



### 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

- Welcome Question: What is one of your best character traits?
- Curiosity Questions
- God's Big Story
- Connecting the Wonder Truth
- In Awe of God's Wonder
- Word of Wonder Activity
- Discussion Questions for Elementary Kids and Preteens
- Small Group Prayer Time
- Elementary Responding in Worship: Mercy Moments
- Preteen Responding in Worship: Mercy & Me



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

### Small Group

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

### LESSON AT A GLANCE

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**WORD OF WONDER:** 2 Timothy 2:13

### 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!**

### Curiosity Questions

Ask the following “I’m curious” questions. Say, “I’m curious ...” before each question and give kids a chance to think about and answer each one.

#### I’m curious ...

- What are some of the best character traits that you see in other people?
- Do you think God has any of these same character traits? Why or why not?

## Word of Wonder Activity

### WORD OF WONDER

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

—2 Timothy 2:13 (NirV)

**SUPPLIES:** Bible, large plastic hoop (1 per small group)

**Our Word of Wonder for the Think Again series reminds us that God's faithfulness never ends!**

**Let's say the verse together now.** Open your Bible to 2 Timothy 2:13. Read 2 Timothy 2:13 several times together.

Invite kids to stand and form a circle while holding hands. Break the circle momentarily to hang a large plastic hoop on the arm of one kid.

Explain that the goal of this activity is for kids to move the plastic hoop around the circle without unlinking hands while they say the Word of Wonder. Kids will move the hoop across arms, over heads, under their bodies, etc., until it has traveled the entire circle. Each kid can take a turn repeating the memory verse as the plastic hoop travels around the circle. Or if your group includes younger kids or kids who are new to the Word of Wonder, say the verse together as a group as the hoop passes from person to person.

Once the hoop travels around the circle, pause to say: **Great job! The hoop, which has no end, never left the circle! In the same way, God never removes His faithfulness and mercy from us! God's love has no end!** If time allows, challenge kids to pass the hoop around the circle again, this time in the other direction, as they say the verse.

## God's Big Story

**SUPPLIES:** Bibles (1 per kid)

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. Invite your group to find the book of Judges in their Bibles.

Read Judges 2:11–15 and 3:15; 26–30 aloud to the kids.

## Elementary Questions

- **After Moses led the Israelites, a man named Joshua was their leader. When Joshua was alive, how did the Israelites act?** *(They followed God and His ways!)*
- **How did the Israelites act after Joshua died?** *(They forgot about God, ignored Him, and worshiped false gods.)*
- **What happened to God's people when they ignored Him and served false Gods?** *(Their enemies attacked them and won.)*
- **What do we call the people God sent to rescue and lead the Israelites?** *(judges)*
- **What happened when the Israelites asked God for help?** *(He sent judges to save them. He showed them mercy.)*
- **When was a time that God helped you?**

**God is faithful and will always invite us to return to Him when we wander away from Him. God is willing to forgive us and doesn't treat us as our actions deserve. God is full of mercy! Let's talk with Him in prayer now.**

## Preteen Questions

- **Why do you think it was easier for the Israelites to follow God when Joshua was alive than after he died?** *(Possible answer: Joshua helped them remember the great things God had done.)*
- **The Israelites were attacked by their enemies, and God allowed those enemies to steal from the Israelites. Why do you think God would allow the Israelites to experience moments of misery?** *(Possible answers: God had warned them and kept His word; God knew they weren't ready to turn back; God let them face natural consequences so they would grow and remember Him.)*
- **How did God respond when the Israelites asked Him for help?** *(He sent judges to save them.)*
- **What does this show us about God?** *(Possible answers: that He is loving and full of mercy.)*
- **When was a time someone showed you mercy?**
- **How has God shown you mercy? Explain.**

**Remember a time when you made a wrong choice. In that moment, did you feel like your entire life was one big mess? Pause as kids think. Remind them that it's okay if they don't want to share. God is merciful, and when we ask, He will always step into our messes and hard situations and help us. Let's talk with Him in prayer now.**

## Small Group Prayer Time

Remind kids that we can talk to God anytime and about anything. God is always listening and hears us when we ask for help. He will show us mercy. Invite kids to share any prayer requests with the group. Ask if anyone would like to pray aloud for the group. Close by saying each kid's name and thanking God for His love and mercy to her.

