

Grade 3—Unit 2

Judges

After Joshua and his generation died, many of the Israelites did not know God or remember the things God had done for their ancestors. They were influenced by other tribes and cultures around them. They began worshiping false gods and idols, giving no glory to God. Because the Israelites had been unfaithful, God allowed their enemies to make life difficult for them. They suffered many defeats in battle. In their suffering, some of the Israelites began to seek help from God. God raised up judges to help bring the Israelites back into the covenant relationship.

A consistent cycle pervades the book of Judges: the Israelites sin against God by worshiping idols—they forget God—their enemies triumph over them—the people cry out to God—with great mercy, God responds to their prayers.

Judges were charismatic leaders who emerged because the “Spirit of the Lord empowered” them with exceptional authority and power. Yahweh was king and chose the leaders to bring the people back to him and to lead them in battle. The judges were viewed as heroes. After leading the people in battle, they often continued in a leadership role.

LESSONS

1. The Story of Deborah
2. God’s Message to Gideon
3. Gideon, God’s Judge
4. Samson, A Foolish Leader

Unit 2: Judges

Unit Information

SUMMARY

This unit tells the stories of some of the judges God raised up to lead the people of Israel and turn their hearts back to God.

Deborah was a woman of deep wisdom and great leadership ability. She was the only woman judge and the only judge in the book of Judges to also be a prophet(ess).

God called **Gideon** to lead the Israelites to victory over their enemies, but Gideon felt inadequate. He asked for reassurance that God was indeed with him. After receiving his signs, he obeyed God and led Israel to victory in battle. Gideon reminded the Israelites that only God could be their king.

In spite of **Samson's** wrong motive of revenge, God used him to prove that the real God was not Dagon, but Yahweh. In studying the character of Samson, we can see how his selfish desires controlled his life. However, God used Samson to begin freeing the Israelites from the Philistines.

KEY BIBLE TEXTS

Psalms 143:8 (main memory verse)

Judges 4 and 5

Judges 6:7

Judges 8:22, 23 (memory verses)

Judges 13-16

James 1:5-8

James 3:13 (memory verse)

Mark 10:27 (memory verse)

BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

The Time of the Judges

After Joshua died, Israel remained in the land as a nation of tribes held together by their covenant with God. Many of the Canaanites still lived in the land. The sea people, the Philistines, occupied the coast. Their five powerful cities engaged in commerce and controlled the making of iron during the time of the judges. After Joshua's generation had died, another generation grew up who didn't know God or what God had done for Israel. "Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord and served Baal. They forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed and worshiped various gods of the peoples around them. They provoked the Lord to anger because they forsook him and served Baal and the Ashtoreths" (Judges 2:11-13).

The time of the judges shows a cycle of disobedience, punishment, crying out to the Lord, forgiveness, and renewal. "Whenever the Lord raised up a judge for them, he was with the judge and saved them out of the hands of their enemies as long as the judge lived: for the Lord had compassion on them as they groaned under those who oppressed and afflicted them. But when the judge died, the people

returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their fathers, following other gods and serving and worshiping them” (Judges 2:18-19).

Serving an invisible God who required ethical behavior proved difficult for the Israelite people. The path of least resistance led to idol worship. After all, the Baals and Ashtoreths of the fertility cult also sent rain. The temptation of syncretism was strong. It wasn't so much that they wanted to stop worshiping Yahweh. Worshiping only Yahweh was the hard part.

The results of this combining of religions were disastrous. Reading the book of Judges often gives one a sick feeling. Each new generation seemed to need to discover for itself that renouncing their faith in the one true God led to oppression from their enemies, fighting among themselves, and lawlessness in the land.

God Calls a Faithful, Willing Leader

In the time of Deborah, there rose a Canaanite coalition led by Jabin. Israel stood in danger of losing the Promised Land. Fearful travelers abandoned the roads. Village life in Israel ceased (Judges 5:6-7). Deborah, who belonged to the tribe of Ephraim, became recognized throughout all Israel as a leader. As a judge and prophetess, she held court under a palm tree between Ramah and Bethel. When Deborah told Barak to fight Sisera and Jabin's army, he agreed under the condition that she accompany him.

Though all the tribes were expected to help each other in times of crisis, only Zebulun and Naphtali came to the battle. Ten thousand men on foot would seem to be no match for an army with 900 iron chariots (a technology the Israelites did not possess). But once again, the Lord won the battle. A sudden storm filled the age-old Kishon River bed, miring the heavy chariots. Jael, a tent-dwelling woman, killed the fleeing captain of the Canaanite troops.

Deborah's judgeship was unique on two counts. She was the only woman judge in the book of Judges and the only one said to have prophesied. As a prophetess, she received her wisdom and words from the Lord. Deborah still serves as an example that women can be effective leaders of God's people.

