

The Need for Judges Week 1

Point to Emphasize: We should follow the rules and regulations set before us and ask God for what we should do; God's answer to us is how God cares for us.

Reference Reading: Judges 1:1, with footnotes 1 and 2; Judges 17:6

Memory Verse: Hallelujah! Blessed is the man who fears Jehovah, Who delights greatly in His commandments. (Psalms 112:1)

Story Sample

Do you remember how God delivered His people from the cruelty of Pharaoh and led them out of Egypt so that they could hold a feast with Him? Moses led the people through the wilderness to Mount Sinai. It was here that God opened His heart to His people and loved them. They were to be His people, and He was their God. It seemed as if everything was perfect between God and His people.

But the situation changed. The children of Israel turned their back on God and went after other things. Instead of loving God, they loved idols. To them, idols were the things made of wood and stone. They turned away from God. This led to a period of history called the time of the judges.

Now what are the judges? (*Definition: a public official with authority to hear and decide cases in a court of law, a governing leader [Biblical judges: a ruler or a military leader as well as someone who presided over legal hearings.]*) Today, when do people have to stand before a judge? (*Usually when they break a law.*) So, are judges for our good or are they bad for us? Yes, they are for our good. Judges are needed to correct and punish our behaviors that are bad/harmful. Judges are needed to keep us abiding by the law.

Now, I don't think any of you have done anything that would cause you to go to court and stand before a judge. But what about going to the principal at school? He is kind of like a judge. Let's say that someone does not follow the teacher's directions. Instead of doing the math problems in class, he breaks the rule of the class and is sent down to the principal's office. Now, are principals for our good? Yes, they are for our good. They are meant to correct and discipline us so that we will behave the way we should. When we are in school, we should sit in the classroom to learn things and not to misbehave to be sent to the principal's office.

What does it mean to say that this period of time is the time of the judges? (*It means that God's people broke God's law all the time; so they needed to have judges to keep things in order.*) During that time, there was a saying, "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did that which was right in his own eyes." (Judges 17:6)

[Give an example that when you were a child, instead of obeying the rule (your parent's rule or the rule at school), you did what was right to you, and how it resulted in trouble for your family or your classmates. This example should show us how much we need to follow the rules and regulations.]

Of course this really offended God! "In those days there was no king in Israel!?" How could that be? God was the KING! How dare they say that there was no king! God was the King! Even today He is still the King! But the children of Israel refused to recognize God's kingship. What about the part of the verse that says, "Everyone did that which was right in his own eyes?" Isn't God the only One who is right? But the people did what was right in their own eyes, and hence, they became rotten and corrupted. They needed the judges to judge them.

In the weeks to come we will tell you some stories from this period of time, the time of the judges. These stories are all in the Bible. Can you guess which book that these stories come from? That's right – the book of Judges.

The book of Judges begins from after Joshua's death, that is, after the time of Moses and after Joshua and Caleb had led the children of Israel into Canaan. At the time of Joshua, the children of Israel were victorious against their enemies because they still trusted God and followed God. Let's read the first verse in Judges.

Read Judges 1:1

"And after the death of Joshua, the children of Israel inquired of Jehovah, saying, Who will go up for us first against the Canaanites, in order to fight against them?"

Joshua had died, he used to be the one who led the children of Israel into the good land, Canaan; thus, his death was a big loss to Israel. The children of Israel wondered who would take the lead to fight their enemies. So they asked Jehovah concerning who would go up for them first against the Canaanites in order to fight them. Wow, did you notice that? They asked Jehovah what they should do! They didn't come up with a plan and then take a vote. They asked Jehovah what to do. Guess what?? They got an answer! This is how God cares for us.

Whenever God's people look to Him, He answers. What do you think Jehovah's answer to the children of Israel was? Come back next week to find out!

Judah Helps Simeon Week 2

Point to Emphasize: We should help our brothers and sisters; we should not just take care of ourselves.

Reference Reading: Judges 1:2-19; 2:11-20; 4:1-3

Memory Verse: Love one another warmly in brotherly love; take the lead in showing honor one to another. (Romans 12:10)

Story Sample

[Review week 1]

Now that the children of Israel are in the land God gave them, they needed to fight their enemies. So they asked God what to do. These were God's people, and thus, when they asked God what to do, He answered.

Read Judges 1:2

"And Jehovah said, Judah shall go up. I have now given the land into his hand."

So the people took Jehovah's word. They believed His promise. Now, Judah was the strongest tribe among the children of Israel. They could have just taken Jehovah's word and done it all by themselves, without any help. But instead of going off to fight the enemy and gain the land by himself, Judah went and talked with the weakest tribe, the tribe of Simeon. Judah told Simeon, his brother, that if he would come and fight with him then later he would go with Simeon and join to fight the enemies of Simeon's tribe. Did Judah need Simeon's help? NO! But Judah was looking out for his brother. Judah knew that Simeon would need help.

So you have two things happening. Judah, the big, strong brother is looking after the weak brother AND he is doing it in a way that does not make his brother feel inferior, or less than him. Sometimes when we help our brother or sister out, we let them know that we are helping them out because we are "better or older or smarter" than they are. Are you happy when someone helps you in that way? I'm not either.

