will be dedicated to God as a Nazirite from birth. He will begin to rescue Israel from the Philistines."*

The angel told her that she was not to drink any alcohol nor was she to eat any forbidden food. Then, he went on to tell her that when her son was born, she was never to cut his hair for he was to be set apart for God's special plan. God was going to use her son to conquer the Philistines, but he had to follow Nazirite rules all his life.

A Nazirite, was a person who completely devoted himself to serving God. A Nazirite made a promise to God that he would keep his life pure before the Lord. To set himself apart from other people, Nazirites never ate or drank anything made from grapes, nor cut their hair. Following these rules showed others that they were keeping their heart and mind pure before the Lord.

Samson's mother started preparing him for service to the Lord even before he was born by keeping the Nazirite vow herself – she didn't drink alcohol or eat unclean food while she was pregnant.

## Judges 13:24

*When her son was born, she named him Samson. And the LORD blessed him as he grew up.*

Samson kept the vow, at least while he was young. And, as we will find out, this gave him special strength and power. But when he grew up he broke his vow to keep his life pure. He often got into trouble because he was spoiled and wanted his own way.

## Judges 14:1-2

*One day when Samson was in Timnah, one of the Philistine women caught his eye. When he returned home, he told his father and mother, "A young Philistine woman in Timnah caught my eye. I want to marry her. Get her for me."*

A girl from the Philistines had caught Samson's eye. He should never have had anything to do with the Philistines. They were very bad people, but Samson wasn't careful about who he made friends with.

If you become close friends with someone that doesn't know and love God, you will find that it may be very tempting to do things that displease God, too. You may desire to be accepted by your friends at school, for example, but remember, it's important for you to choose good friends – ones that love God, too. It is important for you to choose friends that encourage you to remain loyal to God no matter what.

He demanded that his parents get her for him. They tried to talk him out of wanting this Philistine girl.

## Judges 14:3

*His father and mother objected. "Isn't there even one woman in our tribe or among all the Israelites you could marry?" they asked. "Why must you go to the pagan Philistines to find a wife?" But Samson told his father, "Get her for me! She looks good to me."*

His parents didn't want Samson to marry a Philistine girl. They knew God would not be pleased if Samson married a girl that did not share his faith in the one and only true God.

What they didn't know is that the Lord would use this situation to come against the Philistines, who were harshly ruling over Israel.

## Judges 14:4

*His father and mother didn't realize the LORD was at work in this, creating an opportunity to work against the Philistines, who ruled over Israel at that time.*

His father and mother finally gave in to his wishes and went down to Timnah to meet the girl's parents and arrange for the wedding.

## Judges 14:5-6

*As Samson and his parents were going down to Timnah, a young lion suddenly attacked Samson near the vineyards of Timnah. At that moment the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon him, and he ripped the lion's jaws apart with his bare hands. He did it as easily as if it were a young goat. But he didn't tell his father or mother about it.*

The next time Samson went to Timnah was for his wedding.

## Judges 14:8-9

*Later, when he returned to Timnah for the wedding, he turned off the path to look at the carcass of the lion. And he found that a swarm of bees had made some honey in the carcass. (9) He scooped some of the honey into his hands and ate it along the way. He also gave some to his father and mother, and they ate it. But he didn't tell them he had taken the honey from the carcass of the lion.*

You see, it was against the law of Moses for him to touch a dead body, so he didn't tell them where he got the honey.

Samson's father made the plans for the marriage which included a big party. The bride's parents chose 30 young Philistine men to be Samson's groomsmen.

Samson decided to have a little fun with his groomsmen, so he told them a riddle.

Do you know what a riddle is? A riddle is a question or a puzzle to be solved. For example, *what goes up when the rain comes down?* (An umbrella!)

Samson was so sure that the groomsmen wouldn't be able to guess the riddle, that he made a bet. He said that if they guessed the riddle, he would give each of them a new set of clothes. But if they couldn't guess the riddle, each of them had to give him a set of clothes. (Clothes were very expensive in Bible times and hard to get. So, this was an expensive bet!)

So, Samson told them this riddle:

Judges 14:14

*So, he said: "Out of the one who eats came something to eat; out of the strong came something sweet." Three days later they were still trying to figure it out.*

Can you guess the answer? Of course, we know he meant the lion was strong and the honey sweet, but the men couldn't guess it. They puzzled over it for three days and they realized they would never be able to solve it. They didn't want to let this Israelite get the better of them, so they decided to get Samson's bride to get the answer for them.

Judges 14:15

*On the fourth day they said to Samson's wife, "Entice your husband to explain the riddle for us, or we will burn down your father's house with you in it. Did you invite us to this party just to make us poor?"*

The bride was terrified! She didn't want to be burned alive in her father's home. So, she begged Samson to tell her the secret.

Judges 15:16

*So, Samson's wife came to him in tears and said, "You don't love me; you hate me! You have given my people a riddle, but you haven't told me the answer."*

*"I haven't even given the answer to my father or mother," he replied. "Why should I tell you?"*

At first, he wouldn't tell her, but she begged and begged so much that he finally gave in.

Judges 15:17

*So, she cried whenever she was with him and kept it up for the rest of the celebration. At last, on the seventh day he told her the answer because she was tormenting him with her nagging. Then she explained the riddle to the young men.*

How do you think Samson felt when the groomsmen were able to give the correct answer to the riddle? Samson got angry at his new bride; she had told the secret! So, Samson went out to punish the Philistines by attacking them!

