

The Judges

Sunday Plan

SCRIPTURE

Judges 2

MEMORY VERSE

Judges 2:18

OPTIONAL VIDEO

Book of Judges — Animated Overview

<https://southside.cc/824-893>

When we forget God, he keeps reaching for us.

For the Teacher

Read this before you teach. Two weeks ago Joshua led the people across the river. Last week, the walls of Jericho fell. Today, fast-forward. Joshua dies. The generation that saw God's miracles dies. And their kids — the ones who didn't see the Red Sea, didn't watch the walls fall — grow up and forget. Judges 2 is the chapter where the wheel starts turning. The people forget God, things fall apart, they cry out, God sends a rescuer (a *judge*), there's peace for a while, and then they forget again. The cycle runs for the next three hundred years. The kids should leave with one idea firmly in place.

KEY TRUTH

When we forget God, he keeps reaching for us.

The cycle is the chapter. Judges 2 is not a story with a plot. It is a *pattern* — sin, trouble, crying out, rescue, peace, forget, repeat. Verses 11–19 spell it out so plainly that you can almost draw it on the board as you read. That's the move today. The kids are going to walk through the cycle on the board with you, and by the time you finish they'll see why this chapter matters: it's the engine that drives the whole rest of the book.

The hinge is verse 18. "The LORD was moved to pity by their groaning." This is the verse that explains everything. The people don't earn the rescue. The judges aren't dispatched because Israel finally got it together. God rescues because God *feels* something — pity, compassion, the same word used when a parent looks at a hurting child. Don't move past that verse fast. The whole book of Judges hangs on it.

Forgetting is the start of the cycle. Verse 10 says it: "another generation grew up after them who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done." Nobody told them. The previous generation walked across a dry riverbed and watched walls fall down, and somehow that story didn't get passed on. The kids should hear that loud and clear — forgetting God is what starts the slide. Remembering is what holds the line.

Where this connects. Two weeks ago: *God goes with you, so be brave* (Joshua 1). Last week: *When God says walk, you walk* (Jericho). Today: *those same people stop walking with God — and God still rescues them*. That arc matters. The kids should feel it: God's faithfulness doesn't depend on ours. He's the one who keeps showing up.

What we're skipping and why. Judges 2:1–5 (the angel of the LORD weeping at Bochim) and the lists of nations God left in the land (2:20–23, ch. 3) are theologically rich but pull the lesson away from the cycle itself. Today stays in 2:6–19 — the death of Joshua's generation, the forgetting, and the cycle. The individual judges (Othniel, Ehud, Deborah) come later in the quarter. We're naming the pattern today; we'll meet the people next.

Repeat the bottom line all morning. Say it at least six times. Have the kids say it back. Write it on the board next to the cycle. End with it.

MATERIALS

- Bibles for every student
- Whiteboard or large paper, markers
- Pencils, crayons or colored pencils
- Activity sheets (printed in advance from this week's activities — pick what you'll use)

1. Gather

Welcome the kids and have them sit together. Tell them today's story picks up a long time after Joshua and Jericho — Joshua is gone now, and his whole generation with him.

ASK

Has anyone ever made the same mistake over and over, even when you knew better?

Let two or three kids answer. Don't push. Then tell them: today's chapter is about a whole *people* who kept making the same mistake over and over — and the God who kept rescuing them anyway. Write the bottom line on the board:

SAY

When we forget God, he keeps reaching for us.

2. The Story

Setting the Stage

Before opening the Bible, the kids need a quick bridge from where last week left off. Tell them, in your own words:

SAY

The last few weeks we've been with Joshua. He led the people across the Jordan River. The walls of Jericho fell. God's people moved into the promised land, and for a while everything was good. Joshua got old. Joshua died. And the people who had walked across the dry riverbed and watched the walls fall — they got old too, and they died.

Then their kids grew up. And here's where today's chapter starts.

Reading the Text

Have everyone open to Judges 2:6. Pick a confident reader.