[Tell a personal story about looking out for your own brother or sister, especially how you could help him and not cause him to feel like he owes you a favor.]

What a super brother Judah was! He helped out his brother in such a way that did not make Simeon feel weak. Rather, they were equal partners - each helping the other.

So Judah went up and Simeon went with him. And since they trusted in Jehovah, God allowed them to defeat their enemies throughout the whole land of Canaan. Oh, Judah was bold and victorious in battle, and Jehovah was with him the whole time. If you like battles, you should read the Bible! The Old Testament is full of stories about battles! From Jerusalem to the high country to the low country, the children of Israel won every battle against the Canaanites. Was this a small battle that was fought in a short time?? NO. You can tell from the above that it was

a series of battles, battle after battle that covered the whole land of Canaan. All this time when they fought, Jehovah was with them. (Judges 1:19) It was God who allowed every victory they had!

Unfortunately, as time went on the children of Israel did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah. They turned away from God and no longer trusted in Him. They set up idols instead of coming to know the true God.

Therefore, God set judges over them to correct and discipline them so that they would come back to be His proper people. Jehovah was with these judges. (Judges 2:16) But the children of Israel did not listen to the judges.

Eventually, Jehovah sold them into the hand of Jabin the king of Canaan who severely oppressed the children of Israel for 20 years. The children of Israel cried out to Jehovah.

What do you think Jehovah's response was this time? Next week we'll hear how a woman was used by God to save His people!

Deborah Judged according to God's Law

Week 3

Point to Emphasize: We should do what's right in God's eyes, not what's right in our own eyes; it is good to be different for Jehovah's sake.

Reference Reading: Judges 4

Memory Verse: Whatever Jehovah pleases He does in heaven and on earth... (Psalm 135:6a)

Story Sample

When all the men of Israel had failed Jehovah, He raised up a woman to sit as a judge over His people. This is remarkable! The children of Israel had never had a female leader before. God's way is excellent! Does anyone know what this woman's name was? (*Deborah.*)

Deborah was very capable. Yet she did not act like a man or try to be in charge of the men. At that time, all the men were doing what was right in their own eyes, but Deborah did what was right in God's eyes. She acknowledged God and obeyed Him. Jehovah was her King. We all know that boys are boys and girls are girls. They are not the same; they are different. Both boys and girls can be capable, but a boy does not behave like a girl, and a girl does not behave like a boy.

Deborah was the wife of Lappidoth. They lived in Ephraim, and Deborah sat under a palm tree there and judged all the cases that came before her. Eventually, that place was known as the Palm of Deborah. The children of Israel went to her for judgment, and she judged their affairs according to God, but Deborah did not consider herself as a ruler or leader over the people. She sat under a palm tree near her home, not on a throne in a palace. She called herself the mother of Israel, not the Queen or Judge of Israel. Just like a mom has to settle disagreements among her kids, Deborah judged the cases that came to her to settle the cases among the children of Israel. She judged according to God's law. She was a prophetess who spoke for God and spoke God's word to His people.

Before Deborah, no one was willing to take the lead to fight for Jehovah's interest, and no one was willing to follow a leader. Everyone did what was right in their own eyes. *[Give a story of children following a teacher's instructions and getting a good grade versus acting according to their own ideas without any leading. Make a parallel between Deborah being a leader, like the teacher.]* It was a miserable situation! God needed someone to take the lead to fight for Him, and He needed some to follow such a leader. Even though the Israelites were being mistreated by King Jabin, none of them were willing to take the lead to fight against him. No one was willing to take the lead, and no one was willing to follow a leader. Because of that, they remained under Jabin's rule.

But Deborah was different. She was willing to follow Jehovah, and she was willing to depend on Him. By depending on God and following Him, she could lead His people. She didn't mind being different from everyone else for Jehovah's sake.

[Share an experience of this at a child's level—of being different because of being willing to follow godly parents. For example: coming to the meeting on Lord's Day morning instead of staying home and doing whatever we want.]

Deborah was this kind of person, and because she cared about following God, He was able to use her in an EXTRAORDINARY way! Next week we will see that Deborah's being raised up changed the entire condition of the children of Israel!

Deborah Kept the Proper Order Week 4

Point to Emphasize: We should keep the proper order so that we can bring peace and rest into our families.

Reference Reading: Judges 4

Memory Verse: But all things must be done becomingly and in order. (1 Corinthians 14:40)

Story Sample

Now Deborah showed how much she cared for doing what was right in the eyes of Jehovah. You see, God commanded Deborah to send out 10,000 men from the children of Naphtali and from the children of Zebulun. But Deborah was not a man who could lead the army into battle. What could she do? Wow, Deborah was so extraordinary! She had the word from God, but she knew that she could not directly carry out this word as a woman. That would be a woman acting as a man. No, every woman needs to be under the man. This is a safeguard for women. Thus, Deborah called Barak, a capable military man. He was the right one to lead the army of Israel. But Barak knew that none of the men were willing to follow. Then he told Deborah, if you go with me, I will go; but if you do not go with me, I will not go. Deborah said, I will surely go with you. Deborah rose up and went with Barak to Kedesh. Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh and 10,000 men went up behind him to Mount Tabor. Deborah also went up with him. WOW! What a change! All those men were now in an excellent order - no longer were they doing what was right in their own eyes.