Judges 14:19-20

*Then the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon him. He went down to the town of Ashkelon, killed thirty men, took their belongings, and gave their clothing to the men who had solved his riddle. But Samson was furious about what had happened, and he went back home to live with his father and mother. (20) So, his wife was given in marriage to the man who had been Samson's best man at the wedding.*

He was burning with anger and left there and went back to live at his father's house. Later, after he cooled off, he went back to get his wife, but he didn't know that she had been given in marriage to another man.

When he found out, he was furious! To get even with them, he lit torches in the Philistine fields and burned their crops and vineyards.

Judges 15:4-5

*Then he went out and caught 300 foxes. He tied their tails together in pairs, and he fastened a torch to each pair of tails. (5) Then he lit the torches and let the foxes run through the grain fields of the Philistines. He burned all their grain to the ground, including the sheaves and the uncut grain. He also destroyed their vineyards and olive groves.*

Now it was the Philistines' turn to be angry. They decided to go to war against the Israelites. They sent an army against the Israelites and demanded that they turn Samson over to them.

The Israelites were afraid of the Philistines and didn't want trouble. So, they promised the Philistines they would capture Samson, tie him up, and turn him over to them.

## Judges 15:12-13

*But the men of Judah told him, "We have come to tie you up and hand you over to the Philistines."*

*"All right," Samson said. "But promise that you won't kill me yourselves."*

*(13) "We will only tie you up and hand you over to the Philistines," they replied. "We won't kill you." So, they tied him up with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock.*

Again, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him giving him mighty strength. He was so strong, the ropes went "snap" and fell off his wrists as if they had only been threads. Then he picked up a donkey's jawbone and killed a thousand Philistines with it.

## Judges 15:15

*Then he found the jawbone of a recently killed donkey. He picked it up and killed 1,000 Philistines with it.*

Samson was a self-centered, spoiled child and he was unable to control his anger. And, his parents were not very good disciplinarians, either. He made wrong choices and didn't keep his life pure. But God, in spite of all this, was able to use Samson's uncontrolled anger to accomplish His will to wipe out many of the Philistines. God truly can use all things to accomplish His will.

Next week we will continue the story of Samson and we will find out that he eventually realized his dependence on God. He could have learned this lesson much sooner in his life. How sad that Samson didn't choose to keep his life pure; how much trouble this brought on him!

## Closing Prayer

Father, please help us to learn from Samson's mistakes. Help us to be careful to think and do right things – things that will please You. Help us to always say "No" to anything that would not bring You honor. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## Learning Activities

## Craft Corner

## Samson's Hair

Stuff cotton into a small paper cup. Out of a sponge, cut a circle just large enough to fit tightly inside the top of the cup. Soak the sponge in water and then set it on top of the cotton. Sprinkle dill, watercress, grass, or mustard seed on top of the wet sponge. Set the cup where it can get sunlight, but not in a place where the sponge will dry out too quickly. Your seeds will start to grow in about three days if you remember to keep the sponge moist at all times. You may want to draw a picture of Samson's head on the paper cup. Watch to see which "Samson" grows the longest "hair."

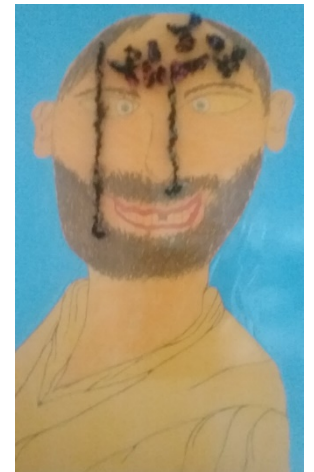


## Game Center

## Longest String Game

Procedure:

1. Create a poster board with a picture of Samson.
2. Punch holes in his scalp.
3. Put pieces of yarn of various lengths through the holes, tying a big knot at both ends.
4. For a correctly answered review question, the child gets to pull a string of yarn.



5. The child with the longest (or shortest) string is the winner. For variety, cut another yarn the exact length of one of the pieces of Samson's hair, and put it in your pocket. The winner would be the one who pulls out the string of yarn the same length as yours.

Or use the following questions in a game of your choice:

1. Explain the cycle that the children of Israel went through over and over again. (Rebelling against God, being overrun by enemy nations, being delivered by a God-fearing judge, remaining loyal to God under that judge, and then, again forgetting God.)
2. When the angel of the Lord appears to Samson's mother and told her she was to finally have a baby, what did He tell her she had to do? (Keep from drinking alcohol and food that was unclean.)
3. What did the angel of the Lord tell her to do to Samson's hair? (Never cut his hair)
4. What is a Nazirite vow to God? (A promise to keep your life pure before the Lord.)
5. What did God give Samson as a result of his keeping the Nazirite vow? (Extra strength and power)
6. Why was it wrong for Samson to want to marry the Philistine girl from Timnah? (God told the children of Israel to not have anything to do with the heathen people that lived in the land; they were not good influences on them.)
7. When the Israelites became too friendly with the heathen people that lived around them, what were they tempted to do? (Forget about God and to follow their ways, worshiping their false gods.)
8. What can happen if you become close friends with someone that doesn't know and love God? (You can be tempted to do things that displease God.)
9. Is it a good thing when parents give in to their children and let them always have their own way? (No! We need discipline so we will learn right from wrong.)
10. What happened when Samson and his parents were going down the road to Timnah? (A lion attacked and Samson killed it.)
11. What did Samson find in the carcass of the dead lion? (A swarm of bees and some honey.)
12. What did Samson promise to give to the 30 men at the wedding celebration if they could solve his riddle? (A complete change of clothes.)
13. How did the men come up with the right answer to Samson's riddle? (They begged Samson's new wife to find out for them. So, she cried and nagged him to tell her. Then she told the men.)
14. What made Samson kill 30 men and take their clothing? (He became angry that his wife told his secret.)
15. What happened when Samson caught 300 foxes, tied their tails together in pairs, and lit a torch between each pair? (He let the foxes run through the fields of the Philistines, burning their crops and vineyards.)
16. What happened when Samson was captured and they tied him with two new ropes and led him away? (The strength of the Lord came upon Samson and he snapped the ropes off his wrists!)
17. What did Samson do with the donkey's jawbone? (He killed a thousand Philistines with it.)





