



LESSON 5 THE JUDGES

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Is Merciful

SCRIPTURE: Judges 2–3

GOD'S BIG STORY: Time after time, the Israelites forgot about God and went their own way, worshiping false gods. As a result, their enemies attacked and defeated them, yet God continued to show them mercy by sending leaders called judges to rescue them.

WORD OF WONDER: God is faithful. That's who He is. —from 2 Timothy 2:13

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 - Erasing Play
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LESSON 5 FOR LEADERS

INVITATION

We invite you to pause, listen, and shift your gaze toward the Father ...

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Is Merciful

SCRIPTURE: Judges 2–3

WORD OF WONDER: From 2 Timothy 2:13

God is merciful. No matter how many times we make the same mistake, it seems God is always ready to give us another chance. He is so faithful to us; it's like He never gets tired of forgiving. He is amazing.

Read Judges 2:10–19 and 3:15–23 and look for mercy from God toward His people. Mercy is not something anyone can earn or deserve.

Can you remember a time in your life when you received mercy? Perhaps you were distracted while driving and narrowly avoided a car accident. Reach deep and find a moment in your life when you have felt the cold sweat of a near miss and have said to yourself, “That was close!” It can be so easy to breathe a sigh of relief and move on quickly, hoping no one else saw!

Let's try another approach: I invite you to thank God for His mercy in those moments. He spares us. He lets us try again when we don't deserve it! Let's give Him all the glory for His endless mercy!

What will we do with all our second chances? Are we meant to do better next time, or simply to trust Him more? What is He forming in His people when He shows mercy?

—**Nancy Wood Clark**

Children's Pastor

Contributor to Wonder Ink

DID YOU KNOW?

FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS

WHO?

The book of Judges lists a number of judges, or leaders, who step in to help or lead the people of Israel when they are struggling against an enemy. In Judges 3, we're introduced to a judge named Ehud and Eglon, the enemy king of Moab.

WHAT?

Chapters 2–3 of Judges explain Joshua's death and the beginning of a disappointing cycle for Israel. The people turn from God, suffer punishment, and cry out for help. God sends rescue through a judge, and then Israel fails again. In one such rescue, Ehud saves God's people by killing a Moabite king.

WHERE?

The Israelites have conquered Canaan, the land God promised them ... for the most part. The book of Joshua reminds us often that they didn't drive everyone out of the land, which means they're still surrounded by ungodly cultural influences.

WHEN?

Moses led the Israelites throughout their desert wanderings. After Moses' death, Joshua took his place. Under Joshua's leadership, the Israelites serve God and conquer the land. In the book of Judges, after Joshua dies, the people lack a godly leader and start to go astray.

CONNECTING TO GOD'S BIG STORY:

God showed mercy on the Israelites by sending judges to save them. This was merciful because the Israelites did not deserve this. In Jesus, God was willing to die for people who were still sinners (Romans 5:8). No one is deserving of God's love and forgiveness, yet He is merciful.



Curiosity

Belief

Faith

Identity

LESSON 5 EARLY CHILDHOOD

Spark curiosity and get kids thinking about the wonder of God.

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Is Merciful

SCRIPTURE: Judges 2–3

WORD OF WONDER: From 2 Timothy 2:13

Play Stations

SUPPLIES: small whiteboards, dry-erase markers, whiteboard erasers, bin, large magnets, large metal washers, various ring-shaped items (wooden, foam, spiky sensory rings, elastic ponytail holders, stacking toy rings, etc.), scoops, bowl, coloring utensils, cardstock (optional), laminator (optional), star stickers (optional)

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: [The Judges Coloring Sheet \(1 per kid\)](#)

Greet the kids warmly and briefly explain the play stations to them. Invite them to play at any of the stations.

Welcome to church! While we're getting ready to start, you can play at any of these stations to help you get ready for our lesson today. Do you have any ideas about what we'll be learning today?

Play Station: Erasing Play

Set up: Set out the small whiteboards, dry-erase markers, and whiteboard erasers. If you want to create your own whiteboards, you can laminate several pieces of cardstock.

Play: Let the kids take turns drawing and erasing their creations. As they play, ask about what they're drawing. Talk about how helpful it is to have an eraser to fix things you did wrong.

Play Station: Endless Exploration

Set up: Set out a bin filled with magnets, washers, a variety of ring-shaped items, scoops, and a bowl.

Play: Let the kids scoop, pour, stack, and explore the ring shapes. Talk about the different sounds the rings make. Discuss the textures and how and why the magnets attract (or stick to) the metal washers. Mention how the rings are endless and don't have a starting or ending point.

