

Use Week of:

Unit 9 • Session 1

Israel's Unfaithfulness

BIBLE PASSAGE:

Judges 1–3

STORY POINT:

God's people repeatedly turned from Him.

KEY PASSAGE:

1 John 1:9

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

What is repentance? Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to Jesus.

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LEADER Bible Study

Following Joshua's death, the Israelites were without a leader. They fell into a cycle of sin that can be seen during each reign of the judges. The cycle is marked by an A-B-C-D-E pattern. Let's look at the first judge, Othniel, to see this pattern.

First, the people fell into **A**postasy. They turned away from God and served other gods. (Judg. 3:7) Next, they experienced a period of **B**ondage. God was angry with the Israelites, and He gave them into the hand of the king of Aram. (v. 8) Third, the people **C**ried out to God. (v. 9) Then, God sent a **D**eliverer to save them. (vv. 9-10) Finally, they had **E**ase in the land. (v. 11) Then Othniel died.

This pattern continued with Ehud. The people had again turned from God. Their apostasy made God angry. He sent them into bondage by strengthening the king of Moab to defeat Israel. The Israelites served the king of Moab for 18 years.

The Moabites were well-fed, especially the king. They enjoyed the fruit of the Israelites' labor while the Israelites went hungry. By thrusting a sword into the king's belly, Ehud disemboweled the king and left him dead on the floor of his room. The fat covered over the handle of the sword so that Ehud could not remove it.

After Ehud delivered Israel, the Israelites struck down the Moabites and there was peace in the land for eighty years. But Ehud would die, and they would need another judge to lead them.

The Israelites needed someone better than a judge; they needed a king who would save them not only from the consequences of their sin, but the sin itself. That was all part of God's plan. God sent a true Deliverer; His Son, Jesus, died for our sin and delivered us forever from the oppression of sin and death.

The BIBLE Story

Israel's Unfaithfulness

Judges 1–3

Joshua had died. Without a strong leader, the Israelites disobeyed God and worshiped false gods. They ignored and forgot about the one true God. God was angry. He let an enemy king take over the Israelites, and they served that king for eight years.

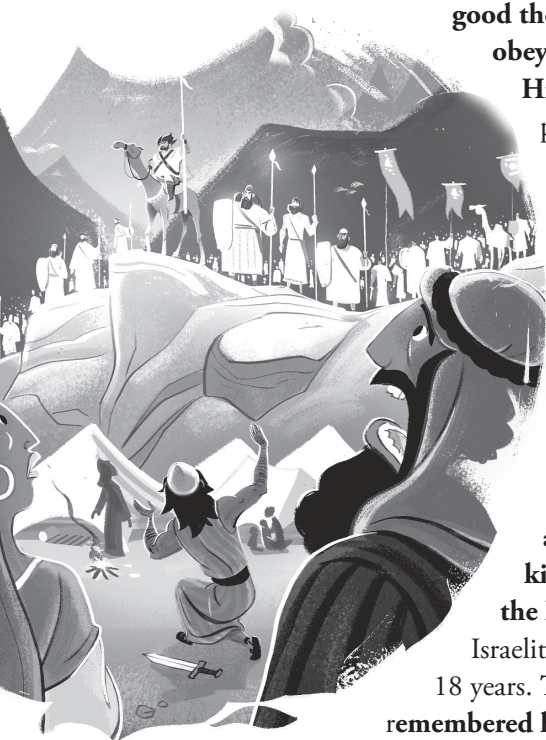
Then the Israelites remembered how good they had it when they loved and obeyed God. They cried out to Him, “Save us!” God wanted the people to love and obey Him, so God raised up Othniel (AHTH nih el) to rule over them as the first judge.

Othniel led the Israelites into battle against the king of Aram, and God helped the Israelites win. The land was peaceful for 40 years. Then Othniel died.

Again, Israel ignored God and forgot Him. God gave the king of Moab power to attack the Israelites and defeat them. The Israelites served the king of Moab for 18 years. The Israelites were sad. They remembered how good they had it when they loved and obeyed God. They cried out to Him,

“Save us!” So God raised up Ehud (EE huhd) to save them.

The Israelites sent Ehud to the king of Moab, who was a very large man. Ehud had a double-edged sword under his clothes. Ehud said,



“I have a secret message for you.” The king dismissed all his attendants so he was alone with Ehud.

When the king stood up, Ehud pulled out his sword. He pushed it into the king’s belly. The sword was swallowed up by the king’s fat. Ehud couldn’t even pull it out! **Ehud escaped down the porch, locking the doors of the room behind him.** Ehud was gone when the king’s servants came in. The door was locked and they thought he was using the bathroom. They waited, but the king never opened the door. The servants got worried, so they unlocked the door and found their king dead on the floor!