# Samson (Part 2)

(Judges 16)

## Pre-Session Warm Up

God has a wonderful plan and a purpose for each one of our lives. As you continue to grow up, God will reveal to you just how He wants to use your life to be a blessing to others and He will give you the strength and power to accomplish His will.

Last week we started to learn about Samson. He was a miracle child, born to a woman who had been barren. His parents were told by an angel that Samson was to be set apart for a special purpose. So, Samson's mother started preparing him for service to the Lord even before he was born.

As he grew up, the Lord blessed Samson and *the Spirit of the Lord began to stir in him* (Judges 13:25). God gave him supernatural strength and power because He wanted to use Samson to defeat the Philistines and deliver the Israelites from these terrible enemies of God.

However, as we learned last week, Samson was prideful, had a bad temper, and disobeyed God. Although Samson was not perfect, God was able to use Samson's strength to accomplish His will to wipe out many of the Philistines.

Today we're going to finish learning about Samson. We're going to find out what he did with his supernatural, God-given strength and power.

## Opening Prayer

Father, today we want to learn that it is You that gives us our special talents and abilities. And we want to learn how important it is for us to always use them for Your glory. Give us ears to hear Your voice this morning so that we don't miss out on the lesson you have here for each one of us. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## Memory Verse

*For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.  
(Philippians 4:13)*

## Lesson

We've been learning about the period of Judges. First, we learned about a judge named **Deborah**. She was a great leader who was trustworthy, brave, fair and just. The people loved her. They would come to her for advice and she led them into battle.

Then we learned about a judge named **Gideon**, a cowardly man who did not have very great faith or trust in God. But God used him and his tiny army to deliver the people of Israel from the hands of mighty enemy forces.

Last week we learned about a judge named **Samson**. Samson had great strength and power because he had kept a Nazirite vow to keep his life pure for the Lord. As long as he didn't drink alcohol or cut his hair, the Spirit of the Lord continued to give him great strength and power. Even though he made many bad choices, God used him to wipe out many Philistines.

Today we continue with the story of Samson.

Judges 16 starts out by telling us that Samson went down to Gaza. And when the people of Gaza saw him coming, they wanted to kill him.

Judges 16:2

*Word soon spread that Samson was there, so the men of Gaza gathered together and waited all night at the town gates. They kept quiet during the night, saying to themselves, "When the light of morning comes, we will kill him."*

They had heard about his great strength and power and were afraid of Samson.

Judges 16:3

*But Samson stayed in bed only until midnight. Then he got up, took hold of the doors of the town gate, including the two posts, and lifted them up, bar and all. He put them on his shoulders and carried them all the way to the top of the hill across from Hebron.*

What incredible strength and power Samson had! The cities in those days had big walls around them. You entered through huge wooden gates. Samson went out to the city gates and lifted them, with the two gateposts, right out of the ground. He put them on his shoulders and carried them up the mountain to Hebron, a distance of 38 miles!

## Judges 16:4-5

*Sometime later Samson fell in love with a woman named Delilah, who lived in the valley of Sorek. The rulers of the Philistines went to her and said, "Entice Samson to tell you what makes him so strong and how he can be overpowered and tied up securely. Then each of us will give you 1,100 pieces of silver."*

Samson fell in love with a Philistine girl named Delilah! You would have thought he would have learned his lesson last time he fell in love with a Philistine girl.

Delilah turns out to be a very bad woman. The rulers of the Philistines offered her a lot of money to find out the secret of Samson's strength.

Samson may have had big muscles, but he wasn't very smart.

## Judges 16:6

*So, Delilah said to Samson, "Please tell me what makes you so strong and what it would take to tie you up securely."*

Delilah tries to trick Samson into telling her what made him so strong. She begged him to tell her his secret. But he lied to her three times.

**First lie: new bowstrings**

## Judges 16:7

*Samson replied, "If I were tied up with seven new bowstrings that have not yet been dried, I would become as weak as anyone else."*

First, he told her that if he was tied up with seven new strings for a bow and arrow, that would take his strength away.

## Judges 16:8-9

*So, the Philistine rulers brought Delilah seven new bowstrings, and she tied Samson up with them. (9) She had hidden some men in one of the inner rooms of her house, and she cried out, "Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!" But Samson snapped the bowstrings as a piece of string snaps when it is burned by a fire. So, the secret of his strength was not discovered.*

So, while he was sleeping, she tied him with new bowstrings, then called, "Wake up, Samson." But the bowstrings didn't hold.

Delilah continued to nag Samson for his secret.

## Judges 16:10

*Afterward Delilah said to him, "You've been making fun of me and telling me lies! Now please tell me how you can be tied up securely."*

**Second lie: brand-new ropes**

The second lie Samson told Delilah was that they needed to tie him up with brand new ropes.

## Judges 16:11-12

*Samson replied, "If I were tied up with brand-new ropes that had never been used, I would become as weak as anyone else." (12) So, Delilah took new ropes and tied him up with them. The men were hiding in the inner room as before, and again Delilah cried out, "Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!" But again, Samson snapped the ropes from his arms as if they were thread.*

Again, while he was sleeping, she tied him up with new ropes. But when he woke up, he broke the ropes as if they were threads.