God Chooses Gideon

Bands of robbers had oppressed Israel for seven years. The Midianites and Amalekites were nomadic tribes who made periodic raids into more settled territories around them. Together, they deprived the Israelite farmers of the produce of the land. This occurred every season, from seedtime to harvest. They brought along their cattle and their tents, and lived on the land until everything was used up, and then moved on.

Gideon was the youngest son of Joash. He lived at Ophrah, a town west of the Jordan, near Shechem, and had sons. Gideon was the fifth recorded judge of Israel, and the greatest of them all. When an angel appeared to Gideon, he was threshing wheat with a flail in the wine-press, to hide it from the Midianites and Amalekites. God called him to deliver the people of Israel from the Midianites, and to destroy Baal's altar. Clothed in the Spirit of God, Gideon raised up an army of 32,000. But God called him to reduce his followers to 300. The midnight attack upon the Midianites, their panic, and the slaughter that followed brought high regard and respect for Gideon. After this attack, there was a peace for forty years.

The Dangers of Self-interest

The Israelites again turned away from God, forgetting all the times that God had helped them. They began to worship other gods. The Lord was angry, and

allowed the Philistine people to become powerful and rule over the Israelites. But God did not turn away from the people of Israel.

One day, the angel of the Lord appeared to a woman of Israel and said, “You are going to have a son. He will begin to free Israel from the Philistines. As a sign that he is to do this special work, his hair must never be cut.”

Just as God had promised, the baby was born and his mother named him Samson. As the boy grew, God blessed him and made him exceptionally strong. Samson knew that he was special and that God wanted to use his strength to free the Israelites from the Philistines. One day, Samson came upon a lion. God gave him the power to kill the lion, tearing it apart with his bare hands.

The Philistines hated Samson because of his strength, and tried to find a way to destroy him. They learned that Samson had fallen in love with a Philistine woman named Delilah. The rulers of the Philistines came to visit Delilah and promised her silver, if she could discover the secret of Samson’s great strength. The woman loved money, so she agreed to trick Samson. Pretending to care deeply about him, she begged him to tell her his secret. Each time Delilah asked Samson, he made up a story about how he got his strength.

But Samson began to love Delilah more than God. When she continued to beg, he finally could stand it no longer. “If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me, and I would become as weak as any man,” he told her.

Delilah let Samson fall asleep with his head on her lap. Then she had someone shave his head and called the Philistines. Samson jumped up to fight, but his strength was gone. The Philistines grabbed him and poked out his eyes. They led him off in chains and put him in prison. Slowly, Samson’s hair began to grow again.

One day, the Philistines held a special celebration in the temple to honor their god, Dagon. The rulers asked for Samson to be brought out of prison to entertain them. Samson could hear the noise of the people celebrating and worshiping their false god. He called out to the Lord, “Please strengthen me once more. Let me, with one blow, have revenge on the Philistines.”

He reached out and grabbed two pillars that supported the temple. Bracing himself against the giant pillars, he pushed with all his might. Down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it!

God’s Purpose Fulfilled in Spite of Sin

Although Samson is regarded as a judge, he is unlike the other judges in that he was not a military leader. For twenty years he was a judge, a Nazarite, and endowed with supernatural power by the Spirit of the Lord. His authority seems to have been limited to the district bordering on the country of the Philistines, who had consolidated their position on the coast and were strong enough to worry the Israelites in the hill country. The divine inspiration that Samson shared with Gideon and others took in him the unique form of vast personal strength with undaunted bravery.

Samson was a very strong man. He strangled a lion barehanded and on one occasion killed 1,000 Philistines by himself. One of his greatest performances was to carry the gates of the city of Gaza all the way to the top of a hill outside Hebron. Those metal gates probably weighed thousands of pounds, about the same size as a large van. The journey to Hebron was uphill for 38 miles!

Amazingly, God again worked in spite of humans’ tremendous sinfulness. Samson, so gifted, cared little about doing God’s will in his life. God intervened on behalf of the Israelites, to accomplish the beginning of their deliverance, through Samson’s death.

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS

- God used the judges to lead God’s people.
- God wanted the Israelites to trust in God’s power to give them victory over their enemies.
- The judges reminded the Israelites that only God could rule over them. They didn’t need a king.
- Judges were human and sometimes needed reassurance, or were swayed by their emotions of love, hate, and revenge.
- Even though judges made mistakes, God’s purpose was fulfilled through them.
- We can trust the God of history to work in our lives.

WORSHIP

Deborah

1. Deborah’s trust in God inspired others. She was not afraid of what others thought, or afraid of the unknown or death. The image of God fighting the battle when the odds were against the Israelites is powerful. Have students share other Bible stories where God won the battle.
2. There are many things to admire about Deborah. She knew that victory was only possible with God’s help. She also remembered to be thankful. Do we remember to say “thank you” as well as “help me” to God? What are some reasons to be thankful to God? Let students share briefly.
3. Bring symbols to the worship center representing people serving God today who are faithful and willing. Pictures, books, pamphlets, etc., are some examples of symbols.