Leader Tip: To ensure safety as the kids explore the small items in the bin, an adult should monitor it at all times.

Play Station: The Judges Coloring Sheet

Set up: Ahead of time, print one copy per kid of the coloring sheet and set out coloring utensils.

Play: Let the kids color. The kids can also turn the sheet over and draw a picture of a night sky and add star stickers.

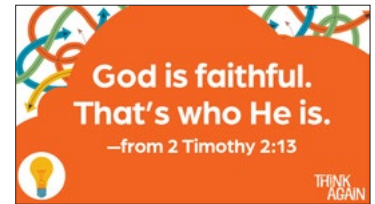
Word of Wonder

SUPPLIES: Bible

WORD OF WONDER
God is faithful. That's who He is.

—from 2 Timothy 2:13

Display the Word of Wonder Slide if using. **Our Word of Wonder for the Think Again series is from 2 Timothy 2:13. Let's practice saying the Word of Wonder together.** Open a Bible to 2 Timothy 2:13 and practice the verse with the kids.



Today we're learning that God is merciful. All through the Bible, we see how God has shown us His faithfulness by showing us love and mercy. Let's play a game to practice our Word of Wonder.

Gather the kids in a circle. **Each person in the circle will say one word of our verse, but there's a catch! You say your word and then turn to the next person and give a high five. Then that person will say the next word and give the next friend a high five. We'll keep going until we say the whole verse.**

If there are more than eight kids in the group, you'll go through the verse more than once.

Leader Tip: Assist the kids as needed. Some kids might find this activity very challenging, so assist them as needed. Repeat as many times as the kids are engaged. You could even try different actions each round!

Encourage the kids to do the motions and say the verse with you.

- **GOD**—Point up.
- **IS FAITHFUL**.—Give two thumbs-up (one on each word).
- **THAT'S WHO**—Put your arms out in front of you, palms up (one on each word).
- **HE IS**.—Point up (once on each word).
- **FROM 2 TIMOTHY 2:13**—Hold your hands open in front of you, as if holding a book.

Gather kids to discuss these questions:

- **How was God faithful to His people in God's big story today?** (God protected and forgave them, even when they didn't always follow Him. He sent judges to help and lead them.)
- **How has God been faithful to you this week?**

VIEW THE GOD'S BIG STORY VIDEO
Watch the God's Big Story Video as kids eat their snacks!



Declaring God's Wonder

Show the Early Childhood Declaration Slide and encourage the kids to say the statements and do the motions with you.

Thank You, God, that You made me! (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Make prayer hands, then point up and then to yourself.

And I am Your kid! (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Put your hands on your hips.

Jesus loves me so much. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Spread your arms out wide to your side one at a time, then pull them in for a hug around your chest.

His love for me is big. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Hold your arms up high and wide above your head.

The Holy Spirit leads me, (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Bring your arms down from above, making a path in front of you.

And I can follow You. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

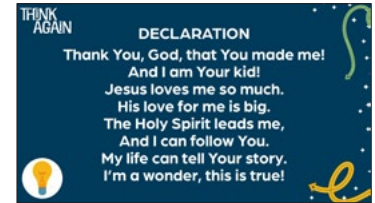
March in place like you're following the leader.

My life can tell Your story. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Hold your hands in front of you like an open book.

I'm a wonder; this is true. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Put your hands up, shake your fingers, and celebrate ("praise hands").



Prayer of Invitation

Before entering into God's big story, lead kids in a prayer of invitation. Use the prayer here or your own words: **God, Your love for us never ends. You know exactly what we can't understand. By the power of Your Holy Spirit, teach us how amazing and full of love You are! Help us see Your mercy and love in our lives, so that we can learn to love and show mercy to others. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

Worship

Today we'll learn about how merciful God is and how His love and faithfulness never end. Let's sing and thank our merciful and loving God together!

Play House of the Lord, All of Me and encourage the kids to sing and dance as they praise God.

God's Big Story

SUPPLIES: Bible

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: Bible Story Picture (1/SG)

Bible Time Rhyme

Say the Bible time rhyme (with motions) each week before the Bible story to remind kids that what they're about to hear is part of God's big story.

I open my Bible, and what do I see? (Hold your hands together, then open your palms, as if opening a book.)

God's big story, waiting for me! (Point to yourself.)

Let's start by reading part of God's big story from the Bible.

Read the God's Big Story Script provided.