**Third lie: weave hair into a loom**

Delilah continued to nag Samson for his secret. But he told her another lie.

## Judges 16:13-14

*Then Delilah said, "You've been making fun of me and telling me lies! Now tell me how you can be tied up securely." Samson replied, "If you were to weave the seven braids of my hair into the fabric on your loom and tighten it with the loom shuttle, I would become as weak as anyone else." So, while he slept, Delilah wove the seven braids of his hair into the fabric. (14) Then she tightened it with the loom shuttle. Again, she cried out, "Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!" But Samson woke up, pulled back the loom shuttle, and yanked his hair away from the loom and the fabric.*

While he was sleeping, she tried that. But that didn't work, either. So, Delilah pouted and whined and nagged some more.

Judges 16:15

*Then Delilah pouted, "How can you tell me, 'I love you,' when you don't share your secrets with me? You've made fun of me three times now, and you still haven't told me what makes you so strong!"*

Delilah asked day after day. She thought of all the things she could buy with the money the men promised to give her if she could find out Samson's secret.

One day Samson got so tired of her begging, he told her his secret. He should never have done that!

Judges 16:16-17

*She tormented him with her nagging day after day until he was sick to death of it. (17) Finally, Samson shared his secret with her. "My hair has never been cut," he confessed, "for I was dedicated to God as a Nazirite from birth. If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me, and I would become as weak as anyone else."*

This time Delilah knew he had told her the truth. Let's see what happens:

Judges 16:18-19

*Delilah realized he had finally told her the truth, so she sent for the Philistine rulers. "Come back one more time," she said, "for he has finally told me his secret." So, the Philistine rulers returned with the money in their hands. (19) Delilah lulled Samson to sleep with his head in her lap, and then she called in a man to shave off the seven locks of his hair. In this way she began to bring him down, and his strength left him.*

Delilah lulled Samson to sleep, cut his hair, and God took Samson's strength away.

Judges 16:20

*Then she cried out, "Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!" When he woke up, he thought, "I will do as before and shake myself free." But he didn't realize the LORD had left him.*

Samson woke up but this time his strength was gone. He thought he would still be strong without God's help; he forgot that his special strength and power was not his own; it was from God.

How sad, Samson forgot his calling from God. His desire to please Delilah overcame his desire to please God and he didn't keep his vow to keep his life pure for the Lord. So, the Spirit of the Lord left him powerless and the Philistines were able to capture him.

Judges 16:21

*So, the Philistines captured him and gouged out his eyes. They took him to Gaza, where he was bound with bronze chains and forced to grind grain in the prison.*

The Philistines rushed out of hiding and captured Samson. Then, they dug out his eyes. That was a horrible thing to do. They also bound him with chains and put him in prison. Day after day they made Samson grind grain into flour like an animal.

No doubt, as he sat in prison, blind and zapped of strength, Samson felt like a failure. But, day after day something was happening to him. His hair started to grow again!

Judges 16:22

*But before long, his hair began to grow back.*

Meanwhile, the Philistine leaders were so happy they had captured Samson, they decided to celebrate. While the party was going on, they decided to bring Samson out to make fun of him.

Judges 16:23-25

*The Philistine rulers held a great festival, offering sacrifices and praising their god, Dagon. They said, "Our god has given us victory over our enemy Samson!" (24) When the people saw him, they praised their god, saying, "Our god has delivered our enemy to us! The one who killed so many of us is now in our power!" (25) Half-drunk by now, the people demanded, "Bring out Samson so he can amuse us!" So, he was brought from the prison to amuse them, and they had him stand between the pillars supporting the roof.*

They brought Samson from the prison and made him stand at the center of the temple of their god, Dagon, between two pillars supporting the roof. The people laughed at him! They were glad that he was blind and no longer had the strength to hurt them anymore.

Finally, Samson realized where his strength had come from. He told the boy who was leading him, to place him between the pillars supporting this temple to their false god. Then, Samson prayed to God!

Judges 16:26-28

*Samson said to the young servant who was leading him by the hand, "Place my hands against the pillars that hold up the temple. I want to rest against them." (27) Now the temple was completely filled with people. All the Philistine rulers were there, and there were about 3,000 men and women on the roof who were watching as Samson amused them. (28) Then Samson prayed to the LORD, "Sovereign LORD, remember me again. O God, please strengthen me just one more time. With one blow let me pay back the Philistines for the loss of my two eyes."*

The temple was filled with thousands and thousands of people. Samson asked God for one last burst of strength.

Judges 16:29-30

*Then Samson put his hands on the two center pillars that held up the temple. Pushing against them with both hands, (30) he prayed, "Let me die with the Philistines." And the temple crashed down on the Philistine rulers and all the people. So, he killed more people when he died than he had during his entire lifetime.*

Samson reached towards the two pillars that supported the roof, braced himself and pushed with all his might. Down fell the temple and everyone was killed. Sadly, Samson died with the Philistines in the ruins of the temple.

Samson! What a pathetic man! He had been given great strength and power by God, but he didn't use it for God's glory! He allowed himself to be tricked by Delilah. He forgot that his special strength was from God. He thought he was invincible – he didn't know that he was really weak without God's special anointing. He was full of pride.

God had given Samson supernatural strength and power. But, for most of his life he failed to use it for God's glory. He was a self-centered spoiled brat! How much more might have been accomplished through Samson's life had he remembered to live his life to please God!

But Samson's story teaches us that it is never too late to start over. Finally in the end he realized his dependence on God. And when he died, God turned his failures and defeats into victory. The lesson for us is that no matter how badly we've failed in the past, it is never too late for us to put our complete trust in God.