## Elementary Responding in Worship: Mercy Moments

**SUPPLIES:** table, water bottles (2 or more), shallow plastic tubs (2 or more), several sponges, tablecloth or blanket, coloring utensils

**Wonder Ink RESOURCES:** [Mercy Moments Sheet \(1 per kid\)](#), [Think Again Elementary Spotify playlist](#)

Ahead of time, print one copy of the Mercy Moments Sheet for each kid. Set the water bottles, plastic tubs, and sponges on a table and cover them with a tablecloth or blanket. If your group is large, consider setting up multiple tables with one set of supplies on each (two water bottles, two shallow tubs, and several sponges).

Ask kids the following brain teaser:



- **What is something that's full of holes but can hold water?**

Give kids time to brainstorm answers as a group. Reassure them that although this sounds impossible, there is an answer. Invite kids to share all their guesses before you uncover the supplies and reveal the answer: **A sponge!**

Next, ask for a volunteer to pour some of the water in a bottle into the first tub. Then invite kids to take turns using a sponge to soak up water from the water tub and then squeeze it into the second tub. Continue until all the water has been transferred from the first tub to the second. If time allows, empty all the water into the first tub and continue transferring water until the first tub is nearly dry.

Ask kids:

- **Did the sponge ever stop absorbing water? Why or why not?**
- **Does God ever stop showing mercy to us? Why or why not?**

**It should be impossible for something with holes to hold water, but that's not the case with a sponge because that's what it's made to do! Absorbing water is its purpose. Holding water is the number one characteristic of a sponge. No matter how much of a mess we make with water, the sponge will be able to clean it up. In a similar way, God is merciful; it's one of His character traits. God will never stop being full of mercy. No matter how many wrong choices the Israelites made, God showed mercy and sent someone—the judges—to save them.**

**Because God never changes, He is still showing us His mercy today. Even when we have gotten ourselves into a difficult situation, God will extend mercy and show us a way out.**

Give each kid a Mercy Moments Sheet and set out coloring utensils. Read the words on the sheet together (It's the Wonder Truth!): **GOD IS MERCIFUL**. Invite kids to think about times when God has shown His mercy—when He has forgiven people and not treated them the way their actions deserved. They might think about today's part of God's big story or a situation in their own lives. Invite them to color or decorate their sheets as they think about God's mercy or to draw pictures on the back of their sheets of a time God showed mercy.

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Play music from the [Think Again Elementary Spotify playlist](#) as kids color and draw. Invite them to take their sheets home as a reminder that God is full of mercy!

Encourage kids to teach their families about mercy at home using a sponge and water, just as they did at the start of this activity!

**Make It Inclusive:** Provide a variety of coloring utensils to benefit kids of varying fine motor skill abilities. For example, markers require less muscle strength/pressure than crayons or colored pencils. If possible, also have simple adaptive tools on hand, such as pencil grips.

## Preteen Responding in Worship: Mercy & Me

**SUPPLIES:** scissors (prep only), writing utensils, coloring utensils

**Wonder Ink RESOURCES:** *Mercy & Me Journals* (1 per kid), music from the [Think Again Elementary Spotify playlist](#)

Ahead of time, print a copy of the Mercy & Me Journal for each kid. Use two-sided printing with the flip on the short edge. Cut the footer off the bottom of each sheet and fold them in half to create small four-page journals.

**Today we learned about how God showed mercy to His people—the Israelites—by sending them judges to save them. What is mercy?**

Allow kids to share. If needed, remind them that mercy is choosing not to treat someone as their actions deserve. **God was merciful to the Israelites long ago, and He's still merciful to us today! Let's spend some time writing and drawing about God's mercy in our lives.**

Set out writing and coloring utensils, and give each kid a Mercy & Me Journal. Invite kids to write their names on the front cover; then read each page aloud. For your reference, here are the prompts on each page:



Page 1: How does God show mercy to His people?

Page 2: When have you seen someone showing mercy to another person?

Page 3: When have you made a repeated choice that required forgiveness?

Page 4: Finish this sentence: Even when I fail, God is \_\_\_\_\_.

Play music from the [Think Again Elementary Spotify playlist](#) as kids write and draw in their journals. After a few minutes, invite kids who would like to share one thing they wrote or drew to do so. Some kids may want to keep their journals just between them and God—and that's OK!