Even in our families there is a proper order. Have you ever asked your mom if you could do something and she responded with, "I need to ask your dad:" Or have you gotten in trouble, and your mom said, "We will have to talk to dad about this." Or "Your father will have to deal with you about this." This is to keep a proper order in the family. This will bring peace and rest into our families.

When these 10,000 men went, the enemy did not sit still. Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, called all his chariots, 900 iron chariots, and took all the people who were with him to the river Kishon. The children of Israel did not have any chariots.

Read Judges 4:14

And Deborah said to Barak, Rise up, for this is the day when Jehovah will deliver Sisera into your hand. Jehovah has indeed gone out before you. So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand men after him.

Jehovah fought for Israel. Jehovah threw Sisera and all his chariots and all his army into confusion with the edge of the sword before Barak. All the army of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword; not even one was left.

Meanwhile, Sisera had fled on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber. And Jael told him to turn into her tent, and she covered him with a rug. Sisera told her to stand guard at the entrance of the tent. He told her that if anyone came and asked, "Is there a man here?" she

should say no. Sisera had run a long way, and he was exhausted from the battle and from running for his life. As soon as he laid down under that rug he was sound asleep. While he was sleeping, he was killed by Jael.

As Barak was pursuing Sisera, Jael came out to meet him and said, "Come, and I will show you the man you are seeking."

So on that day God subdued Jabin the king of Canaan before the children of Israel. Afterwards they destroyed Jabin the king of Canaan. Deborah and Barak led the people to sing praises to Jehovah for His mighty victory. The land had rest for 40 years. This was all because Deborah followed God, and God did whatever He wanted through her!

God Appearing to Gideon Week 5

Point to Emphasize: Even as children, we can be those used by God.

Reference Reading: Judges 6:1-27

Memory Verse: Because no word will be impossible with God. (Luke 1:37)

Story Sample

After Deborah, a very long time passed. Eventually, the people went back to their old ways, doing evil things all over again. God's people would promise to change and then before you knew it, they were back to doing evil all over again. So God put them in the hand of their enemy, Midian, for seven years.

Now these were seven terrible years for the Israelites. The Midianites treated them just horribly, so much so that the Israelites hid in caves from them. The Midianites took everything from them. It just got worse and worse and eventually, what do you think they did? They called out to God. This is just the history of God's people at that time. Whenever they got in trouble, eventually they called out to Jehovah. And God, being the faithful God, answered their call once again.

This time God sent a prophet to speak to them. This prophet reminded them of all that God had done for them, bringing them out of the land of Egypt to the good land. He also reminded them that they had refused to listen to God. Sometimes we are like this with our parents, aren't we? We don't always WANT TO listen to them and do things their way. So we need to be reminded of all they do for us.

And then the Angel of Jehovah appeared to a man named Gideon. Gideon was a busy young man, trying to care for his family. The Angel of Jehovah told Gideon that Jehovah was with him; but Gideon was confused about what was happening with the children of Israel. He wanted to know why these things were happening to God's people. It seemed to be such a hopeless situation. But instead of answering Gideon's questions, the Angel of Jehovah encouraged Gideon, telling him that He was sending him to go in the strength that he had and save Israel from Midian. He told Gideon He would be with him.

But Gideon was full of more questions. How could HE save Israel? In Gideon's eyes, he was nothing, nobody. He came from the poorest clan in Manasseh, and he saw himself as the least in his father's house. How could he possibly do this? He couldn't understand why God would choose him to carry out this battle. But God knew better! Gideon was the one God wanted for this battle. Once again, He promised He would go with Gideon, and He promised him a victory. There's nothing God can't do!

Sometimes we are like Gideon. We think we are too young, too unimportant, and too small. But God sees us differently! He sees the very best in us. *[Storyteller: give a personal example.]*

Do you think Gideon just agreed to go right away? No! He was still questioning. So he asked the Angel of Jehovah for a sign, so that he could really be sure this was God. He went and prepared a special meal. When he offered it to the Angel, He told Gideon to set the meal on a rock. The Angel of Jehovah took His staff and touched the meal. And do you know what happened? A fire came and burned the whole thing. Just a touch from the staff and there was fire! And then the Angel of Jehovah left.

Gideon was amazed! He realized that this was God he had been talking to, and so he called out to God. God answered him, telling him not to be afraid, that he would not die for seeing the Angel of Jehovah face to face. Gideon listened to God. He then built an altar to remember this special time.

There was a reason that God came to Gideon. It wasn't just to do something miraculous. He came because He wanted Gideon to do something. What God wanted him to do was to destroy the idols that belonged to Gideon's father. God wanted a man to carry this out for Him, and that man was Gideon. But Gideon was still frightened, even though he knew that God was asking him to do it. He was afraid of his father's house and also of what the people might do to him. Even though he knew his father would be horribly upset and the people of the city would want to kill him, he did what God told him to do. Gideon was not a young boy at this time. He was a man. Yet he loved his father and surely wanted to remain close to him. But Gideon knew he must obey God. He knew his father was sinning against God by having an altar of an idol. He had to act on God's word. Later Gideon became a marvelous judge because at this point he listened carefully to the word of God. That was something most of the children of Israel were not doing. He obeyed God's word and acted on it.

