LESSON 2

GOD SAVES THE ISRAELITES THROUGH THE JUDGES

OBJECTIVES

- 1. To understand who were the judges and what was their relationship with God and the people.
- 2. To live a life of victory, as the judges did.
- 3. To break free from cycles of sin that may bind us, as they did the Israelites.
- 4. To understand the love, mercy, and patience God showed to His people through His deliverance.

MEMORY VERSE

"And when the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge."

(Judges 2:18a)

PRAYER

- Thank You, God, for gathering us here so that we can worship and learn more about Your word.
- 2. Please forgive us for any sins that we know knowingly or unknowingly committed.
- 3. We ask that You guide us in overcoming our sins through the abidance of Your Spirit.
- 4. And Lord, thank You for protecting us from the evils of this world.
- 5. May You help us focus on this lesson so that we can apply its teachings to our lives.



Overview

1. The Israelites' failures and cycle of sin

- Did not drive out the remaining Canaanites (1:19-21, 27-35)
- Served other gods (2:11-23)
- Nations left to test the Israelites (3:1-6)

2. Judges raised by the Lord

- Othniel (1:12-15; 3:7-11)
- Ehud (3:12-30)
- Shamgar (3:31)
- Deborah (4-5)
- **3. Linking to the Ten Basic Beliefs**—One True God: Our God is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent.
- 4. Life Application
 - Breaking the Cycle of Sin
 - How Can God Use Me?
- 5. Activity—Repentance Action Plan



Background Knowledge for Teachers

Understanding the Period of the Judges

The period recorded in the Book of Judges has often been termed the dark ages in the history of the Israelites. It spans approximately 450 years from the death of Joshua (Judg 1:1) until the calling of Prophet Samuel (cf. Acts 13:20).

God had willed for the Israelites to have a king since the time of Balaam (Gen 17:6; Num 24:17-18; Deut 17:14-15; 28:36). According to God's plan, the king or the anointed of the Lord's was to act as the Lord's captain or prince (Heb. Nagid), but the king that the Israelites sought was one akin to those found in the Canaanite population (Heb. Melek).

For a king to rule and judge the Israelites, they needed to conquer the land of Canaan and totally drive out its inhabitants. The Israelites failed to do so, which led to a loose confederation rather than a kingdom being established. As a result, the Levites lived in the lands of Ephraim, the Israelites raised up their own gods and own order of religion and priesthood, and brothers killed brothers. There was no political, administrative, or military organization throughout Israel, and every man did what was right in his own eyes (Judg 17:6; 21:25).

The work of the judges was to administer to the people, judging their good and evil deeds, a task not dissimilar to that of the elders during the time of Moses as advised by Jethro (Ex 18:21-23). Additionally, God made use of these Godfearing judges to deliver His people from the hands of their oppressors.

Though the judges may easily be considered heroes of their time, they were mere instruments—often with glaring imperfections—used by God in an interim period until God would raise for them a king to lead His people.

The Sins of the Israelites

The sins of the Israelites are characterized in the Book of Judges as a cycle consisting of a series of common spiritual mistakes, such as not being committed to passing on their faith (i.e., forgetting Joshua's declaration: "As for me and my household"), and being unable to break away from the lures and enticement of the other nations—playing the harlot and defiling themselves with both spiritual and physical adultery (Ex 34:15-17; Num 25).

The underlying cause of the Israelites' cycle of sin was their inability to drive out the Canaanites as God had commanded. The purpose of learning about the Israelites' and judges' sins is not simply to look into their failures, but to understand how failure to follow God's commandments produces gaps and holes in our faith where sin can grow and lead to suffering and death (Jas 1:14-15).



Reaching Out to Your Students

1. "I am weak..."

Students at this age will begin to face more complex issues and challenges regarding sin. Habits are slowly being set and without the correct guidance, cycles of sin may have developed without their realization. Pose this question: "How many times have you asked God for forgiveness for the same sin?" This will help students to realize that many sins are actually repeating cycles(e.g., lying, cheating, stealing, disrespecting parents, etc.). Though students understand the concept of sin and repentance, it is often difficult—even for mature believers—to remove themselves from the situation and see the sinful cycle in which they are caught. Remind students that the first step is to realize that we need God's help; once we have realized that, we must cry out. And we cannot stop there, as the Israelites did; we must break the cycle and seek to be a better, holier Christian every day.

