



## Lesson: Judges: Judges Rule Israel

This week we wrap up our theme on conquest with the death of Joshua and transition to the next theme of judges or cycles. As God's people come back to the land promised to them, those people now living there have built big cities. These cities hated God's people and did not want them in the land, and much more they did not like the God the Israelites worshipped. Judges also happens to be one of our sixteen themes to help children understand God's story of redemption. The book is filled with many bizarre and gruesome stories, so we only chose a few to tell. It is important to note that Judges has a repetitive cycle to it, and it will be helpful to know in terms of teaching. The sequence begins with God's people living in disobedience and God would discipline them usually through famine or an invading force. Once the Israelites had experienced enough of this discipline, they would cry out for deliverance. God would provide deliverance by way of a judge. The judge would rule over Israel, and during this time God's people remained faithful to Him. Once the judge passed away, God's people would slip back into disobedience and the whole cycle would repeat.

This week we learn about Deborah and how God used her to not only speak to his people (she was a prophetess), but also to judge and lead His people. Deborah's courage and leadership, as well as obedience to God, helps God's people win a decisive victory over the Canaanites. We continue to learn that God keeps His promises, but He does ask that His people trust and follow His commands.

**Scripture:** Joshua 9-10; Judges 2-5

**Story:** *Vos Child's Story Bible*, Chapters 55-56 and 58-59

### Teaching Points:

- God is faithful and never changes. God keeps His promises.
- God is sovereign (or in control).
- Man is sinful.
- God is kind and merciful.
- God talks with man.
- God wants people to know He is a great God.
- God is holy. God wants His people to be holy.
- God is all knowing.
- God does not need any help.
- God saves His people.
- God provides for His people.

### Scripture Memory and Hand Motions for April:

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." Joshua 1:9

- **Have I not commanded you?** (*point emphatically to people in front of you*)
- **Be strong and courageous.** (*flex biceps/arms and/or puff out chest*)
- **Do not** (*cross arms making an "x"*)
- **be frightened and do not be dismayed,** (*use hands to grab opposite arms showing fear*)
- **for the Lord your God** (*point upwards with both hands*)
- **Is with you** (*point to one another*)
- **Wherever you go** (*walk in place*).

## Story

### **Review**

Before Palm Sunday and Easter, we learned about Joshua and the Israelites going into the Promised Land. They defeated the mighty city of Jericho. News of Jericho's defeat quickly spread throughout the land; many other people became afraid of the God of the Israelites. The Israelites travel deeper into the Promised Land. They encounter other cities and people. God takes care of His people, but as the Israelites settle in the land, they soon forget God. The Israelites would be corrected for their sin, and God would use people called judges to deliver His people.

### **The Day the Sun Stood Still**

As the Israelites began to live in the land, they made friends with those in a city named Gibeon. When news spread about the city of Gibeon and Israel's friendship to other cities, the kings of those cities were very angry. Five kings from these cities decided to gather together all their soldiers and to punish Gibeon for betraying them. The Gibeonites heard that all these soldiers were coming to punish them and sent an urgent message to Joshua to help them!

"Come help us! Come help right now! We need your help!" the message read. Joshua had to keep his friendship with the Gibeonites, he swore to it. Joshua collected his army together, and marched to help the city of Gibeon. As Joshua and the Israelites were marching God spoke to Joshua. "Do not be afraid of these five other kings and all of these soldiers. I will help you fight them and win. They won't be able to stand before you," God told Joshua. Joshua and the Israelites marched all night. Suddenly Joshua arrived at Gibeon and the five kings and their armies were camped outside of the city walls. The five kings and their armies did not expect Joshua so soon. A great battle began between the Israelites and the five kings and their armies. The battle lasted all day, and the sun was beginning to go down. Joshua wanted to finish the battle and he knew that if night came, the enemy could escape. Joshua then prayed for God to have, "Sun stand still over Gibeon. And moon stay away!" God granted Joshua's prayer, and made the day longer for him, so that he had time to defeat the enemy.

The five kings saw their armies could not defeat the Israelites; the five kings ran away and hid in a cave. That day the Israelites conquered the kings and their five armies. The Israelites would go on to conquer more cities and take the land just as God said they would.

### **Joshua's Death**

Joshua had led God's people for a very long time, but he grew old and died. Before he passed away, Joshua made a map and divided the land God's people had taken back into eleven different parts. Each piece of land was for one of Israel's sons (**Teacher Note:** you may need to revisit Israel (Jacob) and his twelve sons); each son of Israel grouped their children, grandchildren and other descendants into groups called tribes. So, if Judah was your great, great, great grandfather, you belonged to the tribe of Judah. Once Joshua divided the land, people went to live in their part. They built houses, grew crops, tended sheep, and had big families. Many years passed and more of the leaders of God's people who loved God passed away and left. Soon new people came to lead the Israelites, but they did not love God as much and they did not listen to God's commandments.

God's people tried very hard to get all of the Promised Land back, but some of the Canaanites did not leave and God's people could not get them to leave. The Canaanites were mean and very bad; they did not worship God and they did not love God's people. So, God's people lived in the same land with the Canaanites. This was not what God wanted for them. God knew that if His people lived in the same land with the Canaanites, soon His people would be mean and very bad people too. Because God's people could not get the Canaanites to leave the land, God told them that the Canaanites would bother and hurt them. When God told His people the news they cried for a very long time; they knew that they had disobeyed God.