So Gideon went to do this at night, so no one would see him do it. He did what God had told him. He took ten men, and they tore down the idols and then he built an altar to the true God.

And what do you think happened next? Do you think the people were happy about this? Maybe next week we can see what happened next.

Gideon Wanting Proof Jehovah Was Sending Him Week 6

Point to Emphasize: We don't need to doubt God because He always takes care of us. We need to trust in God; He is faithful.

Reference Reading: Judges Chapter 6

Memory Verse: For His lovingkindness is great toward us, And the faithfulness of Jehovah is forever. Hallelujah. (Psalm 117:2)

Story Sample

Last week we saw how Gideon obeyed what Jehovah had asked him to do. He did all this at night. Now, in the morning, when the people found out about it, they were upset. They saw that the idols were destroyed. Then, they saw the altar of the true and living God there. But instead of turning to God they were very angry! They went looking for Gideon. And it was to his father that they went, demanding that Gideon be presented to them.

But Gideon's father stood up to everyone who came. He refused to give up his son, because he saw that what Gideon had done was right. He realized he should not have been worshipping idols, so he stood strongly on the side of his son. Because Gideon had stood for God, his father also was saved from worshipping an idol.

After this, Jehovah remained with Gideon. When the time came for a battle against their enemies, God was with him once again. Gideon blew the trumpet and all the tribes of Israel were called up and came together.

But Gideon *still* wasn't sure of himself, and he wasn't so sure about God either. So he went to God to ask for a sign. He wanted proof that God would save Israel through his hand. He wasn't sure he could trust God, so he wanted something more than just God's word. He wanted a sign.

So Gideon told God what he was going to do. He told Him that he would put out a fleece of wool. In the morning, if the fleece was wet and the ground was dry, he would know that surely God had done this. And do you know what? In the morning the fleece **WAS** wet, and the ground **WAS** dry! So do you think Gideon believed? No, not fully. He needed more assurance from Jehovah. He wanted even more proof.

Isn't that just like us? We know that God takes care of us, but sometimes we doubt Him. *[Give a short experience of knowing that God would take care of you but you doubted and wanted to test Him.]* Even though God has done so much for us, we still might **doubt** if God will be faithful in taking care of us. We should never doubt God. Gideon doubted God and wanted to test God, just to make sure. But, we need to trust God all the time. Gideon might have been scared. So he asked God for another sign. He told Him that he would put out a fleece of wool again. This time, though, if the fleece was dry and the ground was wet in the morning, he would know for sure that God had done this. And do you know what? In the morning the fleece **WAS** dry, and the ground **WAS** wet. And this time he believed. God had done what he had asked! Surely God was with him! **NOW** Gideon was ready to go to battle.

I want to encourage you this week to trust God in everything. God knows what we need, and He always takes care of us! We should never doubt God. God is faithful!

God Chooses the Right Men Week 7

Point to Emphasize: God cares more for what we are than what we can do.

Reference Reading: Judges 7: 1-7

Memory Verse: ...But the people who know their God will show strength and take action.
(Daniel 11:32b)

Story Sample

[Review]

Since Gideon was sure that God was with him, he took action. He and all the people who were with him got up early in the morning and went to the spring of Harod where they camped. The Midians were camped to their north. While they camped at the spring, Jehovah had a most unusual talk with Gideon. We might expect that Jehovah would give him instructions on how to go and fight against the strong Midian army. In this way the mighty army with over 30,000 men would descend upon the enemy and gain the victory! BUT this is not the kind of conversation Jehovah had with Gideon.

Instead, Jehovah gave the most unusual battle plans to Gideon. He actually told him that he had too many men! How could that be? I would think the more, the better! But God wanted to prove that He was winning the victory and that the Israelites might be too proud if they did it all by themselves. So, He told Gideon to tell the warriors, "Whoever is afraid and trembling should return and depart from here" (Judges 7:3b).

So, Gideon made the proclamation and 22,000 departed. WOW! 22,000 were afraid, not believing that Jehovah would win the battle for them. Only 10,000 now remained. When Jehovah saw this, He said that the people were still too many! And of these 10,000, Jehovah was sure that most were not qualified to go to battle. NOT qualified? Why? They were all warriors! Well, that was not how Jehovah saw it, so He made them take a test to see if they should go into battle.

If you want to see who the top spellers are in a class, you just give a "pop" spelling quiz. No one has been warned about the spelling bee and no one has any time to prepare. At the end, you will surely see who the best spellers are. And these are the ones you would send to the next level of the school spelling bee to represent the class.

So, Jehovah had Gideon test the remaining men. Gideon brought these 10,000 down to the spring. Now, all of these men were really thirsty. They had been out in the hot sun and not had a drink for a while. How might you expect them to get a drink from the spring? Most of them when given the chance to drink from the spring forgot they were going out for a battle and laying aside their weapons bowed down to drink without restriction. 9,700 men took a drink this way. So, you had 10,000 men *[Write number on board]* and 9,700 sought the most comfortable and easy way to drink, regardless of their mission. However, the remnant, that is 300 of them, got a drink in a different way. They actually used their hands to bring the water to their mouth

and lapped it up like a dog. *[Demonstrate]* You don't get much water this way. It is so inconvenient. And, it takes a long time. So why did 300 of them do it this way? *[let them guess]*

They were close to the enemy camp. If you stuck your face in the water, you would not be able to see anyone who came up to attack you. And if you were down on your hands and knees, the attacker could slay you before you could get to your feet. The 9,700 men who drank like that were only taking care of their thirst, but not thinking about the battle. But the other 300 men took care of the need to fight the enemy as well as their thirst.