Gideon

1. Gideon felt inadequate for the task to which God called him. Finally, he was able to trust and obey God. Focus on the idea that God is always ready to help us when we have difficult things to do. God doesn’t ask us to do things we can’t do. Instead, God invites us to do things that we can do with God’s help. Ask children to list things that are difficult for them to do. Have them bring in symbols of these fears. Set them at the worship center and during worship time, pray for these concerns and ask God for help.
2. Sometimes we feel all alone, when almost everyone else is doing wrong. We might be afraid to stand up for what is right. But remember that God is always with us. We can lean on God and lead others to lean on God as well. What are some ways we can do this? In groups of four, act out short skits of leading others to victory as Gideon did.

Samson

1. What are some influences that can lead us in the wrong direction? (*bad habits, cliques, TV*) Bring to the worship center symbols of influences that lead us in the *right* direction. Pray together as a class for wisdom to respond to the right influences.
2. It is important to choose our friends carefully. The wrong friends can get us to do wrong and get into trouble like Samson. What are some qualities of a good friend?

MEMORY PASSAGES

This unit offers a main memory verse passage, plus several bonus passages to be used if desired. These passages are provided in large format on pages 72-75, to be used as posters or overheads.

ASSESSING TEACHING / LEARNING

- Students' understanding of the lessons may be assessed by their answers given on the worksheets.
- The symbols students draw on their Faith Hero T-shirts may also be used to assess their learning.
- Other indicators include group discussions, work done together in small groups, and work on Faith Hero cards.

Let the morning bring me
word of your unfailing love,

for I have put

my trust in you.

Show me the way

I should go,

for to you I lift my soul.

Psalm 143:8



The Israelites said to
Gideon, "Rule over us—you,
your son and your grandson—
because you have saved us
out of the hand of Midian."

But Gideon told them,
"I will not rule over you,
nor will my son rule over you.
The LORD will rule over you."

Judges 8:22-23



Jesus looked at them
and said, "With man
this is impossible,
but not with God;
all things are possible
with God."

Mark 10:27

Who is wise and
understanding among you?

Let him show it by
his good life, by deeds
done in humility that
comes from wisdom.

James 3:13



Judges

LESSON 1: THE STORY OF DEBORAH

Objective

Students will recognize that being God’s leader means being faithful and willing to do what God asks.

Key Concepts

- God used Deborah, a woman, to lead his people.
- Deborah’s faithfulness to God was shown in her willingness to be God’s spokesperson, calling Barak and going with him to battle.
- God wanted the Israelites to trust in God’s power for victory over their enemies.

Text: Judges 4-5

Estimated Lesson Time: 45 minutes

Materials

- Bible
- *God Gives the Land* by Eve B. MacMaster
- Blank Hall of Faith cards (1 per student)
- For Extend the Lesson, option two: Bibles, Bible reference books (*optional*)
- For Extend the Lesson, option three: Faith Hero T-shirts, fabric crayons/markers
- For Extend the Lesson, option five: Bible memory journals, crayons/markers
- For Extend the Lesson, option six: “The Story of Deborah” worksheet (p. 78)

Teacher Preparation

- Practice reading the story of Deborah from chapter 15 of *God Gives the Land*.
- If using Extend the Lesson, option six, make copies of “The Story of Deborah” worksheet (1 per student).

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Life without obedience. Fasten a large sheet of paper on the wall for a “graffiti wall.” As students arrive, have them write comments about God’s faithfulness to those who obey God. Discuss what school would be like if no one was in charge or could enforce any rules. (*People could come whenever they wanted to; there would be no homework, tests, or class work required.*) At first it might look good, but after a while students might find some disadvantages. This was the situation of God’s people after they settled in the land of Canaan.

LESSON STEPS

- 1. Give an overview of “The Time of the Judges,”** using the Bible background information from pages 67-68.
- 2. Read the story of Deborah** from *God Gives the Land*, chapter 15.
- 3. Discuss the story.** What obstacles did Deborah have to overcome to be a faithful, willing leader for God?

- She was a woman. Society saw her as from a lower class of people.
- Jabin’s army had iron chariots, and the Israelites did not.
- Baruk would only go to battle if Deborah went along. Nothing in the text indicates that Deborah had any warrior status or abilities.

4. Faith and blessings. Read James 1:5-8. Deborah was faithful and willing to do what God called her to do. God is always looking for opportunities to give good gifts to men and women. Because of their lack of faith, people often give up these blessings. Help is ready from our giving God, if we ask for it.

Contrast the faith of Baruk and Deborah. (*Baruk needed assurance. He was unwilling to believe God’s word through Deborah. Deborah believed and obeyed God.*)

5. Make Hall of Faith cards for Deborah. Hand out blank Hall of Faith cards and invite children to draw a portrait of Deborah on one side. On the other side, students should list:

- Facts and Figures
- Faith Reminders
- Memory Verse
- Story of Deborah found in Judges 4-5

EXTEND THE LESSON

(These activities will extend the lesson to longer than 45 minutes.)

