

Judges & Ruth

God's *Faithfulness* Remains

women's | BIBLE STUDY

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LESSON *Three*

Othniel and Ehud



Israel's cycle of disobedience had begun. As a result of serving foreign gods, Israel experienced discipline from the One True God. One after the other, foreign nations rose against them. Yet God, in His mercy, delivered Israel by raising judges. First, Israel overcame the king of Mesopotamia under the leadership of Othniel. Then, they defeated the Moabites under the leadership of Ehud. Even in their sin, God remained faithful.

SEVEN CYCLES

This lesson begins a new section in Judges. Within Judges 3:7-16:31 are the seven cycles of sin and deliverance that characterize this book.¹⁶

Read Judges 3:7-31 before answering the following questions.

1. For review, read Judges 2:11-19 and the Introduction on pages 8-10 to be reminded of Israel's cycles of sin. Take some notes below on what you discover about both Israel and God.

2. Read the verses below. Circle what stands out to you about **sin** and its **consequences**.

*“Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor His ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.”
Isaiah 59:1-2 (NIV)*

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Romans 3:23

“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all have sinned...” Romans 5:12

*“For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.”
Romans 7:18-20*

Circle what stands out to you about **God's goodness** in the midst of our sin.

“The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will He keep His anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove our transgressions from us. As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear Him.” Psalm 103:8-13

“My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of His reproof, for the Lord reproves him whom He loves as a father the son in whom He delights.” Proverbs 3:11-12

What truth stands out to you through this exercise?

Read Judges 3:7-11.

3. How does verse 7 begin? With this type of introduction, what do you expect to happen in the rest of the passage?
4. Who is the first judge of Israel and how does he come to power? (For further insight on God's authority over earthly leadership, see Romans 13:1-2.)
5. Judges 3:7-11 is one of the clearest examples in Judges of Israel's cycle of sin. Where in this story do you see:

Sin:

Slavery:

Supplication:

Salvation:

Silence:

Looking over what you wrote above, how do you see God in action?

JUDGE

Remember, a judge during this time was a military, political ruler.

SUPPLICATION

A supplication is a prayer or plea to God for help.

OTHNIEL

The name Othniel means “God is My Strength.” Turn back to Judges 1:12-15 to see where he was first introduced in this story.¹⁷

MESOPOTAMIAN KING

Cushan-Rishathaim was likely not the real name of the king of Mesopotamia. His name translates to mean “Dark, Double-Wicked One,” indicating it was a play on words that sounded like his real name.¹⁸

- Put yourself in Israel's shoes. It appears they did not always recognize God's hand at work. Do you always recognize when God is at work in your life? Explain.

What tends to distract you from this awareness and how can you become more aware of His work?

MOAB

Read Genesis 19:30-38 to discover the beginnings of Israel's neighboring country, Moab.

LEFT-HANDED

The inclusion of Ehud being "left-handed" seems odd at first. However, this trait is part of what allows Ehud to deceive Eglon. "Because he was left-handed Ehud strapped his sword on his right thigh, contrary to the norm. Thus, Eglon never suspected that Ehud was reaching for a weapon..."¹⁹

Read Judges 3:12-31.

- As if straight out of a 21st-century superhero movie, Ehud dramatically delivers Israel from their enemy. Using the prompts below, describe the scene:

Setting:

Characters:

Climax:

Resolution:

- Ehud escaped unnoticed. After he arrived at the hill country of Ephraim, what happened? (verses 26-30)

9. Take a step back and look at the bigger picture. What did Israel do to receive God's deliverance through Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar? Why did God continue to intervene?

"Grace teaches us that God loves because of who God is, not because of who we are."

– Philip Yancey²⁰

10. Review the definition of Grace in the appendix and write down what stands out to you. Reflecting on your own life, when have you received God's gracious deliverance even though you did not and do not deserve it? Where do you still need it today? (See Appendix: Grace.)
11. Though this section of Scripture depicts graphic, war-torn images, we can learn something great about God. From these verses, how would you describe God's character and why?
12. Look at verse 11 and verse 30. Israel experienced rest. When things are going well in your life do you experience a lack of intensity or devotion in your relationship with God? Why or why not?

FAILURE TO OBEY

"The lesson is clear: a people which fails to give wholehearted obedience to the Lord can only sink lower and lower."²¹

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

Turn to page 35 for an optional activity on seeing your sin.



BIG IDEA

What is your biggest takeaway from this week's lesson?

Meditate on Psalm 51.

Spend time confessing to the Lord where you have fallen short. Talk to Him about what happens when you are feeling tempted. Let Him into your struggle and ask Him to help.

Now, remind yourself of what is true:

“For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His steadfast love toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove our transgressions from us.” Psalm 103:11-12

“But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.” 1 John 2:1b-2 (NIV)

Write down any reflections you have in the space below:

God knows your sin and He loves you even still. His love is **unconditional**. Set aside time this week to rest in this love—however this might look. Maybe it’s a walk around your neighborhood after work or listening to worship music once your kids fall asleep. It might even be taking a nap. Remember, nothing can change God’s love for you. Furthermore, He desires for you to experience the fullness of His joy, unhindered by slavery to sin. Life is found in Him alone.

Notes