Sometimes we are like the 9,700. We want to do things the easiest and most comfortable way rather than the best way. When I was young, the ice cream truck would come to our neighborhood. All of the children in the neighborhood would be so excited! Some would just run out into the street to stop him, and others would look both ways to check for cars coming before they would go out in the street to the truck. And if their little brother and sister were with them, they would hold their hands when they crossed the street. They chose the safer way over the easy way.

All of the 9,700 had failed the test. They all were sent back, each to his own place. Jehovah told Gideon that through the 300 men who lapped the water He would save him and deliver Midian into his hand. God wanted a particular kind of person, one who cared not only for his own needs, but also for what it would take to win the battle. He wanted someone who was watchful and careful.

And do you know what? Those 300 men defeated the Midian army. God had found the right people to do the job. It is not big numbers God needs to defeat the enemy, but the right kind of persons. We will see next week how they did it!

Gideon Obeyed God and God Delivered the Israelites Week 8

Point to Emphasize: God takes care of us, and we should give Him the credit.

Reference Reading: Judges 7:9-20; 8:22-23

Memory Verse: ...I will not rule over you...Jehovah will rule over you. (Judges 8:23b)

Story Sample

Gideon and the 300 men were camped above the camp of the Midianites and Amalekites. The Bible tells us that the enemy's camp had so many people that it looked like a swarm of locusts. Wow—Gideon had only 300 men and the enemy's army was that big! It might have seemed discouraging, but Jehovah told Gideon to do something that would strengthen him. Jehovah told Gideon to go to the edge of the camp of Midian and to listen to what the men there were saying.

So Gideon obeyed the Lord, and he and his helper Purah crept down to the edge of the camp of Midian, and they heard a man there recounting a dream to his companion. Wow! What a dream! A huge, round loaf of barley bread rolled through the camp of Midian, hit the tent, and caused the tent to collapse. INCREDIBLE!

But what did the dream mean? When the man's companion heard the dream, he realized that the barley loaf referred to swords and that God had delivered them into Gideon's hand. God gave the dream to one man, and He gave the interpretation of the dream to his companion.

When Gideon heard this conversation, he worshipped God. He knew the dream was from God. The dream made him bold. He knew that God would do what He said He would do. So Gideon and Purah returned to the 300 men and told them that it was time to strike the enemy's camp, because Jehovah had delivered the enemy into their hand.

He divided the 300 men into groups of 100. Each man carried a trumpet in one hand, and a torch inside a pitcher in the other hand. The pitchers hid the light from the torches, so that the enemy didn't see all the lights and didn't know they were coming. That was pretty smart!

Gideon told his men to watch him and do what he did. He did not give many instructions ahead of time. Everyone had to pay careful attention to Gideon and do as he did. *[Insert story about paying close attention to follow someone.]*

When they got to the edge of the camp, Gideon and his group blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers so the light from the torches shined out. The other groups watched carefully and did what Gideon did: And they cried out, "A sword for Jehovah and for Gideon!"

What a noise! What a sight! Out of nowhere, the camp was surrounded by sounds and lights! The men in the camp were filled with fear! What was happening? The enemy's camp was in chaos. They ran and drew their swords. And as the 300 men blew the trumpets, Jehovah caused the enemy to swing their swords at one another. They were running around in

confusion, with their swords drawn, and they ended up slaying one another. Wow, Jehovah knows how to fight and win a battle! He can work all things out the way He needs them to be! Even though Gideon had only 300 men, Jehovah won the battle. This is because God does not need a large number; He needs those who obey and take His way.

After the battle, the people were so happy that they wanted Gideon to rule over them. Do you think Gideon accepted this honor? No, he did not. When we accomplish something, it is easy to take the credit, but Gideon knew that he had not won the victory—God had.

Gideon gave the credit to Jehovah, and he worshipped Him. Gideon had not fought the battle so that he could be a ruler. He had done it because he was obeying the instructions of Jehovah. Because Gideon obeyed God, there was rest in the land for forty years.

The Angel of Jehovah Appearing to Manoah Week 9

Point to Emphasize: We should always bear responsibility.

Reference Reading: Judges 13:1-23

Memory Verse: Give thanks to Jehovah, for He is good, for His lovingkindness is forever;
(1 Chronicles 16:34)

Story Sample

From the time that Gideon passed away, the children of Israel mostly forgot about Jehovah their God Who had delivered them, and they went after the idols. They did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah. Years had passed with the children of Israel giving up God, so He delivered them into the hand of their enemies. Jehovah delivered the children of Israel into the hand of the Philistines for 40 years.

Now there was a certain man from Zorah whose name was Manoah. He and his wife had been married for some time, but they had no children. The Angel of Jehovah appeared to the woman and told her that she would conceive and bear a son. He told her that she should be very careful during her pregnancy: not to drink wine or any strong drink and not to eat anything unclean. In the Old Testament, God's law divided all foods into two categories – clean and unclean. As God's people, the children of Israel were only to eat the foods that were clean. By doing this, they took care of their health as they obeyed God's word.