- **Read about more women leaders** in the Bible: Esther, Abigail (1 Samuel 25), and Priscilla (Acts 18, Romans 16:3).
- **Find the ways Israelites disobeyed God** (Judges 2:10-20; 3:5) and list them. You may want to research Canaanite gods in Bible reference books.
- **Work on Faith Hero T-shirts.** Invite students to add Deborah’s name and a symbol from one of her experiences to their Faith Hero T-shirts. Provide fabric crayons or markers.
- **Write a praise poem to God.** The Song of Deborah in Judges 5 brings praise and honor to God for delivering the Israelites. Have students write a praise poem about something God has done for them.
- **Bible memory journal.** Invite students to decorate a page in their Bible memory journals. (*See directions in Unit 1, Lesson 1, Extend the Lesson #3.*) Ask wondering questions about Psalm 143:8: I wonder what happened when Deborah put her trust in God. I wonder how God showed Deborah the way she should go.
- **Complete “The Story of Deborah” worksheet**, p. 78. An answer key is provided on page 79.

Name _____

The Story of Deborah

Worksheet



Directions: Put the following events that happened to God's people, the Israelites, during Deborah's time, in order of how they happened. Number the sentences from 1-10.

_____ Deborah and Barak remembered to be thankful by singing praises to God.

_____ Sisera, the Canaanite leader, ran away.

_____ Deborah asked Barak to lead the army into battle against the Canaanites.

_____ Deborah went with Barak and the soldiers, but she did not fight.

_____ The Israelites were disobedient and worshiped the false gods of the heathen people around them.

_____ Deborah led the people for 40 peaceful years.

_____ Deborah held court under a palm tree between Ramah and Bethel.

_____ God made the iron chariots bog down in mud, giving the Israelites victory over their enemies.

_____ Jael killed the fleeing captain of the Canaanite troops.

_____ God sent a great thunderstorm, causing the dry Kishon River to turn into a rushing river.

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

11. Deborah gave God the honor for winning this war. How did God win the war for the Israelites?

12. Explain how Deborah's faithfulness and willingness to do what God asked made her a great leader.

“The Story of Deborah” Worksheet—Answer Key

- 9 Deborah and Barak remembered to be thankful by singing praises to God.
- 7 Sisera, the Canaanite leader, ran away.
- 3 Deborah asked Barak to lead the army into battle against the Canaanites.
- 4 Deborah went up with Barak and the soldiers, but she did not fight.
- 1 The Israelites were disobedient and worshiped the false gods of the heathen people around them.
- 10 Deborah led the people for 40 peaceful years.
- 2 Deborah held court under a palm tree between Ramah and Bethel.
- 6 God made the iron chariots bog down in mud, giving the Israelites victory over their enemies.
- 8 Jaal, a woman, killed the fleeing captain of the Canaanite troops.
- 5 God sent a great thunderstorm, causing the dry Kishon River to turn into a rushing river.

10. Deborah gave God the honor for winning this war. How did God win the war for the Israelites? *God caused a thunderstorm which mired the heavy chariots.*

11. Explain how Deborah’s faithfulness and willingness to do what God asked made her a great leader.

- Deborah was a great leader because she received her wisdom and words from the Lord.*
- She was not afraid to speak out for God and call Barak to fight a war that, in human eyes, was impossible to win.*
- She was not afraid to go to the battlefield with Barak, following the call of God to fight the Canaanites.*
- God used her to bring peace to the Israelites.*

Judges

LESSON 2: GOD’S MESSAGE TO GIDEON

Objective

Students will recognize that Gideon had difficulty believing God could use him.

Key Concepts

- Like Moses, Gideon had difficulty believing that God could use him.
- God heard the cries of the Israelites and called a judge, or leader.
- God chose Gideon to save Israel from Midianite oppression.
- Gideon was obedient to God and God protected him.

Texts: Judges 6–7

Estimated Lesson Time: 30 minutes

Materials

- Bibles
- Magazines, advertisements, and catalogs for making a class collage
- *God Gives the Land* by Eve B. MacMaster
- For Extend the Lesson, option one: Faith Hero T-shirts, fabric crayons/markers
- For Extend the Lesson, option three: Bible memory journals
- For Extend the Lesson, option four: “Moses and Gideon” worksheet, p. 82

Teacher Preparation

- Be familiar with chapters 16 and 17 in *God Gives the Land*.
- Read about Moses’ call (Exodus 3–4:17), to be ready to help students in Lesson Steps 2 and 3.
- If using Extend the Lesson, option four, make copies of the “Moses and Gideon” worksheet (1 per student).

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Discuss idols, those of Bible times and those worshiped today. Have students work together to make a collage of today’s idols that keep us from being close to God. Use advertisements, magazines, and catalogs. Display the collage in the classroom and save it to use in the next lesson.