2. "But You are strong!"

We are empowered by the Holy Spirit to overcome sin and to serve Him. Students have both the physical and cognitive ability to take on more responsibility in their church. Remind students that they are never too young to start helping out in church. As long as they have a willing and God-fearing heart, God will make use of them.



5 Minutes

Has one of your friends ever made a promise to you but didn't keep it? How did that make you feel? How would you feel if the same person kept making the same promise, but time after time they kept breaking it? What would you do?

Now, let's brainstorm for a moment: What are some things that God has asked us to do (e.g., keep the 10 commandments, preach to our friends, keep holy, etc.)? Have we done these things? How many promises have we made to God that we have already broken many times?

The Israelites made many promises to God. When Joshua was still around, they made a covenant to never leave God and to never worship idols. But we will learn today that not only did they break this promise once, they broke it again and again. God wanted His people to learn, so He punished them for their wickedness. But He also loved them, so He raised up judges to save them, too.



Vocabulary

oppressor: someone who uses their power to punish othersforsake: to leave or give up on someone or somethingcovenant: an agreement or promise between God and manox goad: a stick used to guide oxen and prod them to walk

Meaning of Names

Othniel: "Power of God" Ehud: "I will give praise" Shamgar: etymology unknown



Bible Discovery & Spiritual Teaching

30-35 Minutes

FOR TEACHERS

Students have corresponding worksheets they must fill out for each section. Hand out Bible Discovery Worksheet #1, and ask students to complete it as you go over the first section.

The Israelites' Failures

When Joshua and the Israelites crossed the Jordan River, what was their mission? [Allow students to answer.] That is right, let us read Deuteronomy 20:16-18. Not a single inhabitant could remain in Canaan; otherwise, they would teach the people how to sin against God.

But do you think the Israelites followed God's commands? Let us read Judges 1:19-21. It says that the Lord was with Judah, but why does it also say that Judah couldn't drive out the inhabitants because they had chariots of iron? Does that mean that these chariots were stronger than God? No! Rather, the people were weak; they saw how strong the chariots of iron were and thought that they could not drive these chariots out on their own. They forgot that God was on their side!

Let us go through verses 27-35 and highlight every group of people that they couldn't drive out. There were so many! And those in the tribe of Dan were even kicked out of their land and had to move away to find another place to live because they couldn't reach their land.

Teachings

- Sin is harder to get rid of than we think! It will stick around for as long as it can.
- Sin stays in our actions, in our heart, and in our thoughts.
- God is always on our side, but when we forget that He is watching, that is when we fail.
- Today, God has given us His commands that He wants us to follow.

FOR TEACHERS

Students should have Worksheet #1 completed by now. Review the worksheet with the students to make sure they have completed it correctly. Then, hand out Bible Discovery Worksheet #2 for students to fill out in the next section.

The Israelites' Cycle of Sin

What made God so sad and displeased wasn't just that they failed to drive out the inhabitants, or that the Israelites forsook Him once, but that the Israelites kept on forsaking God and His commandments.

Let us read Judges 2:20-23. The Israelites continued to repeat the same mistakes and sin against God, and it came to the point where God no longer came to their quick rescue but first gave them over to their enemies to punish and teach them.

The Israelites kept falling into the same spiritual rut because they weren't teaching their children about the great things that God had done and weren't teaching their children to obey God's commandments.

As God raised each judge, the people's faith would be renewed, but as each judge passed away, they would continue to forget about God and what He had done for them (Judg 2:11-23; 3:1-6).

How often have we forgotten what God has done for us? Raise your hands if you remember today's sermon. Last week's? The week before? Forgetting the sermons is similar to not remembering God's commands to us.

[If the teacher has an age-relevant cycle-of-sin testimony, this would be a great opportunity to reinforce and illustrate the concept of the cycle of sin.]

Teachings

- The Israelites forgot God's grace and mercy and continued in sin.
- The Israelites didn't tell their children about the sins they were committing.
- Today, we must do our best to remember both God's words and what He has done for us every day.

