



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: Even if we are not faithful, he remains faithful. He must be true to himself.

—2 Timothy 2:13

- PRE-SERVICE:
 - OPTION 1 Interactive Game: One, Two, Three!
 - OPTION 2 STEM Activity: Egg-cellent Mercy
- Welcome Question: What is one of your best character traits?
- Declaring God's Wonder
- Prayer of Invitation
- Worship: That's Who I Praise, All of Me
- God's Big Story
- Connecting the Wonder Truth
- In Awe of God's Wonder
- Responding in Worship: Name Above All Names
- Blessing Your Kids



SCAN FOR THIS
WEEK'S VIDEO!

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: 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.

LESSON 5 ELEMENTARY & PRETEEN

Large Group

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: 2 Timothy 2:13

Series Bumper and Countdown Videos

Choose between the [Think Again Series Bumper Video](#) and [Countdown Videos](#) to introduce the kids to the series.

Welcome Question

SUPPLIES: paper, coloring utensils, whiteboard (optional), dry-erase marker (optional)

Before kids arrive, display [The Judges Welcome Question Slide](#) or write the following question on a whiteboard: “What is one of your best character traits?” Set out paper and coloring utensils.



As kids arrive ...

Warmly welcome every kid by name. Encourage kids to introduce themselves to new kids as they arrive. Direct everyone’s attention to the Welcome Question. Read the question aloud to younger kids. Invite kids to draw pictures of their answers if they choose. Consider sharing one or two of your own favorite character traits to get kids started.

At your start time ...

Begin your time together by introducing yourself by name and stating one of your best character traits. Invite several kids to do the same as they answer the Welcome Question: **What is one of your best character traits?**

Today we’ll hear in God’s big story about a group of people who made wrong choice after wrong choice. And we’ll see how God showed them one of His amazing character traits—mercy! But first, it’s time to be curious!

OPTION 1 Interactive Game: One, Two, Three!

Display the first of the [One, Two, Three! Slides](#) and gather the kids. Today we'll play a game called **One, Two, Three!** When I say, "Go," everyone will find a partner. Together, you and your partner will say, "One, two, three, go!" and immediately hold out one, two, or three fingers.

Display the second of the [One, Two, Three! Slides](#). Either you or your partner will win, depending on how many fingers each of you holds out. One finger beats two; two beats three; and three beats one. If you both hold out the same number of fingers, it's a tie, and you'll play again until one of you wins. Who would like to demonstrate the game with me? Call on one kid to play the game with you in front of the group. Once everyone seems to understand the rules, thank your helper and invite her to return to her seat.

When we begin, whoever wins will remain standing, and everyone who doesn't win will sit against the wall. Then the winners will play the winners until just one person remains. OK. Stand up and find a partner, but don't begin until I say, "Go." Give kids time to pair up.

Before we begin, there is one little twist. I need one person to be the judge. Pause for kids who are interested to raise their hands and choose one to be the judge. Ask a youth or adult volunteer to take that person's place with his partner. At different times during the game, the judge will say "mercy," and anyone who has been eliminated can immediately stand up, find a partner, and rejoin the game. There is no limit to how many times "mercy" can be called.

Leader Tip: You need an even number of participants plus one judge. If needed, invite a volunteer to join, or join the kids yourself!

OK. Is everyone ready? Allow kids to respond. **Then, "Go!"** Kids play the first round of One, Two, Three! with their partners. Then the winners remain standing, find a new partner, and play again, while the kids who lost sit against the wall. Once a good number of kids are sitting out, encourage the judge to say, "mercy!" (Some judges may need encouragement from you to speak up. Others will play the role boldly!)

Before ending the game, ask the judge to say, "mercy!" one last time so that everyone is participating at the end. There will never be a single winner.