LESSON STEPS

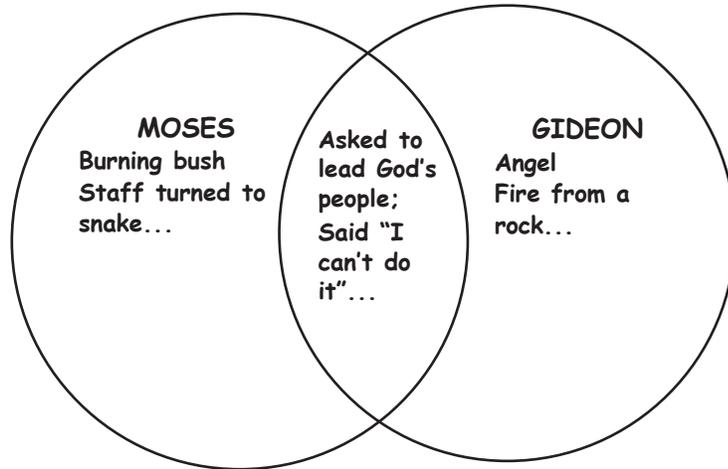
1. Tell the story of Gideon. Using *God Gives the Land*, read or tell the story from chapters 16 and 17.

2. Compare Gideon’s call and Moses’ call. Have students work in pairs to compare and contrast Gideon’s call (Judges 6:11-24; 36-40) with Moses’ call (Exodus 3–4:17). Find answers to the following:

- How did God appear?
- What did God ask?
- What excuse did the person give?

- What was God’s encouragement?
- What was God’s sign?
- What was the person’s response?

3. Share answers with the class. Use a Venn diagram to compare the calls to Moses and Gideon.



EXTEND THE LESSON

(These activities will extend the lesson to longer than 30 minutes.)

- **Work on Faith Hero T-shirts.** Invite students to add Gideon’s name and a symbol from one of his experiences to their Faith Hero T-shirts. Provide fabric markers or crayons.
- **Write “letters to the editor.”** Gideon destroyed the altar of Baal. This greatly upset the townspeople. Have students write pretend letters to the editor of the local paper, trying to convince people to turn away from idol worship to worship the one true God.
- **Bible memory journal.** If students did not have time to finish the decoration of Psalm 143:8 during the lesson on Deborah, give time to finish now. Ask similar questions about Psalm 143:8: I wonder what happened when Gideon put his trust in God. I wonder how God showed Gideon the way he should go.
- **Complete the “Moses and Gideon” worksheet** from page 82. Answers are as follows:

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. G | 6. M |
| 2. M | 7. G |
| 3. M | 8. G |
| 4. G | 9. M |
| 5. G | 10. M |

Name _____



Moses and Gideon



Directions: Put a **G** if the sentence is about Gideon and an **M** if the sentence is about Moses.

1. ___ God appeared to him as an angel.
2. ___ God appeared to him in a burning bush.
3. ___ God asked him to lead the people out of Egypt.
4. ___ His excuse was that his family was weak and he was young.
5. ___ God asked him to save Israel and defeat the Midianites.
6. ___ God's sign to him was that his rod became a snake.
7. ___ God's sign to him was that his bread and meat were set on fire.
8. ___ His response to God was that he built an altar.
9. ___ His excuse was that he couldn't speak well and people might not believe him.
10. ___ God encouraged him by saying he would give the words to speak and teach him what to say.

Judges

LESSON 3: GIDEON, GOD’S JUDGE

Objective

Students will recognize how God worked in Gideon’s life to do the impossible.

Key Concepts

- God continued to fight battles for the Israelites under the leadership of Gideon.
- Gideon reminded the Israelites that only God could rule over them. They didn’t need and shouldn’t have a king.

Texts: Judges 6–7; Judges 8:22-23

Estimated Lesson Time: 30 minutes

Materials

- Bible
- Collage from Lesson 2
- *God Gives the Land* by Eve B. MacMaster
- “Old and New Gideon” handout (p. 85)
- For Extend the Lesson, option one: scarves or lengths of fabric for headgear and belts, flashlights, noisemakers
- For Extend the Lesson, option two: Hall of Faith cards
- For Extend the Lesson, option three: Bible memory journals
- For Extend the Lesson, option four: “Gideon, God’s Judge” worksheet (p. 86)

Teacher Preparation

- Make copies of the “Old and New Gideon” handout, one per student.
- If using Extend the Lesson, option one, gather simple props for dramatizing the story of Gideon (cloths for headgear, sashes, etc.), including flashlights and noisemakers.
- If using Extend the Lesson, option four, make copies of “Gideon, God’s Judge” worksheet (1 per student).

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Getting rid of idols. Using the class collage from the last lesson, review the idols of Bible times and of today. Have students tear up the mural, to symbolize getting rid of “idols” in their lives. Pray together.