The book of Judges describes a sad period of time in the lives of the children of Israel. The people did not have a strong leader, so they didn't have strong faith in God. The last sentence in the book of Judges tells why they got themselves into the situation they were in.

Judges 21:25

*In those days Israel had no king; all the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes.*

It's important for us to have good, strong, courageous leaders who can show us the right way to live. It is also important for you and me to be good followers. How would it be if you were trying to lead some people who suddenly decided to go their own way? Good followers always listen and obey their leaders; they show their love and respect by always following the rules! They don't go off to do their own thing.

Remember that a good leader is one that is following Jesus. So, if you want to be a good leader in your family, or at school, you need to be a faithful follower of Jesus.

## Closing Prayer

Father, teach us these important lessons: first of all help us to remember to use the gifts and talents you have given us for Your glory. Don't let us waste time being selfish and spoiled! Secondly, help us to be good leaders—good examples—in our homes and in our schools and in our neighborhoods by being faithful followers of You, Jesus. In Your name, we pray. Amen.

## Learning Activities

### Craft Corner

#### *Samson Figure*

Materials:

Provide each child with the following:

- 7 4" pieces of string (for "hair").
- 1 wooden bead (for the "head").
- 1 ½ chenille stems or pipe cleaners (long piece for the "body"; short piece for the "arms").
- 1 4" piece of twine (for the "belt").

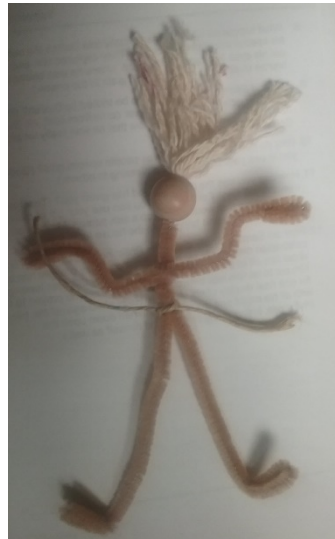
Procedure:

1. Fold the "body" in half, over the "hair".
2. Thread the "body" through the "head" (bead) "feet" first so the "hair" is sticking out the top.
3. Wrap the "arms" around the upper part of the "body".
4. Tie the "belt" (twine) around the waist.
5. Untwist or unravel the "hair" strings.
6. Bend the ends of the chenille stems (pipe cleaners) to make "hands" and "feet" and to protect child from getting poked.

### Game Center

Use the following questions in a game of your choice:

1. How did Samson show his incredible strength at the city of Gaza? (He took hold of the doors of the gate of the city and the two gateposts, pulled them up, bar and all, put them on his shoulders, and carried them to the top of the hill that faces Hebron.)



2. What gave Samson his incredible strength and power? (As long as he didn't drink alcohol or cut his hair he had great strength. These were outward signs that he was keeping the Nazirite vow to keep himself pure for the Lord.)
3. Who was Samson's girlfriend? (Delilah)
4. Why was it wrong for Samson to fall in love with Delilah? (She was a Philistine. God told the children of Israel to not have anything to do with the heathen people that lived in the land; they were not good influences on them.)
5. When the Israelites became too friendly with the people living in the land around them, what were they tempted to do? (Forget about God and to follow their ways, worshiping their false gods.)
6. What can happen if you become close friends with someone that doesn't know and love God? (You can be tempted to do things that displease God.)
7. Why did Delilah try to trick Samson? (She was going to get a lot of money from some Philistine men if she could find out what made him so strong. They were afraid of Samson and wanted to overpower him and put him in chains.)
8. Three times Samson told Delilah lies about what made him so strong. What was one of the ways?
  - a) If I were tied with seven raw-leather bowstrings, I would become as weak as anyone else.
  - b) If I am tied with brand new ropes which have never been used, I will be as weak as other men.
  - c) If you weave my hair into your loom...
9. Why did Samson finally tell Delilah that his strength was in his hair? (Because she kept begging him.)
10. What happened when Samson finally told Delilah the truth about his special strength and power? (They captured him and gouged

out his eyes and took him to Gaza, where he was bound with bronze chains and made to grind grain in the prison.)

11. Why did Samson allow himself to be tricked by Delilah? (He forgot that his special strength and power came from God. He thought he was invincible – he didn't know that he was really weak without God's special anointing.)
12. When the Philistines cut Samson's hair, what did they do with him? (Blinded him and put him in prison as a slave.)
13. Why did God give Samson supernatural strength and power? (God wanted to use Samson to defeat the Philistines and deliver the Israelites from these terrible enemies of God.)
14. How did Samson finally die? (The Philistines were having a big celebration over finally capturing Samson. They brought him out to show him off to the crowds. He asked the boy that was leading him out to let him rest between two pillars. Then he prayed to God for one final display of his strength. He pushed against the pillars with all his might and the temple crashed down upon the Philistines, killing many of them and himself as well.)
15. What does God want us to do with the special talents and abilities He gives us? (Use them to bless other people.)

# Ruth (Part 1)

(Ruth 1)

## Pre-Session Warm Up

Do you have a best friend? Did you know that a good friend is a gift from God? They are precious. God wants us to pick friends that are good for us. What makes a person a good friend? [Teacher, lead the children in a discussion of friendship.] Friends are loyal and faithful. They love you and stick with you, no matter what. Friends listen to you and you listen to them. A good friend helps you make good choices!

It's been said that if you want to have good friends, you need to *be* a good friend. God wants us to be a good friend to the friends that He brings into our lives. What do you think you need to do to be a good friend to someone?

Today we will learn about two women who were very good friends, Naomi and Ruth. And we'll find that the reason they loved each other was because they were both unselfish.