FOR TEACHERS

Give students time to finish up the Worksheet #2. Go over the cycle as a class, and reinforce the idea that a cycle of sin never ends unless the person makes a determination to break out of the cycle. The suggested answers have been provided below. After the class discussion, hand out Bible Discovery Worksheet #3 for students to complete in the next section.

The Israelites Cycle of Sin

- vv. 10-13: The Israelites forgot about God and worshipped idols.
- vv. 14-15: God punished them and delivered them into the hands of their enemies
- vv. 15b, 18b: The Israelites were distressed and cried out to God.
- vv. 16, 18a: God raised up judges to deliver them from their enemies.
- vv. 17, 19: The Israelites did not listen to the judges, and returned to worshipping idols and sinning after the judges died.
- 1. Each time they went back to sinning, they sinned even more and were even more corrupt than before.
- 2. Answers may vary. Possible answers: They forgot about how God had delivered them from their enemies; they wanted to worship idols that allowed them to sin, instead of worship God, who gave them many commands to follow; etc.]

Judges Raised by the Lord: Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah

Now we will study the first four judges mentioned in the Book of Judges. Please follow along and fill in the worksheet as we go over the judges. [Ask the students to read the passage as a class, and then go over the information for them to fill out.]

Judg 1:12-15; 3:7-11 (Othniel)

- o Name: "power of God"
- o *Special characteristics*: courage, had Spirit of Lord come upon him, fought with power
- o *Achievements:* defeated King of Mesopotamia and Kirjath Sepher

Judg 3:12-30 (Ehud)

- o Name: "I will give praise"
- o *Special characteristics*: left-handed; from the tribe of Benjamin
- o Achievement: stealthily defeated King of Moab

Judg 3:31 (Shamgar)

- o Name: etymology unknown
- o Special characteristics: used ox goad as a weapon
- o Achievements: defeated 600 Philistines

Judg 4-5 (Deborah)

- o Name: "torches"
- o Special characteristics: only recorded female judge in the Book of Judges; sang a song of prophets; brave
- o Achievements: led army of Israel against a king of Canaan

Teachings

- Othniel: We must seek the power of God (Spirit of God) to overcome sin (3:10).
- Ehud: God can make use of our special characteristics (left-handedness) to serve Him (3:21).
- Shamgar: God can use something ordinary (i.e., an ox goad) to do extraordinary things in our lives (3:31).
- Deborah: We must be both brave and active in our service to God (4:14).

HOMEWORK ANSWER KEY

- 1. 1 Samuel 15:24-26 Insincere
- 2. Jonah 3:5-10 Sincere
- 3. Acts 2:36-41 Sincere
- 4. 1 Kings 21:25-27 Sincere
- 5. Genesis 3:9-12 Sincere



Linking to the Ten Basic Beliefs

2-5 Minutes

One True God

In this lesson, we learned that the Israelites sinned by worshipping other gods and idols. Did these idols or gods save them from being destroyed by their enemies? No. Only the one true God had the power to save the Israelites, because He is omnipotent. Also, since He is omniscient and omnipresent, He knew when and where the Israelites needed help, and He could hear them crying out to Him in their distress. Out of His power, He raised judges and abided with them to deliver the Israelites out of the hands of their enemies.



Check for Understanding

5 Minutes

- **1. What were the Israelites failures?** They didn't drive out Canaanites completely and they worshipped other gods.
- **2.** What was the cycle of sin for the Israelites? They forgot about God, worshipped idols, were punished by God, cried out to God, God sent judges to save the people, but they forgot God again.
- **3.** What was the meaning of Othniel's name and how was this shown in his life? His name means "Power of God". The Spirit of the LORD came upon him.
- **4. What was special about Ehud and how did he use this for God?** He was left-handed. He used this special characteristic to help him defeat the king of Moab by using his left hand to kill him when others would normally use their right.
- **5. What was special about Shamgar?** He used an ordinary tool to defeat the Philistines and achieved an extraordinary result through God's power and guidance.
- **6.** What was the difference between Barak and Deborah? Deborah had courage and actively fought for God, while Barak was afraid to go on his own.
- 7. Name one special characteristic you may have today. Answers may vary.