When Ehud escaped, he blew a ram’s horn and he became the Israelites’ leader. “God will help us defeat our enemies, the Moabites,” Ehud told them. So the Israelites battled the Moabites and took control over them. **There was peace in the land for 80 years.**

When Ehud died, the Israelites ignored and forgot God again. They turned away from Him. When they remembered how good they had it when the loved and obeyed God, they cried out to Him, “Save us!” God sent a third judge, Shamgar (SHAM gahr), to save them.

Christ Connection: The judges saved the people from the consequences of their sin, but not the cause of it. God’s plan was to one day send a true Deliverer—Jesus, His own Son—to be the King of His people. Jesus saves people from sin forever.

Bible Storytelling Tips

- **Draw a diagram:** Help kids visualize the cycle of the judges by drawing a circle and labeling it clockwise: *Disobeyed God, Enemies attacked, Cried out to God, Judge delivered, and Time of peace.* Refer to the diagram as you tell the story.
- **Pause for effect:** Use brief silence between paragraphs to capture kids’ attention.

INTRODUCE the Story



SESSION TITLE: Israel's Unfaithfulness

BIBLE PASSAGE: Judges 1–3

STORY POINT: God's people repeatedly turned from Him.

KEY PASSAGE: 1 John 1:9

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is repentance? Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to Jesus.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to name their favorite superpower. Each kid should then tell why he picked that particular power. Explain that after Joshua died, God's people were left without a strong leader.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "Word Reveal" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete "Word Reveal" on the activity page. Guide kids to color in the squares that contain a circle to discover the word that means "not keeping your promises or remaining loyal."

SAY • God wants His people to be faithful. As we will see in our Bible story today, the Israelites were unfaithful. How did God respond to this? We'll soon find out!

LOW PREP

- "Old Testament Books Cards" printable
- Bibles
- clear contact plastic (optional)

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Old Testament books game

Form groups of up to four kids. Print and cut apart the Old Testament books cards. Prepare one set per group. Mix up the cards and challenge groups to arrange the cards in the

order they appear in the Old Testament. Provide Bibles for groups to check their work with the table of contents.

Prompt kids to point out the books of Old Testament Law. (*Genesis–Deuteronomy*) Explain that the next Bible division is called Old Testament History. It is made up of 12 books from Joshua–Esther.

SAY • Have you ever read from the Book of Judges? The Book of Judges shows what happens when God’s people turn away from Him and worship false idols. It also shows God’s mercy to guide His people back to Him. Today’s Bible story comes from the Book of Judges.

OPTION 2: Chaos game

Instruct kids to form a circle. Position four trash cans or baskets on their sides around the circle. Scatter balls in the center of the circle. Explain that each kid should decide silently which basket will be his goal.

When you say go, kids will use their feet to tap the balls into their chosen basket. Explain that players may not use their hands, but they may kick balls out of another basket.

Play for several minutes. Then call time and count the balls in each basket to determine which basket contains the most balls.

SAY • How did you feel while playing that game? That was pretty chaotic, right? Everyone was doing whatever he or she wanted. In today’s Bible story, that’s what God’s people started doing—whatever they wanted. Let’s see how that worked out for them.

Option: Laminate the cards between clear contact plastic to reuse in future sessions.

- trash cans or laundry baskets, 4
- tennis balls or other small balls, 2 or more per kid

Transition to teach the story

TEACH the Story



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BIBLE PASSAGE: Judges 1–3

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KEY PASSAGE: 1 John 1:9

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is repentance? Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to Jesus.

- room decorations
- Theme Background Slide (optional)

Suggested Theme Decorating Ideas: Cover the walls with black paper. Attach paper star cut-outs or adhesive glow-in-the-dark stars to the paper. Hang inflatable balls from the ceiling like planets. Roll a piece of poster board into a cone shape to make a large telescope. Position a stool or outdoor chair to one side.

Countdown

- countdown video

Show the countdown video as you transition to teach the story. Set it to end as the session begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

- leader attire
- astronomy books
- Bible

[Leader enters carrying a few books about astronomy. Leader also carries a Bible.]

LEADER • Hello, everyone! Welcome! I am so glad you could join me today. My name is [*your name*], and I bet you're wondering what all of this is. [*Gesture to theme decorations.*] I'm an astronomer! To be more precise, I'm an amateur astronomer. My hobby is exploring the universe by observing, researching, measuring, and sharing what I've learned.

With the way the earth moves around the sun—one time around in one year—I'm learning that

Tip: If you prefer not to use themed content or characters, adapt or omit this introduction.

many things occur in cycles, like the seasons! The four seasons happen every year.

You know, every time I am amazed by the universe, it makes me think of how amazing God is. After all, He created everything! He gives us His Word, the Bible [*hold up the Bible*], so we can know Him. I want to share a Bible story with you about a different type of cycle. Are you ready?