The Angel said that Manoah's wife was to get pregnant and have a baby boy. He was to be a Nazarite – one separated unto God. This boy should never shave his head. When he grew up he would begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines. What an announcement! First, she was going to have a baby boy. This would be a miracle! Second, she had to take care of what she ate and drank while the baby was in her womb. Third, the boy was never to cut or shave the hair on his head. That was most unusual. Fourth, this boy would grow up and save the people from the Philistines. That was tremendous! *[Write these 4 points on the board.]*

The woman went quickly to find her husband and excitedly told him about the Angel's visit. She told him that a man of God came to her and "His appearance was like an angel of God, very awesome" (Judges 13:6).

You can tell that she was pretty overwhelmed by the appearance of this angel. She had become speechless. Manoah immediately cried out, begging Jehovah, "Oh my Lord! Let the man of God, whom You sent, come again to us, I pray; and let Him teach us what we should do with the boy that is to be born" (v. 8).

Right away Manoah wanted to know how to raise this son they were going to have. You know I have been with a family when they found out that they were getting a dog. The kids right away starting talking about how cute the puppy would be and how great it would be to play with. No one talked about how they would have to feed the dog every day and make sure it had water. No one talked about how much work it would take them to train the dog to obey, sit, and stay.

No one wanted to talk about how the dog would be their responsibility. They all just talked about the fun they would have. But you know, the fact is, everything we get is a responsibility. A new bike, a new pet, a new baby are all great, BUT it means someone must be responsible. Manoah was this kind of man. He knew he would need to be responsible for this baby. Manoah was a thoughtful person. He knew that he had to consider what would need to be done in the days, months, even years to come to properly raise this child according to God's ways.

Later, when the woman was sitting alone in the field, the Angel of God came again. She hurried to get her husband. Manoah approached Him and asked if He was the man that had spoken to his wife. The Angel said that He was. Then Manoah wanted to know what rule the boy should follow and what was he to do. You see, Manoah did not doubt at all that what the Angel had spoken would take place. Manoah had heard the report from his wife, and he believed the Angel's word. He would have a son. What Manoah wanted was to make sure that he understood how the boy should be raised. What instructions should the boy be given? What was Manoah to do in bringing up the boy? How should the boy be raised?

The Angel spoke again the same matters that He had spoken to the woman. He did not add anything new. Who can tell me those things again?

Manoah wanted to spend more time with the Angel, so he asked if they could prepare a meal for Him. But the Angel would not stay and eat the food. He did not want anything as repayment for coming to them. He told them that if they were to do anything, they should offer up a sacrifice to Jehovah. To do this showed that they wanted to give thanks to God. They knew He was the One who could bring this about.

But Manoah still didn't really understand completely. He did not really understand who this man was. He said, "What is Your name, so that when Your words come to pass, we may honor You?" Do you know what the Angel of Jehovah replied? He said, "Why do you ask about My name, since it is wonderful?" (vv. 17-18).

Manoah followed the Angel's instructions. He offered up the young goat upon a rock as a sacrifice to Jehovah. The flame went up from the altar to heaven. While Manoah and his wife looked on, the Angel of Jehovah went up in the flame. How wondrous! First He had been right there with them, and then He went up in the flame. What a marvel! How awesome! They fell on their faces. They knew that they had seen God! Manoah was in fear; surely they would die since they had seen God.

But his wife calmed his fear, knowing that Jehovah would not have let them hear these things if He had planned to kill them. No, Jehovah had come to visit them in a very special way, and He was pleased with the offering they had given.

Samson Taking the Way of a Nazarite Week 10

Point to Emphasize: We should follow our parents' instructions consistently.

Reference Reading: Judges 13:23, 24

Memory Verse: I will give careful heed to the perfect way... (Psalm 101:2a)

Story Sample

[Review]

Manoah's wife became pregnant just like the Angel of Jehovah had said. During the nine months of her pregnancy she followed Jehovah's word to her. She had to only eat the foods permitted in God's law and she could not drink wine or any strong drink. She took care of herself and the baby growing inside of her by following His instructions.

Now that sounds pretty easy, doesn't it? But let me ask you a question. Have your mom or dad given you instructions on how to wash your hands? Of course, they have. When you were younger, they went with you to the sink and turned on the water, handed you the soap, and told you to rub those dirty hands together with the soap. Then you had to rinse and dry them. Some moms have been known to make their kids come and let her smell their hands to make sure they used enough soap.

Didn't your parents instruct you how to brush your teeth? Sure they did. Some families even have an egg timer in the bathroom and you have to keep brushing your teeth until all the sand goes through. In that way you will always have healthy teeth without many cavities.

NOW here comes the real question:

Do you follow those hand washing instructions each and every time when you wash your hands OR do you often turn on the water, splash them with a little water and then whiz out the door? Do you brush your teeth really good each time? Or is it "toothbrush in and toothbrush out"? Just with these two examples, we can see that hardly any of us will pass the test, will we?