## Opening Prayer

Father, You want us to pick friends that are good for us and You want us to learn how to be good friends to them. I pray that this morning You will give us hearts to hear the message that You have for us because we want to please You with our lives. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## Memory Verse

*A friend loves at all times. (Proverbs 17:17)*

## Lesson

We just finished our studies in the book of Judges. We learned that the period of the judges was a sad period of time in the lives of the children of Israel. The people did not have a strong leader, so they didn't have strong faith in God. These were dark days for Israel, when "everyone did as he saw fit" (Judges 17:6; 21:25).

But during those dark and evil times, there were still some who followed God.

The next book in the Bible is the book of Ruth. This is a wonderful love story that takes place during the time of the judges that shows us that not everything was bad and hopeless. Ruth is a beautiful example of loyalty, friendship, and commitment to God.

Sometime during the time of the judges, Israel suffered from a famine. It had not rained for a long, long time in the land and the crops were dead and the grass and trees were dying. There was no food for the people to eat. So, some of the people went over to the other side of the Dead Sea to the land of Moab where there was plenty of food to eat.

A woman named Naomi, her husband, and two sons were among those who moved to Moab.

Ruth 1:1

*In the days when the judges ruled in Israel, a severe famine came upon the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah left his home and went to live in the country of Moab, taking his wife and two sons with him.*

While they were living there, the two sons grew up and married a couple of Moabite girls, one was named Ruth.

Then a sad thing happened. For some reason Naomi's husband and both of her sons died. This made Naomi and both of her daughters-in-law widows; they were left all alone.

Now what was Naomi to do? Life was difficult for widows and she missed her friends and family that she had left behind back home in Bethlehem, people who loved the God she loved. When Naomi heard that the famine was over and that God had blessed His people with good crops once again, she decided it was time to go back home.

Ruth 1:6-7

*Then Naomi heard in Moab that the LORD had blessed his people in Judah by giving them good crops again. So Naomi and her daughters-in-law got ready to leave Moab to return to her homeland. With her two daughters-in-law she set out from the place where she had been living, and they took the road that would lead them back to Judah.*

But, after they began their journey, Naomi stopped in her tracks and decided to tell her two daughters-in-law not to come with her, but to return to their own homes and families.

Ruth 1:8-9

*But on the way, Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back to your mothers' homes. And may the LORD reward you for your kindness to your husbands and to me. May the LORD bless you with the security of another marriage." Then she kissed them good-bye, and they all broke down and wept.*

Naomi only wanted what was best for her two daughters-in-law. She knew that they would be well cared for back in their own homes. She encouraged them to stay in Moab, even though this would mean she would have to travel to Bethlehem alone, a very dangerous thing for a single woman.

Naomi was not a self-centered person, was she? She was thoughtful and kind, looking out for her daughter's best interest. Like Naomi, we must consider the needs of others and not just our own.

Ruth and the other daughter-in-law had to choose whether to go with Naomi or remain in their homeland where false gods were worshiped.

God loved them very much and wanted them to leave their sinful ways. He wanted to bless them with good things. But, they had a very important choice to make. Would they leave their false gods and follow Naomi to the land where they worshiped the one true God? Or, would they remain in Moab with their families?

Naomi knew that her daughters-in-law would have little chance of finding another husband in Bethlehem because they were foreigners so she again urged them to turn back and stay in Moab.

The one daughter-in-law did return back to her fathers' house in Moab but Ruth still had not made up her mind.

Ruth 1:15

*"Look," Naomi said to her, "your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods. You should do the same."*

Ruth alone had to choose whether she would go back to her father's house in Moab or go to Bethlehem with Naomi, and put her trust in the God of Israel.

Ruth chose to go with Naomi even though this meant that she would probably never have a family. Ruth was willing to give up the possibility of getting another husband and having children in order to care for Naomi. Again, she is an example to us of someone who is unselfish and other-centered. She was a friend in deed!

Naomi did not force Ruth to go along with her back to Israel. Ruth made a choice to put her trust in the God of Israel.

A good friend is someone who lays down their life for someone else. Jesus did that for us. Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13)

Jesus came down from heaven and lived a life among men so that we could get to know God personally. Then, He allowed Himself to be crucified on the cross to pay the penalty for your sins and my sins. He did that because He knew it was our only hope of ever getting to heaven. He died on the cross for our sins and rose again to prove that He really was God. What a friend we have in Jesus! He laid down his life for us. And the apostle John said, "There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends." (1 John 3:16)

What do you think it means to "lay down your life" for someone? (To not be selfish; to think of the other person's needs and wellbeing first. To give up what might be good for you, because it isn't the best for your friend.) Can you give me an example of this in your life?

Ruth gave up everything to follow Naomi and her God; she was a very good friend.

Ruth 1:16-17

*But Ruth replied, "Don't ask me to leave you and turn back. Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you live, I will live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. Wherever you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD punish me severely if I allow anything but death to separate us!"*



Naomi could see Ruth had made up her mind. So Naomi gave up trying to talk Ruth into going back to Moab

Ruth 1:18

*When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she said nothing more.*

And so they returned to Bethlehem.

Ruth 1:22

*So Naomi returned from Moab, accompanied by her daughter-in-law Ruth, the young Moabite woman. They arrived in Bethlehem in late spring, at the beginning of the barley harvest.*

Ruth was a Moabitess; the Moabites were enemies of God. But although Ruth was a Moabitess, she was blessed because of her faithfulness. She became a great-grandmother of King David and a direct ancestor of Jesus.

Ruth was a very good friend to Naomi, wasn't she? Wouldn't you like to be that kind of friend to someone?

## Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for the wonderful friends that You have given us. Let us always treasure the good people that You have put into our lives. Help us to be loyal and faithful friends to them. Amen.

## Learning Activities

### Craft Corner

### Game Center

#### ***Stick Together Relay***

Divide your children up into teams of two. Give each team a balloon. Tell your children that they have to get the balloon down to the other end of the room around a chair and back to the beginning to the line, but they can't use their hands, arms, mouths, or feet except to pick up

and place the balloon at the beginning of the game. Tell your children they can decide where they want to place the balloon, but they must do it as a team and remember to "Stick Together" just like Naomi and Ruth did in the Bible lesson. They may want to place the balloon between their arms, on their hips, between their shoulders, etc.

Or, use the following questions in a game of your choice:

1. Why did Naomi and her husband and two sons move to Moab? (There was a famine in the land and the children of Israel went over to the East side of the Dead Sea to find food.)
2. What sad thing happened to Naomi and her two daughters-in-law when they were living in Moab? (Naomi's husband and her two sons died, leaving the three women as widows.)
3. Why did Naomi decide to go back home to Israel? (She heard that the famine was over and that God had blessed His people with good crops once again.)
4. After she started her journey back to Israel, what did Naomi suddenly tell her daughters-in-law? (Go back to their own families in Moab.)
5. Why did Naomi tell both of the daughters to go back to Moab and not to travel with her to Israel? (She knew the girls would have a better chance to get re-married among their own people. She only wanted what was best for the girls.)
6. Why do you think Ruth decided to go with Naomi instead of returning to her own family? (She had put her trust in the God of Israel. And she loved Naomi and wanted to care for her.)
7. What do you think it means to lay down your life for someone? (To not be selfish; to think of the other person's needs and well being first. To give up what might be good for you, because it isn't the best for your friend.)



# Ruth (Part 2)

(Ruth 2 – 4)

## Pre-Session Warm Up

[Teacher, write the word “Foreigner” and lead a discussion about this word.] Do you know anyone who is from a different country? Sometimes people treat foreigners rudely because they speak English with an accent or they may look different. Maybe they have skin that’s a different color or eyes that are slanted. Sometimes people are mean to someone with a skin color that is different from theirs. God loves all people; He made each of us special and unique.

Have you ever felt like a stranger or an outsider? Have you ever been the new kid in school? How did that feel? How do you treat people that are new in school? Do you try to make them feel accepted and comfortable?

What a foreigner needs is a friend who will come alongside and help them become part of the group.

Today we will continue learning about Ruth, a foreigner in the land of Israel. We’re going to find out if she was treated as an outcast or if she was shown kindness.

## Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, we want to be just like You. When you lived here on Earth You were loving and kind to everyone. We pray that this morning You will teach us how important it is to be kind to outsiders and to include them into our lives so they won’t feel left out. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

## Memory Verse

*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved. (Acts 16:31)*

## Lesson

Last week we began our studies in the book of Ruth, a wonderful love story that took place during the time of the judges.

Review:

1. Naomi and her husband and two sons left Bethlehem and moved to Moab because there was a famine in the land.
2. Then a sad thing happened: Naomi’s husband and her two sons died, leaving her and her two daughters-in-law as widows.
3. When Naomi heard that the famine was over back home, she decided to return to Bethlehem.
4. But Naomi encouraged her two daughters-in-law to stay in Moab because she knew the girls would have a better chance to get re-married among their own people. She only wanted what was best for the girls.
5. But Ruth decided to go with Naomi instead of returning to her own family. She loved Naomi and wanted to care for her *and* she had put her trust in the God of Israel.

So, we pick up the story at the point when Naomi and Ruth arrive in Bethlehem; it was the time of the barley harvest.

Ruth 1:22

*So Naomi returned from Moab, accompanied by her daughter-in-law Ruth, the young Moabite woman. They arrived in Bethlehem in late spring, at the beginning of the barley harvest.*

You may have heard of the little town of Bethlehem; it is the place where Jesus was born. But the story of Ruth was way before the time of Jesus. Bethlehem is a little farming community about five miles from Jerusalem.

Naomi and Ruth were both widows. There was almost nothing worse than being a widow in the ancient world. Widows were actually considered to be like slaves because they had no way of making money to buy food for themselves. So, Ruth came up with an idea.

## Ruth 2:1

*Now there was a wealthy and influential man in Bethlehem named Boaz, who was a relative of Naomi's husband, Elimelech.*

[Teacher, if you are using the NKJ version, explain that a *kinsman* is a relative.] Boaz was Naomi's nearest relative; he may have been her husband's brother. And, he was a wealthy farmer.

## Ruth 2:2

*One day Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go out into the harvest fields to pick up the stalks of grain left behind by anyone who is kind enough to let me do it." Naomi replied, "All right, my daughter, go ahead."*

The children of Israel had a law that said they were not allowed to pick a field completely bare. They were to leave some of the grain on purpose as a way to provide for the poor. When the wheat and barley were ready to be harvested, farmers hired *reapers* (pickers) to come into the field and cut down the stalks and tie them into bundles. The reapers were to leave the corners of the fields, along with any grain they dropped, for the poor. This was God's way to provide for the poor and to teach His people to care for others. Since Ruth had no money; she decided to go into the fields and glean. [Teacher, write the word "Glean" and explain to *glean* is a term that means to *gather* or to *pick up*. Gleaners were women who went into the fields after the reapers and harvesters had completed their work.]

It was a hard job. [Teacher, throw a handful of plastic drinking straws on the floor and demonstrate to the children what gleaning is.]

## Ruth 2:5

*Then Boaz asked his foreman, "Who is that young woman over there? Who does she belong to?"*

Ruth caught his eye. She may have been very pretty. We do know that she was a good hard worker.