Judges 2:6–10

After the reading, work through these questions together:

DISCUSSION

1. Verse 7. While Joshua was alive, what were the people like?

→ *They served the LORD. They remembered what God had done.*

2. Verse 10. After Joshua's whole generation died, what does it say about the next generation?

→ *"They did not know the LORD or the work that he had done." They forgot. Nobody told them.*

3. So what's the very first thing that goes wrong in this chapter?

→ *Forgetting. Before they ever sin, before any trouble starts — they forget God. That's where it begins.*

The Cycle

Tell the kids you're going to read the next part, and as you read, you're going to draw something on the board. They have a job: listen for what happens *to* the people, and what God does *for* the people.

Pick a confident reader.

Judges 2:11–19

As you talk through these verses, build the cycle on the board, one arrow at a time:

1. **They forget God.** (v. 11–12)

2. **They sin — they worship other gods.** (v. 12–13)
3. **Trouble comes.** Their enemies beat them. (v. 14–15)
4. **They cry out.** (v. 18)
5. **God rescues them — he sends a judge.** (v. 16, 18)
6. **There's peace for a while.**
7. **Then the judge dies — and they forget again.** (v. 19)

Then arrow back to step 1. The cycle starts over.

DISCUSSION

1. Look at verse 18 with me. *Why* does God rescue them? Is it because they earned it? Because they were finally good?

→ *No. "The LORD was moved to pity by their groaning." He felt sorry for them. He rescued them because of what's in him, not what's in them.*

2. Verse 19. After God rescues them, what do the people do?

→ *They go right back to forgetting. As soon as the judge dies, they're back at step one.*

3. So how many times does this cycle happen in the book of Judges?

→ *Over and over. The whole book is this cycle. And every single time, when they cry out, God rescues again.*

TRANSITION

This is the heart of the lesson. The cycle keeps spinning. The people keep failing. And God keeps reaching for them. That's the chapter.

3. The Point

Say the bottom line again, with the kids:

SAY

When we forget God, he keeps reaching for us.

The Memory Verse

Have everyone turn to Judges 2:18. Have a student read the second half aloud:

SCRIPTURE

Judges 2:18

The LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them.

Read it three ways together: all together normally, all together slowly with one finger on the word *pity*, all together one more time.

SAY

"Moved to pity." That means God's heart was stirred. He saw them hurting and he couldn't stand it. The people had forgotten him — but he had not forgotten them. That's why he rescued them. Not because they deserved it. Because of who he is.

Naming Where We Forget

Stand up and walk to the board, where the cycle is drawn. Tell the kids:

SAY

The Israelites' cycle was big — they forgot God and worshipped statues. Our cycle is smaller, but it's the same shape. We forget God when we don't pray. When we skip church and don't notice. When we treat people the way the world treats people instead of the way Jesus did. When we get into a sin we know is wrong and keep going back to it.

The good news is the same news Israel got. When you cry out, God reaches for you. Every time.

PRAY

God, you saw your people when they were hurting. You see us when we are hurting. Thank you for not giving up on them. Thank you for not giving up on us. Help us remember you this week, before we forget and have to cry out. Amen.

4. The Work

Pick one or more activities from this week's menu. Print enough copies for each kid in advance. The kids don't have to do all of them — pick what fits the group's energy and what time you have left.

The menu for this week:

- **The Cycle of the Judges** — coloring page showing the six steps of the cycle as a wheel.
- **Words from Judges** — word search with the names and key words from Judges 2.
- **Where I Need to Remember** — drawing prompt connecting the lesson to the kid's own life.
- **Remember the Cycle** — fill-in-the-blanks recall using the kids' Bibles (Judges 2).

The full production specs for each activity are in this week's activities file.

NOTE

While the kids work, sit with them. Ask one or two what they're working on. Reinforce the bottom line one more time before class ends. If you finish early, have a few kids share what they made. If you run long, send the activity sheets home.

What Comes Next Week

The cycle keeps spinning, and God sends one of his most surprising rescuers — Deborah, a prophet and a judge who leads Israel to victory when no one else will step up. The kids will see what it looks like when God uses unexpected people to save his people.