GOD'S BIG STORY SCRIPT

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: upbeat music from the [Think Again Early Childhood Spotify playlist](#) (optional)

When I say something great about God and His people, you can stand and cheer. Encourage the kids to practice standing and cheering. **When I say something sad or disappointing about God's people, you can make a sad face.** Have the kids demonstrate a sad face. **Are you ready?**

A long time ago, God's people, the Israelites, were slaves in Egypt. God rescued them and led them into the wilderness. Encourage the kids to cheer. God sent leaders for His people. **Moses led them first. When Moses died, God sent a new leader, named Joshua, to lead His people. They walked in the desert for 40 years. Then God led them to a wonderful home that He promised them called Canaan.** Encourage the kids to cheer. **Joshua served God his whole life. Joshua told the people they should follow and obey God. And they did. The Israelites remembered everything God did for them.** Encourage the kids to cheer.

But when Joshua died, some of the people forgot about God. They stopped following God and started to pray to pretend gods, called idols, instead. That made God very angry. God let their enemies steal from them and win in battles. You can make sad faces now or give a thumbs-down. Pause to allow the kids to respond.

Even though the people forgot Him, God still loved them. He sent people called judges to lead and protect the Israelites. Encourage the kids to cheer. **When the people were sorry for not obeying, God forgave them. But after a while, they forgot again and did the same wrong things. Still, God forgave them—every single time!**

God showed them mercy. Mercy means being kind and forgiving, even when someone doesn't deserve it. God showed mercy by sending judges to lead them and help them. Encourage the kids to cheer.

God was patient and loving with His people then, and He still is today. God always forgives us—even when we do things we shouldn't. And God helps us because He loves us so much! No matter what we do, we can know that God is merciful. Encourage serious cheering! The kids can even jump up and dance. You can play upbeat music from the [Think Again Early Childhood Spotify playlist](#).

Connecting the Wonder Truth

Ask the following question to help kids connect the Wonder Truth to God's big story:

Our Wonder Truth today is GOD IS MERCIFUL. The word *merciful* means God is kind and forgiving, even when people don't deserve it. Where did you see our Wonder Truth happen in the story? Allow kids to answer freely.

God showed the Israelites mercy by sending judges to save them. This was merciful because they didn't deserve it. Many years later, Jesus—who is perfect—died for us, even when we didn't deserve it because of our sin. No one deserves it, but God shows us mercy by sending Jesus to forgive and save us!

Prayer and Blessing

After the kids finish the activity, pray with them and thank God for always loving us and wanting a relationship with us.

We're going to use the poster we just made as a guide for our prayer. We can thank God for His mercy and forgiveness! He loves us, no matter what! And He sent Jesus so we can be forgiven and saved.

Read the responses on the poster and encourage the kids to say "Thank You, God" as you read each response.

Encourage the kids to hold their hands out in front of them, with palms up, as if their hands are open to receive something. Tell them to listen and receive the blessing as you speak it over them.

Blessing: Our God is the God who delights in mercy and longs to be near to us. May you never turn away from God, but if you do, may you always be ready to receive God's forgiveness and mercy.

Circle Time: Unending Faithfulness

SUPPLIES: large plastic hoop

Gather the kids in a circle, holding hands. Insert a plastic hoop on the arm of one of the kids.

Today we learned that God was merciful when He forgave the Israelites. God wasn't just faithful one time, He was faithful repeatedly. God showed them mercy. Mercy means being kind and forgiving, even when someone doesn't deserve it. As we play this game, think about how God's love and forgiveness never end. Look at this hoop—does it have a start? Allow kids to answer. Does it have an end? Allow kids to respond. This hoop is a continuous circle. God's love and forgiveness are continuous too.

To play our game, you're going to work together to pass the hoop around the circle without letting go of each other. To pass it on, you must answer a question. Don't worry, you can help each other out with the answers. Let's play!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- **What did God save the Israelites from before they wandered in the desert?** (*slavery in Egypt*)
- **Where did God lead the Israelites after they left Egypt?** (*the special land He promised them, Canaan*)
- **What did the new Israelites not remember?** (*how God took care of His people; what God did for them*)
- **Do you think God loved the Israelites when they turned from Him and made wrong choices?**
- **How does God show His love?**
- **What do you think it means when we say that God is merciful?** (*Mercy means being kind and forgiving, even when someone doesn't deserve it.*)
- **How has God shown His mercy to us?** (*God forgives our sins; God saves us; God invites us into His family*)
- **Who did God send to help the Israelites?** (*judges*)
- **Will God ever stop forgiving you and loving you?** (*No!*)

God is faithful and will always help us follow Him again if we stop obeying Him! He is merciful and will be there for us when we need help! Let's talk to God now in prayer and thank Him for His forgiveness and never-ending mercy.