Gather all the kids together. **Great job, everyone! How many of you lost and had to sit down at some point during the game?** Pause for kids to respond. **How did you feel when the judge called "mercy"?** Pause for kids to respond. **This was just a fun game, and getting it wrong simply meant you made a wrong guess. But in life, we all make much bigger, wrong choices. God's people, the Israelites, knew all about wrong choices! Long ago, they made the wrong choice not to listen to God and found themselves in trouble. However, God is merciful and showed them kindness, and just like in our game today, God sent judges to rescue them!**



To show mercy is to forgive someone and hold back from treating them as their actions deserve. And to be merciful is to be full of mercy. Display the Judges Wonder Truth Slide. Today's Wonder Truth is **GOD IS MERCIFUL**.



Make It Inclusive: For kids with physical limitations, consider inviting them to be judges.

Provide noisemakers, such as bells to shake, as a signal for kids who have been eliminated to rejoin the game.

OPTION 2 STEM Activity: Egg-cellent Mercy

SUPPLIES: table; fresh egg (1 or more); materials for building an egg drop contraption such as small shipping boxes, packing materials (i.e., packing peanuts, bubble wrap, packing paper), wooden skewers, tape, disposable cups; plastic tarp (optional); stepladder (optional)

In this activity, you and the kids will work together to create a contraption to protect an egg as you drop it from varying heights. Ahead of time, decide where you'll drop the egg. Clear out some space, if needed. Consider laying out a plastic tarp to make cleanup easier, especially if your room is carpeted. For a more dramatic effect, bring a stepladder to stand on while dropping the egg. (Just be sure to set the ladder somewhere out of sight before and after the activity.) Set the supplies out on a table at the front of the room. (Consider bringing several fresh eggs so that you have backups, if needed.)

Gather the kids and display the Egg-cellent Mercy Slide. Hold an egg above your head. **What do you think would happen if I dropped this egg right now?** Invite kids to respond. **Yes, it would break into many pieces ... poor egg! Do you think it's possible to drop this egg from very high without it breaking? How so?** Invite kids to share their ideas.

Great ideas! Let's work together to build a contraption we can put the egg in to cushion its fall so that we can drop it from very high without it breaking!



Invite kids to gather around the table and provide ideas for building an egg-drop contraption. If your group is small, this can be an informal conversation where each kid freely shares their ideas and suggestions and contributes to building one group contraption. If your group is large, invite kids to raise their hands if they have ideas and suggestions and call on them one at a time. In this case, you'll build the contraption based on the ideas kids are sharing. Within several minutes, you should have one completed egg-drop contraption.

Let's test our contraption! Invite one kid to gently place the egg in the contraption. Invite another volunteer to drop the contraption (with egg inside). You might have them start by dropping it from a low height of about 1–2 feet off the ground. If the egg survives without cracking, invite another volunteer to drop it from a slightly greater height. Continue doing this, increasing the height each time, until the egg breaks. Or if time is limited, skip straight to a great height, dropping the egg yourself while standing on a chair or, if you have a stepladder, from near the top of the ladder. (Though the egg will most likely break, the kids will love the drama of it all!)

Gather all the kids together. **Great job designing an egg-drop contraption to protect our egg (at least a little bit!) from the natural results of dropping it! What would have happened if we had dropped our egg even just one foot from the ground without our contraption?** Invite responses. **Yes, it would have broken! The contraption we built cushioned the egg, protecting it from experiencing the full impact of falling. Mercy is a little bit like that. When someone extends mercy to us, they forgive us and hold back from treating us as our actions deserve. Our contraption provided a little bit of mercy for our egg today! In God's big story today, we'll hear about how God showed a whole lot of mercy to His people when they made some very wrong choices. Display the Judges Wonder Truth Slide. Today's Wonder Truth is **GOD IS MERCIFUL**.**



Small Group

Introduce small group time. While kids are in small group, consider sitting in the groups for a few minutes each. Engage and interact as is appropriate.

Countdown

After about 15 minutes of small group, give a 5 minute warning and begin the countdown.

