

Session 1

The Judges

Children learn about the various judges and their journeys with God.

Scripture: Judges 3:7–15a, 4:1–4

Supplies:

- names of the judges written on separate cardboard strips
- a copy of the 6 moments for each child
- names of the judges in a bowl/container
- copies of the “wheel”
- sand box
- Marie biscuits and marshmallows
- microwave



Welcome

Follow this six-step recipe to help the children make marshmallow treats:

1. Take a Marie biscuit.
2. Put a marshmallow on it.
3. Warm it in the microwave for 3 seconds (test this beforehand to make sure you don't overheat it).
4. Take it out quickly (Be careful, it's hot!)
5. Take another biscuit and place it on top of the marshmallow.
6. Let it cool down.

Make another treat, but shuffle the sequence:

1. Take the biscuit.
2. Put it in the microwave for 3 seconds.
3. Take it out quickly.
4. Put a marshmallow on top.
5. Now put another biscuit on top.
6. Let it cool down.

Show the children how this hasn't worked out.

Today we will learn that God's people made the same mistakes over and over, almost like using an incorrect recipe over and over.



Worship

Settle down ritual: Use Psalm 23. The children sit down with their legs crossed and their eyes closed. Repeat 3 times: “The Lord is with us.” Then say, “Because the Lord is my shepherd, I am not afraid. He leads me through times of darkness and He takes care of me.”



Word

Read Judges 3:7–15a and 4:1–4

The book of Judges tells the story of the Israelites entering the Promised Land. There wasn't a king yet and they were led by the judges. The judges were war-leaders and they had to make big decisions in the courts. This is where our word "judge" comes from.

The stories of the judges sound a lot like a recipe or a pattern that happens over and over again.

1. Israel loves God and lives close to Him.
2. Israel betrays God and turns to idols.
3. God punishes them by turning them over to their enemies.
4. They ask God to help them.
5. God sends them a judge.
6. The judge saves them from the wrath of their enemies.

This happened 12 times! The names of the judges that God sent, were Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Gideon, Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, Samson.

(Do the following to create an experience of what it means to make the same mistake 12 times. Call one of the children to the front and lightly tap them on their shoulder and say: "Sorry, I won't do it again." Repeat this 11 times.)

Ask the children how they feel about what you did. Did they feel you were sincerely sorry, or did they feel you didn't really mean it? Do they think you should be forgiven every time?

This is what happened in the book of Judges. The Israelites were unfaithful to God 12 times.

Call 12 children to the front and give them each one of the judges' names. Read the names along with them – most of these names sound so strange!

The children stand in the order the judges appear in the Bible. Learn the order of the names together. Challenge the group to learn all the names. The 12 children holding the names swop the names among each other to try to confuse everyone. See who remembers the correct order. They can use the Bible to help them remember. You could turn this into a competition by dividing the group in two.

Children reflect on the story:

1. I wonder if you know someone who makes the same mistake over and over.
2. I wonder if God will always forgive people.



Working and Playing

- Put all the names of the judges in a container and let the children arrange them in the correct order.
- Give each child the six parts of the pattern. Let them cut it up, shuffle it, and then put it back in the right order.
- Give the children copies of the wheel to complete. A smaller, completed wheel is included as answer sheet.
- For older children: let them write the six things in the sand box. Let them wipe it out with their palm to symbolize God's forgiveness.

Closing prayer to end the session

“The Lord chooses you to help those who are hurting, and it doesn’t matter who you are. Go now, do not be afraid. God is with you.”

Othniel

Ehud

Shamgar

Deborah

Gideon

Tola

Jair

Jephthah

Ibzan

Elon

Abdon

Samson

Israel loves God and lives close to Him.

Israel betrays God and turns to idols.

God punishes them by turning them over to their enemies.

They ask God to help them.

God sends them a judge.

The judge saves them from the wrath of their enemies.