If you can't or don't follow these instructions each and every time you wash your hands and brush your teeth in one day or one week, how easy can it be to follow instructions for NINE months! Not so easy! I am sure that you never thought you were so lazy in following instructions, were you? But now we all have to admit that we are lazy.

These are practices to take care of our health. Yet, we just think getting back outside to play is more important, so we take the short-cut when washing our hands. Did you know that hand washing is the best way not to get sick? Well, it is. That is why nurses and doctors scrub their hands for a long time many times throughout the whole day. One time I read an article that said if you want to kill all the germs on your hands you do it like this. **READY-** Turn on the water, grab the soap and scrub. *[Do these motions in the air. Say the alphabet slowly as you scrub. By the time you get to "z", you can rinse.]* THAT is a LONG TIME!

Of course, the instructions given to Manoah's wife were about her eating and her drinking. Why is that? Yes, what she took in affected her body's health and the baby's health. What about the things you take in? Do they do that same thing? Sure! Did you know that the Bible tells us to take care of our body? God cares for the health of our body. There are many things that you can eat or drink that are good for you, but there are also things that you can take into your body that are bad for you. These things are not good for our health. We should all take care of the body God created for us.

Since Manoah's wife followed Jehovah's instructions for nine months, she was very healthy and she gave birth to a healthy baby boy. Does anyone know what name they gave this baby? Samson was his name.

As this baby grew up, he continued in the way that his mom and dad had taken. He followed Jehovah's instructions. Of course, when you are young it is easier to go along with your parents, isn't it? Your parents say, "Eat your veggies, have an orange for snack, don't drink all those sugary drinks, don't play that kind of game . . ." They give you do's and don'ts all the time, and it is pretty easy to go along. But when you get older and some friends do things that are not right, then it takes more to go along with what your parents want. Well, as Samson grew, he really was a Nazarite. He was not like all his friends doing things that were not according to the instructions given to Samson. They could eat and drink whatever they wanted as long as they didn't get caught - but not Samson. He was a Nazarite. He was one set apart unto God. He followed Jehovah's instructions. He would not drink wine, he would only eat the foods permitted by God's law, and he did not always join in and do the things other young men would do. He showed his submission to God by not cutting his hair. In this way he kept himself pure for God. He was very much for God. Samson grew up and Jehovah blessed him.

The Spirit of God Began to Move Samson Week 11

Point to Emphasize: We can be those who have faith in God.

Reference Reading: Judges 13:25; 14:1–15:20

Memory Verse: But know that Jehovah sets apart the faithful man for Himself. (Psalm 4:3a)

***Note to storyteller:* **It must be noted that we do not intend to tell certain details of these stories to the children. We have chosen to highlight only certain aspects that show Samson’s might and his faith. Please exercise care in your story telling. Do not bring in other parts of these stories that expose his immorality, lust of the flesh, and failures as well as other portions that we have purposely omitted.**

Story Sample

The Spirit of God began to move Samson. And he had faith in God. There is a chapter in the book of Hebrews (chapter 11) that records 16 names of those who have faith. Out of the entire Old Testament only 16 names are there as examples of those who lived by faith. And Samson’s name is there! That is impressive!

Let’s list some of the things that Samson did to show his strength and faith in God: Once, when Samson was walking through a vineyard, suddenly a young lion roared against him. And instead of being scared and running away, he had faith in God. The Spirit of God rushed upon him and he tore the young lion apart with his bare hands. He was mighty. I can tear a piece of paper. Now, that doesn’t take much strength, does it? But what amazing strength he had to tear apart a young lion with his bare hands. *[Write this on the board as #1- tore apart a lion.]*

Then, later, he was tricked by 30 Philistines. The Spirit of Jehovah rushed on him again and he went and struck 30 men to pay the debt he owed to the 30 Philistines. *[Write this on the board as #2 – struck 30 men.]*

Another time, he was wronged by a Philistine. He caught 300 foxes. Have you ever caught a wild animal? Neither have I. And foxes are not friendly critters. You don’t just call them and they come to you like a pet dog. So, you know it took time, patience and know how to catch 300 of them. Then he made torches. Interesting combination! What can you do with 300 foxes and torches? Well, Samson took two foxes and tied their tails together to one torch. So how many torches did he have? Right, 150 torches. *[Put on the board as #3. - used 300 foxes and 150 torches to destroy Philistine’s property.]*

After all the foxes were paired up with torches, he then lit the torches and turned the foxes loose into the Philistine’s fields. So you have standing grain - that stuff is dry, and you have vineyards and you have olive groves and you have 150 pairs of foxes each having a flaming torch tied to their tails. What does this give you? LOTS and LOTS of burned fields!! And who do these groves and fields belong to? —the Philistines. What kind of reaction did the Philistines have? They were furious! How dare Samson destroy all their property! So the Philistines

responded with fury, but it was just not aimed at Samson. They rose up against all of Judah at Lehi because Samson was near. They were going to make all the tribe of Judah pay for what Samson had done. Judah would die for what had happened.

So, 3000 men of Judah went down to find Samson. They could not believe what Samson had done. Didn't he know that the Philistines would strike back at them? The Philistines ruled over them. No one could get away with killing them and burning up their property without getting punished. The Philistines would punish all of them. They had to do something to sooth the fury of the Philistines. Otherwise the Philistines would take revenge on all of Judah.