10 Minutes

1. Breaking the Cycle of Sin

[Hand out Life Application Worksheet #1, and then go over the introduction and the scenarios with the students. Afterwards, have the students complete the diagrams on their own. After the students have all completed both diagrams, ask for volunteers to come up to the front of the class and share how they plan to break their cycle of sin.]

Breaking the Cycle of Sin

Being subject to sin is like being under the weight of a net that keeps us from going anywhere (Heb 12:1). And worse yet, we often don't believe we're stuck in this net.

To break free requires a specific step that the Israelites missed in their life of faith during the period of the Judges, which was to keep setting higher standards and seeking to do better for God. The Israelites stopped short at the iron chariots that kept them from entering their allotted land.

Remind students that we must continue to improve and become better Christians every day. This means that when we sin, we must not only ask for forgiveness, but also overcome the sin by the power of prayer and aim for higher ground.

A Useful Vessel for God

The judges were not perfect but they were God-fearing, they were active in serving God, and they had a heart ready to be used by God. Today, students don't have to fight Philistines or kings of Moab. But how can they keep their faith and be able to serve actively in church?

Remind students that service starts with the willingness in their hearts. They have to desire to do better for God, and want to help others and to help the church grow. And from there they will see "special characteristics" or gifts bestowed to each of them that may help them serve God.

[Read the following scenarios with the students, and then discuss the questions that follow.]

Jonah and His Homework

Jonah hated doing his homework. He found out that he could still get average grades in class without doing his homework. So, every time his parents would ask him if he had any schoolwork to do, Jonah would lie and say that he had already finished it. And whenever he went to school, he would lie to his teacher and make an excuse or copy his friends' work.

Jonah knew that this was a sin, and he wanted to stop lying. But every time a new assignment came along, he dreaded it so much. And every time he lied, he would have to say another lie to cover it up again.

One day during a parent-teacher meeting, his parents found out that he had been lying to them. They scolded him strictly and demanded to see his homework. Jonah felt deeply sorry for lying to everyone and prayed to God to forgive him. When they found out, his RE teachers reminded Jonah that he should study hard in school just as if he were studying for God.

Jonah began to put more effort into finishing his homework. Whenever his parents asked and he hadn't finished his homework, Jonah would still feel tempted to lie. But instead, he would say a silent prayer in his heart asking God to give him the courage to tell the truth and do the right thing.

Slowly and surely, by God's power, Jonah started to live and study honestly, bringing glory to God.

Discussion Questions

1. When was Jonah able to stop lying?

When he realized how serious his sin was and how his lies didn't just affect himself.

2. What would Jonah do every time he wanted to lie?

He would say a silent prayer asking for the courage to do the right thing.

Lisa's Curious Ears

Lisa always found it interesting to learn about other people's lives. She also found it more enjoyable when she could share what she heard with other people. The more exciting the story, the more excited she would be to share it. Lisa knew it wasn't right to gossip, but she loved being the "girl who knew everything."

Even when she didn't know a secret, she would pretend she did and make up little details. Every time she shared a little gossip, Lisa would feel guilty, but the feeling of attention was much stronger.

Lisa's best friend at school and at church was Lily. Lily decided to tell Lisa outright that all her gossiping was hurting people and that this couldn't be something that pleased God. When Lisa heard this, she felt the guilt again and agreed to pray with Lily to help her stop this bad habit. Lily would remind Lisa every time she was about to blurt out something about someone. And to give Lisa something different to talk about, Lily and Lisa started to read the Bible together after school.

After regular prayers and Bible reading together, Lisa found that her conversation topics had changed and that she no longer had the desire to listen to other people's secrets, let alone speak about them.

Discussion Questions

1. Did Lisa stop gossiping on her own? Who can help us break our cycles of sin today?

No, she did not. Spiritual companions and those who can be spiritual watchmen for us—brothers and sisters at church, parents, siblings, church ministers—can help us break the cycle.

2. How do you think Lily felt before she confronted Lisa?

She must have been worried about how her best friend would react, but also determined to help Lisa do the right thing.

Ben and His Brother

Ben is ten years old and he has a younger brother, Tim, who is eight. From young, Ben felt as if his parents showed more care towards Tim than they did towards him. His mother would explain that Tim was younger and slower at doing things, so he needed their help and Ben's help. But Ben's jealousy would always get the better of him.