VIDEO: COUNTDOWN

"Hey everyone! Welcome to our Large Group Worship time! My name is _____ and I'm excited to take this time to worship God, review what we just read, and talk about ways we can respond to what we are learning about God! We are going to pray as we prepare our hearts to worship God!"

Declaring God's Wonder

Display the Judges Declaration Slide. Read each line boldly and invite kids to repeat after you.

Thank You, God, that You are good! (Kids repeat.)

You made me on purpose, for a purpose. (Kids repeat.)

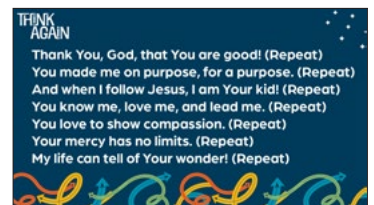
And when I follow Jesus, I am Your kid! (Kids repeat.)

You know me, love me, and lead me. (Kids repeat.)

You love to show compassion. (Kids repeat.)

Your mercy has no limits. (Kids repeat.)

My life can tell of Your wonder! (Kids repeat.)



Prayer of Invitation

Lead kids in a prayer of invitation before entering into worship and God's big story: **God, thank You that there are no limits to Your love! By the power of Your Holy Spirit, show us how amazing and full of mercy You are! Help us to recognize mercy in our lives so that we might accept it and show it to others. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

Worship

God is compassionate and full of mercy! His love overflows to us! Let's sing praises to God now. Play *That's Who I Praise*, *All of Me* and encourage the kids to sing and dance as they praise God.

God's Big Story

Display the *Judges Title Slide*. Explain that today's story is found in a book of the Bible called Judges. Judges tells about different people whom God sent to rescue the Israelites from their troubles. It includes story after story of God's mercy.

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

Watch *God's Big Story Video*.



LESSON 5 THE JUDGES

EXPERIENCE IT! SCRIPT

SUPPLIES: cardstock, scissors (prep only)

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: Find It, Match It Cards (1 set per 3–5 kids)

Ahead of time, print the Find It, Match It Cards onto cardstock and cut apart the cards. You'll need one set for each group of 3–5 kids.

Help kids form groups of 3–5. Give each group a set of Find It, Match It Cards and instruct them to mix up their cards. As you read the story, emphasize the italicized/underlined words and phrases, as each aligns with a Find It, Match It Card.

Each group has a set of cards with pictures and words that fit with today's part of God's big story. As you listen to the story, when I come to a part that connects to one of your cards, I'll say, "Find it, match it!" At that point, you'll look through your story cards and find the picture or words that best match that part of the story. Once you find the card, lay it out in front of your group, and we'll continue. Does everyone understand? Kids respond. OK, then let's get started!

Long ago, God rescued His people from slavery in Egypt and led them into the wilderness on the way to the land He had promised. For 40 years, they wandered in the desert with Moses as their leader. Find it, match it! Pause as kids find the matching card. At the end of their wandering, Moses died, and a new leader named Joshua guided the Israelites into the promised land. Find it, match it! Pause as kids find the matching card. Joshua served God his whole life, helping God's people defeat their enemies and take over the land God had given them. Find it, match it! Pause as kids find the matching card. Joshua told the people they should serve the Lord. While Joshua was alive, the Israelites followed God because they had seen all the great things He had done.

But after Joshua died, a new generation of Israelites grew up, and they didn't know God or what He had done for their family. Find it, match it! Pause as kids find the matching card. Although God had rescued their family from slavery in Egypt, brought them safely through the wilderness, and forgiven them many times, the people quickly ignored Him. They worshiped the false gods of the nations around them, forgetting all that God had done for them. They started to sin against God by serving other gods called Baals(BAY-uls) and Ashtoreths (ASH-tahr-awths). We also call these idols. Find it, match it! Pause as kids find the matching card, which shows people worshiping idols.