## **The Canaanites Attack**

The new leaders of God's people did not know God and did not listen to him. The new leaders of God's people decided that they would act like the Canaanites. They worshipped false gods, made sacrifices to false gods, and forgot about God. God became very angry with His people. God knew that He would have to discipline them so they would know that He alone was the only God His people should worship. The Canaanites bothered, attacked, and hurt the Israelites many times. The Canaanites would steal from God's people a lot. The Israelites became very worried about what to do because they were in a lot of pain from the Canaanites attacking them.

## **The Rise of the Judges**

The Lord never left His people though. No matter how mad God's people made God, He would never ever leave them. God decided that His people needed new and better leaders called judges. God brought judges to Israel at different times. Judges helped save Israel from getting attacked and having their things stolen. Judges were great and powerful people because God was with them. God did not like that His people worshipped other gods, and He did not like His people being hurt. When the judges ruled, the Israelites worshipped God, were safe, and followed God's commands. But as soon as judges passed away, God's people would worship false gods, did not follow God's commands, and were attacked by the Canaanites. God said to His people, "Because you have broken our agreement (covenant) that I commanded your fathers to obey, I will no longer help you get rid of the mean and very bad people that live in the land with you."

## **Deborah**

The Bible has a book called Judges. In the book of Judges, we hear often that "the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord." This happened after each judge had passed away; remember the judges helped God's people to trust and obey God. After the judges passed away, the Israelites would not trust or obey God. This means they forgot about God! When God's people did not trust and obey God, He would correct them.

At one time God's people were ruled by a very wicked king whose name was Jabin (**pronunciation:** jay-bin); Jabin was from Canaan and ruled the Canaanites. The Canaanites were mean and very bad people who did not worship God and did not like God's people. King Jabin ruled God's people for twenty years; he was very mean to them and hurt them many times. Also, during this time there was a woman, named Deborah, whose was a prophetess. This means her job was to speak to God's people for God. Not only was she a prophetess, Deborah was also a judge. The Bible tells us Deborah would sit underneath a palm tree many days and people from all the tribes of Israel would come to speak to her.

One day Deborah sent a messenger to a man named Barak (**pronunciation:** baa-rock). She said to him, "Has not the Lord, the God of Israel, commanded you, 'Go, gather your men at Mount Tabor, taking 10,000 from the tribe of Naphtali and the people of Zebulun. And I will draw out Sisera (**pronunciation:** sis-sir-ra), the general of Jabin's army, to meet you by the river with his chariots and his troops, and I will help you defeat him in battle?"

You see God had told Barak this very thing. Barak was going to defeat Jabin, King of Canaan, and his top general, Sisera, in battle. But Barak was scared; he did not know if he could gather enough soldiers to defeat Sisera. Once Barak heard the message from Deborah, he sent a message back to her; the message said, "If you will go with me, I will go, but if you will not go with me, I will not go." Deborah heard the words as the messenger read the note to her. She sent Barak another message back, it read, "I will go with you. But the choice you are making now will not lead to your glory, for the LORD will give Sisera and the whole Canaanite army victory to me." After Deborah sent the message, she traveled to meet up with Barak. Together they gathered 10,000 soldiers to fight Sisera and King Jabin. Deborah, Barak and 10,000 soldiers arrived at Mount Tabor. Mount Tabor was an important place for travel and trade, and many people crossed through Mount Tabor.

Once Sisera heard that Deborah, Barak and 10,000 soldiers were in Mount Tabor, he quickly called out his 900 chariots of iron and all the men who were with him. This was a big, fierce army which many, many people would be

afraid of. But not Deborah, she knew that God was going to give them the victory in battle. Once she saw Sisera and his army approaching, she told Barak, "Up! Get up! For this is the day in which the Lord has given you a victory of Sisera! Does not the LORD go out before you to fight?" Barak heard these words and took the 10,000 men down and fought Sisera and his whole army. The LORD helped Barak and the 10,000 men defeat Sisera and his whole army. All of Sisera's men ran away, and all of the chariots he had were completely destroyed. From that moment on the Israelites rose up and defeated the rest of King Jabin's armies until at last he no longer ruled over them.

### **Deborah and Barak Sing**

After God's people were finally free of King Jabin, Deborah and Barak sang a song to remember the victory the LORD gave his people. The song spoke of God rescuing His people once again; it spoke of Deborah's courage; it spoke of God's people gathering with Barak to defeat Sisera. The song spoke of the victory of God's people over their enemies. The last verse in the song says this, "So may all your enemies perish, O LORD! But your friends be like the sun as he rises in his might."

God's people enjoyed peace for forty years after this big battle. God's people worshipped Him only; they trusted and obeyed God during those forty years. During this time there were no enemies of God's people because God had shown how great and powerful He was. For the Israelites, God once again showed them that He always keeps His promises; God only asks that they trust Him and follow His commands.

### **Questions for Review**

Have the kids answer "Yes" if it is true, or "no" with the correct answer if it is false.

- God wants us to worship and love Him. (Yes)
- God will never leave us. (Yes)
- The Israelites did not like the Promised Land, so they left. (No! They stayed in the Promised Land.)
- Joshua prayed to God for the sun to stand still and God kept the sun still. (Yes)
- Joshua divided up the Promised Land into 12 parts for the 12 tribes of Israel. (Yes)
- The Canaanites were nice to the Israelites and never hurt them. (No! The Canaanites were wicked and hurt the Israelites all the time.)
- God used Deborah, a prophetess and judge, to help deliver His people from the Canaanites. (Yes)
- Deborah and Barak lost a battle to Sisera. (No! They defeated him.)
- There was big party and lots of singing after the Israelites defeated the Canaanites. (Yes)
- God always loves us. (Yes)
- God always keeps His promises. (Yes)