When his parents weren't around, Ben would push his brother around and call him names. He would unleash his anger—directed towards his parents and Tim—all on his poor brother. Every time, Ben's parents would come home and scold and discipline Ben for bullying his brother. But he thought that as long as Tim was getting so much attention, he had the right to act out, and he would continue to let out his frustration and anger on Tim.

One day on the way home from school, Ben saw Tim being bullied by some other kids. Suddenly, Ben saw what he was like every time he hurt and yelled at his brother. Ben felt overwhelmingly guilty and repented to God.

Ben prayed to God and asked God to teach him how to be a better older brother, according to God's will. That week, during RE class, the lesson was about Cain and Abel. Listening to the Bible story, Ben knew that God was telling him how dangerous anger could be. Ben made a promise to help Tim however he could and made sure to pray for Tim and his family every day.

Discussion Questions

1. How did Ben realize that he needed to break this cycle of anger?

When he saw, through others' eyes, what it looked like to bully Tim and how helpless Tim appeared. He realized his responsibility given by God to be an older brother.

2. How did God help Ben overcome this sin?

God helped Ben overcome this sin by allowing him to learn the danger of anger through RE lessons and through witnessing Tim being bullied by others. Ben determined to overcome this sin by praying for Tim and his family, and by helping Tim whenever he could.

* * * * *

2. How CAN GOD USE ME?

God will always listen to our prayers, but we need to know when we need His help and do our best to seek Him when we are in trouble!

In the situations described below, give the student advice as to how he or she can be a servant of God.

[Hand out Life Application Worksheet #2 and give students time to complete it. After the students have completed it, ask volunteers to share their answers and discuss them with the class.]



Activity

Repentance Action Plan

10-15 Minutes

Objective: To remind the students what true repentance is about and to help them visualize the repentance process.

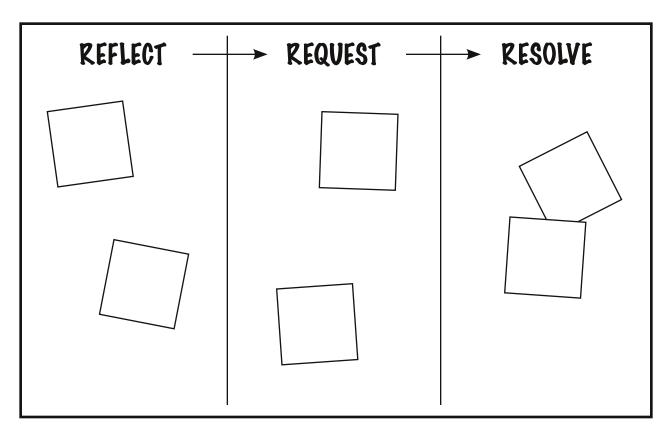
Materials

- Colored cardboard
- Post-Its
- Markers

[Note: For simplicity's sake, basic materials have been listed; however, for more permanent repentance plans, corkboards, Velcro, or magnetic whiteboards may be considered.]