This made God angry, so He allowed people to come steal from the Israelites. And when enemies attacked the Israelites, God did not fight for them. Find it, match it! Pause as kids find the matching



card. **He allowed the enemies to win, just as God said He would. The people were very upset by this.**

So God showed His people mercy. Mercy means that although God could have allowed them to keep experiencing the consequences of their disobedience, He chose to show them compassion and kindness instead. This made the people happy. Find it, match it! Pause as kids find the matching card. **God showed mercy by raising up judges. Find it, match it!** Pause as kids find the matching card. **Judges were leaders who helped the Israelites escape or fight their enemies.**

God would give the Israelites a judge to save them from their enemies. But when the judge died, the Israelites would go back to being sinful and worshiping false gods. So their enemies would attack them. Then the Israelites would cry out to God, and He would send a judge to save them. Although the people never seemed to learn, God continued to show them mercy.

One time, when the Israelites did evil things, God allowed an enemy, King Eglon (EEG-lawn) from Moab, to rule over them. Find it, match it! Pause as kids find the matching card. **The people cried out to God, and He showed them mercy by raising up a judge named Ehud (EE-hood). Find it, match it!** Pause as kids find the matching card. **Ehud had a short sword that he hid under his clothes on his right leg.**

Ehud took a gift to King Eglon and told the king that he had a secret message for him. King Eglon sent everyone out of the room so that he could hear what Ehud had to say. Ehud told King Eglon that he had a message from God, so King Eglon got up to hear it. Ehud pulled out his sword and plunged it into King Eglon's big belly. The whole sword was swallowed up by his belly, and he died that day while Ehud escaped. Find it, match it! Pause as kids find the matching card, which includes pictures of Ehud and King Eglon.

Because of Ehud's bravery, the Israelites were able to fight their enemy and live in freedom for many years.

God showed mercy to the Israelites by sending Ehud. And He sent many more judges like Ehud. We serve a God who stays faithful to us even when we are not faithful to Him. He's a God who loves us, forgives us, and shows us kindness, even when we fail. Find it, match it! Pause as kids find the matching card, which should be the last one remaining. **We know that God is merciful.**

If time allows, invite kids to retell the story in their groups using their Find It, Match It Cards, which should now be in order in front of them.

Connecting the Wonder Truth

Display the Judges Wonder Truth Slide. **Our Wonder Truth today is GOD IS MERCIFUL. Where did you see our Wonder Truth in the story?** Allow kids to answer freely.

God showed mercy on the Israelites by sending judges, like Ehud, to save them. This was merciful because they did not deserve this. Many years later, Jesus—who is perfect—died for us while we were still sinners so that we can be forgiven. No one is deserving of God's love and forgiveness, but God is still merciful!



In Awe of God's Wonder

Spend a few moments allowing kids to think about the wonder of God's story.

Wow! Did you find anything surprising or confusing about this part of God's big story? If needed, help your group remember the key details in today's story.

Why do you think God allowed the Israelites to wander away from Him and choose their own direction? Remember, you don't need to provide an answer to this question—you can simply allow kids to wonder at how God works.

Leader Tip: This story shows God's mercy and forgiveness, yet its violence can seem strange and unsettling. Help kids understand that the point of the story is not to be like Ehud but to understand that God's mercy and forgiveness have no end.

Responding in Worship

SLIDE: RESPONDING IN WORSHIP

Talk about ways we can respond to what we are learning with next steps such as tithing, prayer, asking questions, and worship. Encourage kids to ask their SG leaders any questions they were wondering during the lesson.

***Introduce this next song and invite kids to respond and participate in worship. See the "Worship Posture Tutorial" on the RBKids Resource Page.



WORSHIP VIDEO: [Name Above All Names](#)

Blessing Your Kids

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 a God who delights in mercy and longs to be near us. May you never drift far from God, and if you do, may you always be ready to receive God's mercy.