LESSON STEPS

- 1. Review the story of Gideon,** asking the class to list events from his life. Write these events on the board. How did Gideon change after God spoke to him?
- 2. The “old” and “new” Gideon.** Using the handout from page 82, have students fold the paper on the dotted line. On the left side, write words in acrostic style that describe Gideon before God spoke to him (*timid, shy, afraid, meek, etc.*) On the right side, write words that describe Gideon after God touched his life (*bold,*

brave, leader, etc.). You may work as a class or individually. Encourage the children to draw symbols for the old and new Gideon on their papers.

3. List the “impossible” things God did through Gideon, working in pairs. Use Mark 10:27 for a title.

4. Read Judges 8:22-23. How did the Israelites react to Gideon’s victory? What was Gideon’s response to the Israelites’ offer? Discuss whether we allow God to be the king in our lives and how we do this.

EXTEND THE LESSON

(These activities will extend the lesson to longer than 30 minutes.)

- **Dramatize the story of Gideon** choosing his army and leading them to victory over the Midianites. Use simple props, including lights and noisemakers as scare tactics for Gideon’s army.
- **Play “Name that Hero,”** using a deck of Hall of Faith cards. Divide the class into three teams. Team 1 draws a Hall of Faith card and reads the character description. Team 2 consults together and has 20 seconds to name the hero. If they name the hero correctly, they get a point. If they are incorrect, Team 3 gets a chance. The team who answers correctly draws another card and reads the description to the next team.
- **Bible memory journal.** Allow time for children to complete their decorations of Psalm 143:8, if necessary.
- **Complete “Gideon, God’s Judge” worksheet,** page 86. An answer key is provided on page 87.

Name _____

Old and New Gideon

Directions: Fold paper in half on dotted line. On the left side, write words using letters in Gideon's name that describe him before God spoke to him. On the right side, write words that describe Gideon after God spoke to him. (One is done for you.) Then draw symbols of the old and new Gideon.

Old

G
T I M I D
D
E
O
N

New

G
I
D
E
O
N

Name _____

Gideon, God's Judge

Worksheet

Directions: Fill in each blank with a word from the list. Each word is used once.

Baal Midianites fire young sign meat wheat weak

1. An angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon as he was beating _____.
2. The angel told Gideon that the Lord would give him the strength to save Israel and defeat the _____.
3. Gideon didn't believe he could save Israel, because his family was _____ and he was _____.
4. Gideon asked for a _____ to show that it was really God talking to him.
5. The Lord told Gideon to put some _____ and bread on a rock.
6. When the angel touched these things with the tip of his staff, a _____ flared up.
7. That night, God spoke to Gideon in a dream and told him to destroy the place where idols of _____ were worshiped.

Directions: Circle the letter for each correct answer.

8. Whose altar to Baal did Gideon destroy?
 - a. His brother's
 - b. His father's
 - c. God's
9. What did Gideon do with the idol of Baal?
 - a. He used it to build a house.
 - b. He used it for firewood.
 - c. He threw it away.
10. How many men went with Gideon to fight the Midianites?
 - a. 10,000 men
 - b. 3,000 men
 - c. 300 men

Directions: Answer each question with a complete sentence. *(Use back of sheet.)*

11. Why didn't Gideon want to be ruler over the Israelites?
12. How did Gideon's life change after God touched his life?

“Gideon, God’s Judge” Worksheet—Answer Key

1. wheat
2. Midianites
3. weak, young
4. sign
5. meat
6. fire
7. Baal
8. His father’s
9. He used it for firewood.
10. 300 men
11. Why didn’t Gideon want to be a judge for the Israelites? *Answers will vary, but should say something about him being the least or youngest in his family and his clan being weak.*
12. How did Gideon’s life change after God touched his life? *Answers will vary, but should say something about becoming a strong leader. He became confident and decisive.*

Judges

LESSON 4: SAMSON, A FOOLISH LEADER

Objective

Students will understand that God continues to be with God's people, even though at times they disobey.

Key Concepts

- God forgives and gives second chances in spite of poor choices.
- Even though lust overruled all reason and faith, God did not turn away from Samson.
- God used Samson's life, even though Samson was not interested in God's plan for delivering Israel.

Text: Judges 13–16

Estimated Lesson Time: 45 minutes

Materials

- Bibles
- Overhead projector and transparencies for Introducing the Lesson (*optional*)
- *God Gives the Land* by Eve B. MacMaster
- Blank Hall of Faith cards (1 per student)
- For Extend the Lesson, option four: cotton balls, paper plates, cardboard box, straws, ping pong balls, balloons, paper plate, ruler or paint stick, plastic milk bottle lids
- For Extend the Lesson, option five: Faith Hero T-shirts, fabric crayons/markers
- For Extend the Lesson, option six: Samson Word Find handout (p. 91)
- For Extend the Lesson, option seven: Unit 2 Review—Judges (p. 92)

Teacher Preparation

- Read Chapters 24–26 in *God Gives the Land*, to become familiar with the story of Samson.
- If using an overhead projector for Introducing the Lesson, make transparencies of the riddles.
- If using Extend the Lesson, option six, make copies of word find (1 per student).
- If using Extend the Lesson, option seven, make copies of review (1 per student).