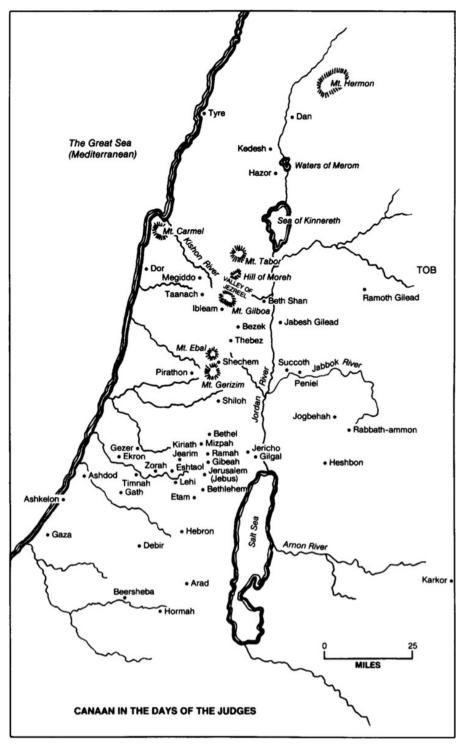
Instructions

- 1. Split the cardboard into three columns.
- 2. Explain to the students the 3 R's: Reflect, Request, Resolve
 - a. Reflect: Think about what we have done wrong to others and to God
 - b. Request: Ask God to forgive our sin say "Sorry"
 - c. Resolve: Make a spiritual goal to not return to the sin again; make practical steps to try not to commit the same sin again
- 3. Ensure that the students label the columns in the following order: Reflect → Request → Resolve. Ask them to use arrows to show how we must strive forward and constantly improve.
- 4. Give each of them Post-Its on which to write a reflection/request/resolution and explain the importance of following through with their repentance to God.
- 5. Use the poster as a reminder of what they have prayed about and of the importance of following through prayers with action.



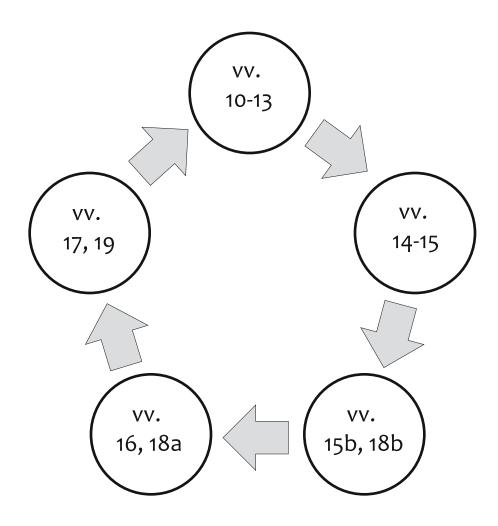
THE ISRAELITES' FAILURE

- 1. What was God's command to the Israelites?
- 2. Highlight every city where the Israelites failed this mission. (Hint: Judg 1:19-21, 27-35)



THE ISRAELITES' CYCLE OF SIN

Read Judges 2:10-19. Next to each sphere, write which stage that sphere is in the cycle of sin.



1. Each time the Israelites went back to their sins, did they get better or worse?

2. Why do you think the Israelites kept forgetting about God?

THE JUDGES' PROFILES

Fill in the charts with information about each judge.

Portrait	Name
	Bible Passage
	Special Characteristic(s)
	Achievement
Portrait	Name
	Bible Passage
	Special Characteristic(s)
	Achievement

Portrait	Name
	Bible Passage
	Special Characteristic(s)
	Achievement

Portrait	Name
	Bible Passage
	Special Characteristic(s)
	Achievement

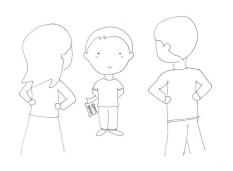
BREAKING THE CYCLE OF SIN

1. Read the scenarios below, and then answer the questions that follow.

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Jonah hated doing his homework. He found out that he could still get average grades in class without doing his homework. So, every time his parents would ask him if he had any schoolwork to do, Jonah would lie and say that he had already finished it. And whenever he went to school, he would lie to his teacher and make an excuse or copy his friends' work.

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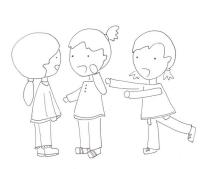
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she felt the guilt again and agreed to pray with Lily to help her stop this bad habit. Lily would remind Lisa every time she was about to blurt out something about someone. And to give Lisa something different to talk about, Lily and Lisa started to read the Bible together after school.

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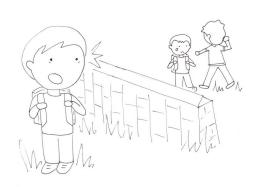
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When his parents weren't around, Ben would push his brother around and call him names. He would unleash his anger—directed towards his parents and Tim—all on his poor brother. Every time, Ben's parents would come home and scold and discipline Ben for bullying his brother. But he thought that as long as Tim was getting so much attention, he had the right to act out, and he would continue to let out his frustration and anger on Tim.