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Before we get started, listen to the big picture question we will be thinking about the next few weeks. Here it is: ***What is repentance?*** Now that's a great question about a big word. [*Stand facing one way.*] ***Repentance is turning away from sin and*** [*turn to face the other way*] ***turning to Jesus.*** Stand up and say that with me.

· Big Picture Question
Poster

Lead kids in saying the big picture question and answer. Guide them to stand facing one way for the first half of the answer and then turn to face the other way for the rest of it.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

· Giant Timeline

LEADER • The Bible is made up of many different stories. All of these stories fit together to tell an even greater story—the story of how God rescues sinners through His Son, Jesus. The Old Testament is about God's people, the Israelites. They were the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God promised to bless the whole world through this family!

The Israelites were slaves in Egypt for hundreds

of years, but God called Moses to lead the people out of Egypt and toward the promised land. When Moses died, Joshua became the leader of Israel. They entered the promised land and, with God's help, they began driving out their enemies. But eventually, Joshua died. Without a leader ... well, let's just say things went downhill pretty fast.

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Judges 1–3. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Israel’s Unfaithfulness.”

LEADER • God’s people repeatedly turned from Him.

They were stuck in a cycle of sin. When God’s people cried out to Him for help, God raised up judges to deliver His people from their enemies.

Israel’s first judge was named Othniel (AHTH nih el). Othniel delivered the people from their enemies, and they lived in peace for 40 years. When Othniel died, God’s people turned from Him again. They were overtaken by the Moabites, and God raised up Ehud to deliver them.

When Ehud died ... you guessed it. The people turned from God again. This time, when the people cried out to God for help, God raised up Shamgar to deliver the Israelites from the Philistines.

Christ connection

LEADER • The judges saved the people from the consequences of their sin, but not the cause of it. God’s plan was to one day send a true Deliverer—Jesus, His own Son—to be the King of His people.

- Bibles
- “Israel’s Unfaithfulness” video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Story Point Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster

Tip: Use Scripture and the guide provided on page 149 to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

Jesus saves people from sin forever.

We might hear this story and shake our heads about how many times the Israelites turned away from God. But we are just like the Israelites. Every day, our sinful hearts want to turn from God. We choose to sin and live for ourselves instead of God.

Like the Israelites, God can lead us to turn from our sin and turn back to Him. This is called repentance. Let's say our big picture question and answer together: ***What is repentance? Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to Jesus.***

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the "Unit 9, Session 1" questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about why sin has consequences, even if we've been forgiven. Guide them to discuss how Jesus changes our hearts.

• "Unit 9, Session 1" questions from kids video



Missions moment (3 minutes)

LEADER • Atlanta is the capital of the state of Georgia. It is also a city located in the middle of the "Bible Belt," an area of the United States historically known for its many churches and churchgoers. But today, many people do not go to church or know Jesus. This is a surprising fact. Let's play a game to learn more things about Atlanta.

Read the sentences on the "Finish the Facts" page, leaving the underlined parts unsaid. If a kid can complete the sentence, they must run to the front of the room. The first kid to the front of the room gets to finish the fact.

LEADER • Many people in Atlanta do not believe the gospel, but missionaries in the city are telling people that

• "Finish the Facts" printable

Jesus saves people from sin.
Pray for the people living in and around the city of Atlanta.

Key passage (5 minutes)

· Key Passage Poster
· “Faithful and Righteous” song

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together 1 John 1:9.

LEADER • To *sin* is to think, speak, or behave in any way that goes against God and His commands. Sin separates people from God. But because Jesus died on the cross for our sins, we can have a right relationship with God. When we confess our sins, God will forgive us.

Lead boys and girls in singing the “Faithful and Righteous” song.

Sing (4 minutes)

· “Walking by Your Side” song

Open your Bible and read aloud Psalm 106:43-45.

LEADER • In our Bible story today, **God’s people repeatedly turned from Him.** No matter how many times we turn from God, He will forgive us when we confess our sin and turn back to Him.

Sing together “Walking by Your Side.”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • Lord God, we confess that just like the Israelites, we have sinned against You. Our thoughts, words, and behavior do not always honor You. We repent, confident that You will forgive. Thank You for loving us and for sending Jesus. Amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now!* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

APPLY the Story



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BIBLE PASSAGE: Judges 1–3

STORY POINT: God's people repeatedly turned from Him.

KEY PASSAGE: 1 John 1:9

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is repentance? Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to Jesus.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- dry erase board or poster board
- marker
- index cards
- tape

Before the session, write the words of the key passage on a dry erase board or poster board. Omit several words, leaving blanks approximately 6 inches wide for each missing word. Write the omitted words on separate index cards.