So guess what they said to Samson?

READ Judges 15:12

We have come down to bind you up so that we can deliver you into the hand of the Philistines. And Samson said to them, Swear to me that you will not fall upon me yourselves.

Samson wanted to make sure that they would only bind him and deliver him to the Philistines. He let them bind him with two new ropes. As they brought him up into Lehi, the Philistines crowded around shouting in triumph. Now they had him! Now they could kill him. Oh, the crowd swarmed around him. He was surrounded in a sea of Philistines, the enemies of the children of God. Then the Spirit of Jehovah rushed upon him and the ropes on his arms became like flax and his bonds melted off his hands. And he found a fresh jawbone of a dead animal and took it as his weapon and killed 1000 Philistines with it. How mighty Samson was! *[Put on the board as #4 - ropes melted and he slew 1,000 Philistines.]*

After this battle, Samson was then very thirsty. And God opened the hollow place that is in Lehi, and water came forth and he drank.

READ Judges 15:18

"...he called on Jehovah saying, You have granted this great victory by the hand of Your servant..." [Put on the board as #5 - He gave God the credit for the victory.]

And Samson judged Israel in the days of the Philistines for twenty years. *[Put on the board as #6 - Samson judged Israel 20 years.]*

Samson Made the Wrong Choices Week 12

Point to Emphasize: The friends we choose either help or hinder us from making good choices.

Reference Reading: Judges 14:1- 16:31

Memory Verse: I am a companion to all who fear You and to those who keep Your precepts.
(Psalm 119:63)

***Note to storyteller:* **It must be noted that we do not intend to tell the details of these stories to the children. We only want to highlight Samson's failures in a very particular way. Please exercise care in your story telling. Do not bring in other parts of these stories that we have purposely omitted.**

Story Sample

[Review]

Now if this were all there were to Samson's story, he would have been remembered as a great and mighty judge over Israel. But we are so sorry that this is not the case. Even though he was mighty and had faith, he also had many failures.

Have you ever watched a track and field competition? When I was your age my brother ran on a high school track team. He ran the mile. This is considered a short race. You only run one mile and then it is over. There is another race called "cross country". In this race you cover a greater distance over different terrain. It takes a lot longer than the mile. You can't just run with all your might and expect to make it the total distance. So throughout the race you are pacing yourself, deciding when to push and when to reserve your energy. A good runner in cross-country is not just one who starts off well. That runner must do well over the entire course.

If Samson had stayed on course over his whole life he would have been like a good cross-country runner. But he only started off well. He then made some very poor decisions, and he failed.

Samson's failure started when he stopped contacting God. And he also wanted to be close to the Philistines, God's enemy. As a Nazarite, he should have continued to only have close friendships with the children of Israel, God's people. If all his companions had been among the children of Israel, he could have remained separated unto God. But as a young man Samson made wrong choices. *[Give example from childhood how associations with certain ones can cause you to do the wrong things – do not expose yourself or others too much as this could change the focus of the story from Samson to your personnel failures. Use short stories that are age appropriate and relevant to the children you are speaking to.]*

The first time Samson was influenced by the Philistines was when he made a bet with 30 other Philistines. If they could answer his riddle within seven days, he would give them very expensive clothes. The 30 Philistines could not figure the riddle out, so they got someone very

close to Samson to wear him down. Those 30 wanted to win the bet. Can you believe Samson was doing such a thing? He made a bet. That is gambling! Samson should never have entered into gambling.

Samson lost the bet, and he suffered a big loss. By this Samson should have learned not to have close ties with the Philistines. He should have repented right then and turned back to God. But he didn't. Samson put his trust in someone who was related to God's enemy. How foolish was he!

Later we see another huge failure. Samson was not sincere in seeking a wife. He should never have been close to a woman unless he was engaged to her. God is most strict in this matter. Samson became closely associated with a Philistine woman named Delilah. She did not care for God or for Samson.

The Philistines hated Samson so much that each ruler was willing to pay 1,100 pieces of silver to destroy him. They talked Delilah into tricking Samson into giving her the secret of his strength. At first, Samson refused to tell her, then told her a lie. But in the end, he was tired of being hounded all the time. So he told her the truth that all his strength was in his long hair. Then as he slept, she had a man come and shave his hair off. When he woke up, his strength was gone, and the Philistines were able to capture him. How pitiful! A mighty man once separated unto God is now blinded and used like a donkey to grind the grain at the prison house! This is too tragic.

The Philistines were so happy about capturing Samson that they held a feast to Dagon their god. And they drank and praised their god for delivering Samson into their hand. At the height of the feast they brought Samson from the prison. They were going to make him perform for them as they scorned and reviled him. The place was full of men and women, and all the rulers of the Philistines were there. On the roof alone there were about 3,000 people. They were all staring at Samson.

Read Judges 16:28-30

What a sad ending this was for Samson!

You know, just because we grow up in families that love the Lord does not guarantee that we will never wander away from the Lord. At every stage, as children living at home, as older ones choosing who we hang out with in school, as young people going off to college, as young adults getting jobs - at every stage we need to be those who are for God -those who are set apart for God. Samson is not remembered only for his might and faith. He is also remembered for his failures.