Invite kids to share prayer requests and praises and to pray for each other. Some kids may not be comfortable praying out loud. That's OK! Encourage them to pray silently and thank God for forgiving us and hearing us. Remind them that God hears all our prayers!

Craft: Galaxy Art

SUPPLIES: address label stickers, black construction paper (1 sheet per kid), chalk (pink, blue, purple, white), shiny star stickers (at least 8–10 per kid), light-colored permanent marker (optional), sheet of dark paper (1 per kid, optional)

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: [Galaxy Craft Labels \(1 label per kid\)](#)

Ahead of time, print the Galaxy Craft Labels on address label stickers (30 per sheet) or use a light-colored permanent marker to write "God's Mercy Is Never-Ending" on a sheet of dark paper for each kid.

Today we're learning how God took care of the Israelites over and over. God loved them, even when they stopped obeying Him and made wrong choices. God cares for us in the same way. His love and mercy never end.

When we make wrong choices and do things that hurt God, it's called sin. But God loves us so much that He shows us mercy. He forgives us repeatedly. He will never stop forgiving us! Have you ever looked up at the night sky? Can you see the end of the sky? No! It reminds us of God's love and forgiveness for us. God's mercy never ends, no matter what we do. He is full of mercy!

Let's create beautiful galaxy pictures to help us remember God's amazing, never-ending forgiveness and mercy!

Give each kid a sheet of black construction paper, chalk, and shiny star stickers. Set out the Galaxy Craft Label stickers and encourage the kids to put a label sticker on their papers. Let them fill their papers with star stickers and use the chalk to draw stars, a moon, planets, or anything else they imagine would be in a night sky. As they work, remind them that God's mercy never ends and share examples of how God has shown mercy in your life.

Take your pictures home to remind you that God loves and forgives you always. His mercy never ends!



Responding in Worship: Thank You Poster

SUPPLIES: posterboard or butcher paper, marker, coloring utensils, stickers

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: music from the [Think Again Early Childhood Spotify playlist](#) (optional)

Before the kids arrive, write “Thank You, God, for ...” in large letters on a posterboard or a piece of butcher paper.

In God’s big story today, we heard how God cared for His people, even though they didn’t deserve it. This is called mercy. God is merciful. That means He forgives and holds back from treating someone as that person’s actions deserve.

God helped the Israelites by sending judges to guide them. Remember how the judges helped the Israelites make wise choices and know God? God was showing the Israelites mercy by sending them judges. God shows us mercy too! He always forgives us and sent Jesus to save us, even though we sin or make wrong choices. We can be forgiven and saved!

Let’s thank God for His forgiveness and mercy in our lives. How has God helped you? What has He done for you that makes you thankful? Allow the kids to respond.

Show the kids the posterboard or butcher paper. **This poster says, “Thank You, God, for ...” and we need to fill in what comes next! Let’s write or draw our answers all over the page and decorate it to thank God for His forgiveness and mercy.** Allow kids to write or draw their responses, or you can go around the room one at a time and write their answers on the poster. Encourage the kids to work together to decorate the poster with the coloring utensils and stickers.

Game: Judge Says

Let's play a game to help us think about how the judges in God's big story may have helped the Israelites. This game is called Judge Says; it's like the game Simon Says. You'll listen and do what the judge says to do. If the leader doesn't say, "judge says," then don't do what the leader says to do. If you do, you're out!

Call out various silly things to do, saying, "judge says" before you give some of the commands. If you don't say, "judge says" before a command and kids do it anyway, first tell them they're out, then tell them they can still be in the game.

Remind them you're showing mercy and giving them more chances, like God does for us any time we do wrong things. You can use the following commands or make up your own:

- Fly like a bird.
- Do jumping jacks.
- Touch your toes.
- Sit down on the ground.
- Jump up and down.
- Put your hands on your head.
- March in place.
- Go touch a wall.
- Clap your hands.
- Stand on one foot.
- Put your hands on your hips.
- Do a dance.

The people in God's big story didn't always listen to the judges. And they didn't always follow and obey God. But God still showed them mercy, and God shows us mercy. He forgives us and loves us!

Make It Inclusive: For kids who can't do the physical commands, or don't want to do them, allow them to be the "judge" and help determine when kids are out.