Display the key passage poster and invite kids to read 1 John 1:9 two or three times. Then remove or cover the poster. Distribute index cards and challenge kids to tape the missing words into the correct spaces on the board. When kids finish, lead them to read the passage aloud.

SAY • Good job! This is an important verse to remember.

When we confess our sin to God, He is faithful to forgive us. This is great news!

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Small Group Timeline and Map Set (005802970)

Distribute Bibles. Guide boys and girls to open their Bibles to Judges 2. Explain that today's Bible story comes from Judges 1–3. Explain to kids that the Book of Judges is the second of twelve books of Old Testament History. No one knows for certain who wrote down the words of Judges, but these words are God's words.

Choose a volunteer to read aloud Judges 2:18-19.

SAY • Each time the Israelites ignored and forgot about the one true God, God allowed Israel's enemies to overtake them. God raised up Othniel to deliver Israel from the king of Aram. [*Point to Aram (B9) on the Old Testament Kingdoms Map.*] He raised up Ehud to deliver them from the king of Moab. [*Point to Moab (K7).*]

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. What cycle of behavior were the Israelites in? *Guide kids to recall that every time another nation ruled the Israelites, the Israelites would cry out for the Lord to deliver them. God would then raise up a judge to save them from the enemy. As the years went by, they forgot, went back into sin, and were captured by their enemies. This cycle of loving God, forgetting Him, doing evil, being captured, and then being delivered was repeated.*
(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Ps. 50:15.)
2. What did the Israelites need to be rescued from their enemies? *Lead kids to discuss how the Israelites needed a Savior who could deliver them once and for all. They needed a Savior who would deliver them from their sin, not just their enemies.*
(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Rom. 7:20.)
3. How does Jesus deliver sinners? *Help kids understand that Jesus is the only person who can free us from our sin. The Israelites continued to battle their enemies and the sin within until God sent the true Deliverer—Jesus. We are controlled by sin until we trust Jesus to deliver us from it. Jesus sets us free from sin, so we can stand against sin and can become more like Jesus.*
(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Rom. 7:24-25a.)

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

LOW PREP

- “Atlanta Prayer Card” printable, 1 per kid
- popcorn (optional)

Tip: Use this activity option to reinforce the missions moment from Teach the Story.

Option: At the end of this activity, provide popcorn as a treat.

- clothespins, 1 per kid
- fine-tip markers
- self-adhesive magnets
- 1-inch circle cutouts
- yarn in kids’ hair colors
- scissors
- craft glue
- index cards (optional)

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Prayers for Atlanta

Invite kids to sit in a circle on the floor. Remind them that they have learned some facts about Atlanta, Georgia—like Atlanta is a popular place to make movies. Ask kids to fill in this fact: Where there is a movie, there is _____! (*popcorn*) Share the “Atlanta Prayer Card” and read the prayer requests aloud.

Invite kids to join in “popcorn prayers.” Explain that you will begin by saying a one-sentence prayer; then you will say, “popcorn” and the name of the kid who will pray next. That kid will voice a one-sentence prayer, say “popcorn,” and name the next kid who will pray. Continue until everyone has prayed.

SAY • Many people in Atlanta do not believe the gospel, but missionaries in the city are telling people that Jesus saves people from sin. We can help people in Atlanta hear this good news by praying for the people and missionaries there.

Give each kid an Atlanta prayer card to take home so they can to pray with their families for the people of Atlanta.

OPTION 2: Clothespin people reminder hooks

Give each kid a clothespin. Explain that kids will turn the clothespins into figures of themselves. Instruct them to color one side of the clothespin to be clothes. Distribute adhesive magnets for kids to stick to the uncolored side of the clothespin. Provide 1-inch circle cutouts from heavyweight paper. Explain that each kid should draw a face on her circle. Tell kids to glue the circle to the long end of the colored side of the clothespin. Let kids cut lengths of yarn and glue them to the circles as hair.

Point out that kids can stick their magnets to a locker or refrigerator and clip notes or index cards with the clothespin as a reminder. Suggest kids make written reminders of prayer requests or Bible verses.

SAY • In our Bible story today, **God’s people repeatedly turned from Him.** We can be so forgetful! We forget what is true about God and about ourselves. This is why it’s important for believers to meet together regularly and encourage one another. If we have turned from God, we can repent and He will forgive us. Let’s say our big picture question and answer together. *What is repentance? Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to Jesus.*

Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God’s glory and my good?
- Are there any promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas. Then pray, thanking God for sending a true Deliverer who can take away our sin.

As time allows, lead kids to complete “The Cycle of the Judges” on the activity page. Kids should fill in the missing letters for the cycle of the judges and unscramble those letters to fill in the blanks for the definition given.

• pencils
• Journal Page
• “The Cycle of the Judges” activity page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week’s *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.