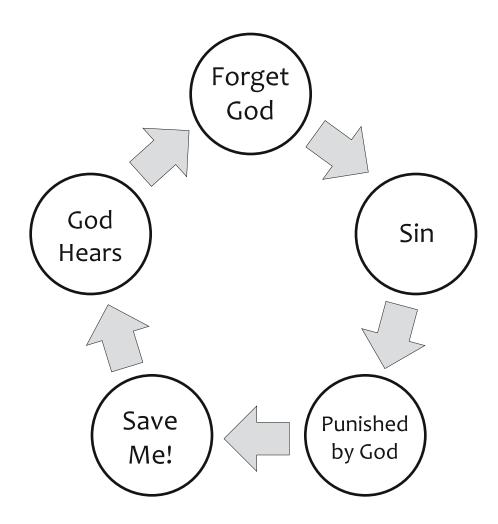
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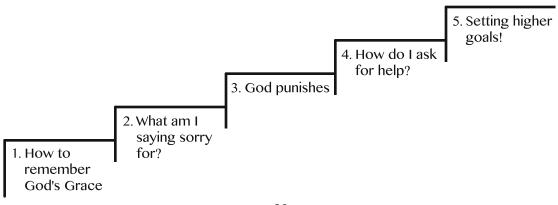
Discussion Questions

- 1. How did Ben realize that he needed to break this cycle of anger?
- 2. How did God help Ben overcome this sin?

2. Next to each sphere, write a past/current example of a cycle of sin you face:



3. On top of each step, write your action plan to break the cycle of sin.



"How Can God Use Me?"

God will always listen to our prayers, but we need to know when we need His help and do our best to seek Him when we are in trouble!

In the situations described below, give the student advice as to how he or she can be a servant of God.

The Young Servant	How Do I Serve?
My friends at school keep asking me if I want to go to play at their place on Saturday. They're also Christian	
The stationery cabinet in our RE class is always messy and I can never find the colored pencils I want	
My RE classmate is sick this week and can't come to church	
Lunch has just started at church, and we're all lining up for food!	
There's a tied up garbage bag next to the kitchen door at church. I wonder why it's there; it's going to stink up the whole place!	
A church visitor is sitting next to me with a closed Bible during Sabbath service, and it doesn't look like she knows how to flip to the passages in the Bible	

E2 Year 2 Book 3 Lesson 2—God Saves the Israelites Through the Judges

Homework Assignment

Name:						Paren	t signat	ure:	Date:
Weekly Bible Reading: Bible Reading: Check each box when you complete that day's reading. Prayer: Check each box after you pray to God that day.					when <u>y</u>	you co	mplete		What I Learned from the Bible This Week 1.
Praye	r: Ched	ck each T	i box a	ıfter yo T	u pray	to Go	d that d	lay.	
	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat		
Read									2
Pray									
		•	•	•				Mem	nory Verse
				Р	lease v	vrite do	own this	s wee	k's memory verse. Judges 2:18a)
_									
perso	ne que	stions I then 1 Ki	belov state ngs 2	v, first wheth	match ier you ?7; Jor	u think	theirs	Was Vei	the Verse Bank to the person described, identify the a sincere or insincere repentance. rse Bank 2:36-41; 1 Samuel 15:24-26; Genesis 3:9-12
and	l aske	d him	to cor	others ne wit	h me.			e if I	didn't get God's approval, so I repented to the prophet
Wł	io wa	s repe	nting?	·					Was it a (sincere) or (insincere) repentance?
mai	n, woı	man, a	and ch		oping	that	God mi		hurch, the pastor asked us all to fast and pray—every forgive us.
Wł	io wa	s repe	nting?						Was it a (sincere) or (insincere) repentance?
the	right	thing.	We re		ed and	l were	baptiz	•	t ways of unbelief, our hearts were cut and moved to do to Christ.
									Was it a (sincere) or (insincere) repentance?

	my many sins, I immediately tore my clothes, put on sackcloth		
and fasted in repentance. Verse:			
Who was repenting?	Was it a (sincere) or (insincere) repentance?		
5. When God asked me about my sin, I did m caused me to behave that way and asking Verse:	ny best to clear my name by telling Him about the others who Him to see that it wasn't entirely my fault.		
Who was repenting?	Was it a (sincere) or (insincere) repentance?		
B. "Judges Wanted" Advertisement Write or draw an advertisement in the box be what qualities God would consider necessary	elow calling for all people of Israel to serve God, and include to be a useful judge.		