## Ruth 2:6-7

*And the foreman replied, "She is the young woman from Moab who came back with Naomi. She asked me this morning if she could gather*

*grain behind the harvesters. She has been hard at work ever since, except for a few minutes' rest in the shelter."*

The servant told Boaz of Ruth's hard work and kindness to Naomi.

## Ruth 2:8-9

*Boaz went over and said to Ruth, "Listen, my daughter. Stay right here with us when you gather grain; don't go to any other fields. Stay right behind the young women working in my field. See which part of the field they are harvesting, and then follow them. I have warned the young men not to treat you roughly. And when you are thirsty, help yourself to the water they have drawn from the well."*

Boaz was a very kind man. He told Ruth to stay right there in his field with his other women and not to go to any other field. He promised to protect and provide for Ruth.

## Ruth 2:10-11

*Ruth fell at his feet and thanked him warmly. "What have I done to deserve such kindness?" she asked. "I am only a foreigner." "Yes, I know," Boaz replied. "But I also know about everything you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband. I have heard how you left your father and mother and your own land to live here among complete strangers.*

Ruth was amazed that Boaz would show kindness to her, after all, she was an outsider, a foreigner, to those in Bethlehem because she hadn't been born there. How do you think Ruth might have felt being new in town? Ruth was pleased to be treated so kindly.

Boaz then invited Ruth to have lunch with him and his workers. After lunch, Boaz instructed his men to leave extra grain for her to gather.

## Ruth 2:15-16

*When Ruth went back to work again, Boaz ordered his young men, "Let her gather grain right among the sheaves without stopping her. And pull out some heads of barley from the bundles and drop them on purpose for her. Let her pick them up, and don't give her a hard time!"*

Normally the gleaners were to wait to gather the grain after the workers were finished. But Boaz told his field workers not to block

Ruth from working alongside them. He knew that she would be able to gather a lot more that way.

He went way beyond the intent of the law that allowed gleaners to come into the fields; he made sure that she was well provided for.

Do you go beyond the minimum requirement? For example, when your parents ask you to clean your room, do you also clean the bathroom? God loves it when we do more than what is expected!

That night after work, Ruth took what she had gleaned to Naomi. Naomi was impressed with the large amount of grain Ruth brought home and she encouraged Ruth to continue to glean in Boaz's fields for the rest of the barley harvest season.

In time, Naomi explained that because Boaz was her closest relative, he was authorized to pay the price to legally marry Ruth and make her his very own so she would no longer be a foreigner in the land. Boaz wanted to take care of Ruth.

What Boaz did for Ruth is a beautiful picture of what the Lord Jesus has done for us. He came to Earth to pay the price to make us part of His family. When Jesus took the punishment for your sin by dying on the cross, He paid the price for your sin. He gave His blood for you, to make you His own so you don't have to be a stranger to God. You can now be a member of His family. God wants everyone to come into His family; He doesn't want anyone to be an outcast. But you must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. [Teacher, review the Memory Verse for this week and discuss what it means to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; give an opportunity to the children to accept Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior.] If you have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, you are now a child of God. You are a member of His family and will someday live with Him in heaven.

Boaz paid the price to make Ruth his very own so she wouldn't be an outcast any more.

God blessed Boaz and Ruth by giving them a son. Many years later into that same family line, Jesus was born. So, Ruth was the great, great, great... (29 greats) grandmother of Jesus.

## Closing Prayer

Father, we admit to You this morning, that we are sinners. And we want to thank You that You came down out of heaven and lived among mankind. Thank You that your death on the cross paid the penalty for my sins. It is because of what You did on the cross, I can say today, that I am saved; I am now a child of God; and, I will some day be face-to-face with You, living in Heaven. Thank You for paying the price to make me part of Your family just like Boaz did for Ruth. In Your name, we pray. Amen.

## Learning Activities

### Craft Corner

### Game Center

#### *Gleaners*

Divide the class into two teams. Have the teams line up. On "GO" the teacher throws down an odd number of plastic drinking straws. The first child on each team picks up straws as fast as possible. The child who "gleans" the most straws, earns the chance to answer a review question. Upon a correct answer, the child picks a felt shape off the flannel board with a hidden number of points on the back (or a ZONK for no points). [Teacher, make the game extra exciting by making the points large: instead of 100 points, make it 1,000 or 10,000!] Then the next child on each team takes a turn.

1. What is the name of the little town that Naomi and Ruth came home to in the land of Israel? (Bethlehem)
2. Naomi and Ruth had no way of making a living. So, what plan did Ruth come up with to provide food for herself and Naomi? (To glean in the fields.)
3. Boaz was Naomi's kinsman. What is a *kinsman*? (A relative.)
4. What did Boaz do for a living? (He was a wealthy farmer.)

5. What is a gleaner? (Someone who comes along after the harvesters and picks up the stray pieces of grain left behind.)
6. How did the children of Israel provide for their poor? (The harvesters were not allowed to pick all the grain. They had to leave some behind for the poor to pick up.)
7. What did Boaz do to make sure that Ruth got plenty of grain? (He told his field workers to leave extra grain for her to find.)
8. In what other way did Boaz make sure that Ruth was safe as she worked in his fields? (He told his men not to touch her; to leave her alone.)
9. What did Boaz finally do to make sure that Ruth was well cared for? (He “redeemed” her; he married her.)
10. Explain why what Boaz did for Ruth a beautiful picture of what the Lord Jesus has done for us. (He came to earth to redeem you and me and make us part of His family.)
11. What famous children came from the family line of Boaz and Ruth? (David and Jesus.)