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Answer some riddles. Choose riddles to put up one at a time, using an overhead projector. Or give the riddles orally. Explain that you will be learning about Samson. Riddles were important in Samson's life (see Judges 14). Here are some examples of riddles to ask the students:

- How much did the crab pay for the sandcastle? A sand dollar.
- What is strong on the outside and sweet on the inside? A lion that has just eaten honey. (*Samson also used a riddle about a lion and some honey. Have the children read it from Judges 14:14.*)

- What did the banana do when the monkey chased it? The banana split.
- What kind of shoes do reptiles wear? Snakers.

LESSON STEPS

1. Tell the story of Samson. Using the book *God Gives the Land*, read or tell the story of Samson from chapters 24-26. It may become too long, to read all three chapters. You will want to leave some parts out and choose the parts that work well with the lesson.

2. Study Samson's character. As a class or in small groups, make a character web of Samson. Write the following references (not explanations) on the board. If using small groups, each group should look up all the references and make their own webs. Then come back together as a class to discuss. If there is not enough time for small groups, you may choose to do the activity as a class. Look at the following references and make a web of Samuel's character on the board or on chart paper.

Judges 14:2, 3—Samson demands that his mother and father allow him to marry a Philistine woman. Explain to the children that this shows a lack of concern for differing religious beliefs between the Israelites and the Philistines, and Samson was not submitting to his parents' wishes. This is not a good sign. Ask what words could be added to the web to describe this kind of character. (*Selfish, disobedient, strong-tempered or easily angered, little self-control*)

Judges 14:5, 6—Samson is so strong that he could kill a lion barehanded. (*Strong*)

Proverbs 10:1 and 23—Many of the things Samson did, such as telling Delilah the secret of his hair, were foolish things to do. (*Foolish*)

3. Samson's relationship with God. Discuss the way Samson related to God. The sad thing is that he obviously believed in God—Yahweh, the God of Israel—and yet he lived his life like those who don't believe in God. Samson did not worship God or thank God for his supernatural strength. He was not grateful for all that God had given him. Only after he was extremely humiliated, did Samson understand what God had done for him.

4. Make Hall of Faith cards for Samson. Hand out blank Hall of Faith cards and invite children to draw a portrait of Samson on one side. On the other side, students should list:

- Facts and Figures
- Faith Reminders
- Memory Verse
- Story of Samson found in Judges 13–16

EXTEND THE LESSON

(These activities will extend the lesson to longer than 45 minutes.)

- **Amazing feats.** Referring to Judges 13–16 and working in small groups, list the amazing things Samson did with his strength.
- **Samson and the Golden Rule.** Samson wanted revenge when people did unkind things to him. He waited for an opportunity to get even. Compare this way

of living with the Golden Rule. Find examples in Samson’s life when he did get even. (See Judges 14:19; 15:3-5, 8a, 15; 16:3, 30a.)

- **Good health and the Bible.** In order to grow strong, we need to follow rules for good health (eating nourishing food, getting proper rest and exercise, etc.). Samson was unusually strong physically, but not socially or spiritually. Look up and discuss verses that show how to grow strong in all three areas.

Physical Strength—Psalm 4:8 (peaceful sleep); Daniel 1:12-17 (eating healthy food and vegetables); Judges 13:7 (avoiding wine and strong drink)

Social Strength—Proverbs 1:8,9; Proverbs 3:3,4; Proverbs 6:16-19; Proverbs 12:18; Proverbs 16:32; Proverbs 17:9

Spiritual Strength—Psalms 119:59, 60; Proverbs 3: 5, 6; Proverbs 4:20, 21; Proverbs 7:1, 2; Proverbs 14:2.

- **Indoor Olympics.** Divide class into two groups, Israelites and Philistines. Keep score as each event is played. Encourage teams to make up cheers.

Ball Toss: See who can throw a cotton ball the farthest.

Paper Plate Toss: See who can come closest to the marked target.

Ping-Pong Hockey: Cut out a cardboard box for a “playing field.” Players use straws to try to blow a ping-pong ball to the goal.

Balloon Pop: Blow up balloons and see who can pop theirs first.

Lid Toss: Draw face on paper plate and cut out big circle for mouth. Attach plate to paint stick or ruler. Give each player three plastic milk bottle lids. See who can toss the most lids into mouth.

- **Work on Faith Hero T-shirts.** Have students add Samson’s name and a symbol from one of his experiences to their Faith Hero T-shirts. Provide fabric markers or crayons.

- **Complete Samson Word Find,** page 91. (See answers below.)

- **Complete Unit 2 Review—Judges** on page 92. You may do this as an open-Bible review or as an assessment. An answer key is provided on page 93.

**Answers for
Samson Word
Find:**

B	U	R	N	T	O	F	F	E	R	I	N	G	S	K
Y	Z	E	B	A	O	P	R	R	E	V	E	N	G	E
A	A	G	F	O	R	J	J	M	C	N	G	I	H	U
H	D	E	L	I	L	A	H	Y	R	I	D	D	L	E
W	E	I	S	H	W	O	T	H	K	B	U	N	Y	R
E	S	O	A	B	U	V	B	H	M	S	J	A	E	D
H	N	I	O	M	I	M	T	W	O	X	F	T	P	Z
U	R	N	A	T	A	G	I	T	D	A	A	S	K	I
J	E	R	R	B	N	N	G	L	S	L	F	R	P	M
T	E	R	C	E	S	S	O	K	I	K	R	E	H	L
I	L	O	R	W	A	I	E	A	W	T	W	D	J	D
M	M	T	W	F	O	N	T	X	H	L	Y	N	K	Q
S	S	E	N	E	V	I	G	R	O	F	X	U	V	B
J	X	S	K	R	O	Z	A	R	M	F	I	C	E	R
H	P	P	Z	N	X	K	Y	D	P	Z	U	A	I	L

Name _____

Samson Word Find

B U R N T O F F E R I N G S K
Y Z E B A O P R R E V E N G E
A A G F O R J J M C N G I H U
H D E L I L A H Y R I D D L E
W E I S H W O T H K B U N Y R
E S O A B U V B H M S J A E D
H N I O M I M T W O X F T P Z
U R N A T A G I T D A A S K I
J E R R B N N G L S L F R P M
T E R C E S S O K I K R E H L
I L O R W A I E A W T W D J D
M M T W F O N T X H L Y N K Q
S S E N E V I G R O F X U V B
J X S K R O Z A R M F I C E R
H P P Z N X K Y D P Z U A I L

Burnt offerings
Delilah
Foolish
Forgiveness
Foxes
Hair
Humility
Jawbone
Judge
Manoah

Prison
Razor
Retaliation
Revenge
Riddle
Secret
Strength
Understanding
Wisdom
Yahweh



Name _____

Unit 2 Review—Judges

What lessons we can learn from the lives of these three judges: Deborah, Gideon, and Samson? Answer the following questions.

1. A. There are many things to admire about Deborah. Name two of them.

B. How can you apply these two characteristics to your life today?

2. Gideon learned that a small group with God on their side can win the battle. Write about this victory.

3. How did Gideon have to stand alone?

4. Samson was led in the wrong direction by his self-interest. In spite of this, God forgave him and allowed his strength to come back. **What are some influences that can lead us in the wrong direction?**

5. Choose one of the three judges (Deborah, Gideon, or Samson). Describe how God used this judge to deliver the Israelites. Miracles happened during the leadership of each of these judges. Be sure to include those miracles as you write about how God used the judge of your choice.

Unit 2 Review—Judges, Answer Key:

1. A. There are many things to admire about Deborah. Name two of them.
(*Note: Children may not be able to use the vocabulary in the listed answers. Please accept any two answers that are similar.*)

- She knew that only with the Lord’s help was victory possible.*
- She remembered to be thankful.*
- Deborah was an able prophet and judge.*
- Deborah had the respect of the Israelites. (They looked to her for guidance.)*
- She was willing to listen to and obey God.*

B. How can you apply these characteristics to your life today?

Accept answers that show students are able to use the answer from section A and apply it in some way to their lives today.

2. Gideon learned that a small group with God on their side can win the battle. Write about this victory.

In the middle of the night, Gideon and 300 men surrounded the enemy camp. With flaming torches and trumpets, they won the victory because God helped them.

3. In what way did Gideon have to stand alone?

He was called to destroy Baal’s altar and deliver the Israelites from the Midianites.

4. Samson was led in the wrong direction by his self-interest. In spite of this, God forgave him and allowed his strength to come back. **What are some influences that can lead us in the wrong direction?**

Answers will vary.

5. Choose one of the three judges (Deborah, Gideon, or Samson). Describe how God used this judge to deliver the Israelites. Miracles happened during the leadership of each of these judges. Be sure to include those miracles as you write about how God used the judge of your choice.

- Deborah: a woman, prophetess, went with Barak to fight the Canaanites, who had iron weapons. God caused a huge thunderstorm, and the iron chariots bogged down in the mud. The Israelites had a great victory over the Canaanites.*
- Gideon: was afraid. He put out a fleece two times, and God convinced him that he was to lead the Israelites. God had Gideon surprise the enemy in the middle of the night, and the Israelites won the victory with flaming torches and trumpets because God helped them.*
- Samson: disobedient to God, followed his own desires. In spite of Samson’s disobedience, God gave Samson his strength back. Through Samson, God delivered the Israelites from the Philistines.*