

Lesson 69

Israel Turns to Idols

Israel began a cycle of disobedience, punishment, and repentance.

Studying God's Word

Don't forget! Review the Optional Supplements and determine where you can use them.

Introduction

Slide #3

Refer to Lesson 68 Theme Poster. In this lesson, we saw how God fulfilled his promise to give the Israelites the land of Canaan. God was with Joshua and the Israelites as they fought the people in the land and conquered their cities. Then Joshua divided the land for each of the tribes.

What tribe didn't receive a portion of land? Levi.

The Levites received cities and pastureland but not a large territory like the other tribes. That's because they were chosen to be God's servants in the tabernacle and to live throughout the land as teachers of God's laws.

The tribes went to the lands they were given. They enjoyed cities that they didn't have to build and fruit from trees they didn't have to plant! God gave them a fruitful land with everything they needed. They could live in comfortable homes and cities instead of tents like they had in the wilderness. But Joshua warned them to serve God alone and to obey his commands. Now that they were living in their new land, would the Israelites continue to obey God or would they disobey? We'll find out in our lesson today!

Israel's Disobedience

Let's look at a passage that sums up the book of Joshua before we move into the book of Judges.

Joshua 21:43-45

Slide #4

Slide #5

Who will read Joshua 21:43-45? Assign readers.

What had the Lord given to Israel in verse 43? All the land that he swore to give to their fathers.

God fulfilled his promises to the "fathers" of Israel. The fathers of Israel included Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (whose name was changed to Israel). God's promise was passed down to each of them that their descendants would become a great nation and be given the land of Canaan. Remember? That's why it was called the promised land.

What did God give Israel in verse 44? Rest on every side; victory over their enemies.

What does verse 45 say about the promises God made to Israel? They all came to pass; none of them failed.

Refer to the Attributes of God Poster. What attribute of God do we see here? Faithful.

Yes. God is faithful to do all he promises to do. God gave the Israelites victory and peace. They were living in the promised land now.

So, now that the promise had been fulfilled, could the Israelites just relax and do whatever they wanted, or did God still expect something from them? Allow answers.

God still required obedience to his commandments. He had chosen the Israelites as his people and saved them from slavery in Egypt. He wanted them to worship him alone, to love him, and serve him faithfully. God wanted them to obey the Ten Commandments and treat each other with kindness and respect.

After Joshua died at age 110 and all those who fought to conquer the land also passed away, the young people were not taught about all the miracles God had done for the Israelites. Sadly, they did not know or trust the Lord.

Judges 2:11–13

Slide #6

Slide #7

Refer to the Books of the Bible Poster. Let's turn to the book of Judges, chapter 2, and see if the Israelites were faithful and obedient after Joshua's death. Who will read Judges 2:11–13? Assign readers. What did the people do in verse 11 that was evil? They served the Baals. What were the Baals? Does anyone know? Allow discussion.

"Baals" refers to false gods. Although the Israelites conquered many people in the land of Canaan, some were still living in certain areas of the land. The Israelites did not completely destroy the Canaanites like God wanted them to. These Canaanites worshipped many false gods like the Baals and invited the Israelites to worship their gods, too.

What else does it say the Israelites did in verses 12 and 13? Abandoned the Lord, went after other gods and bowed down to them, provoked the Lord to anger, served the Baals and Ashtaroath.

Baals and Ashtaroath were the false gods and goddesses of the Canaanites.

So, did the Israelites obey or disobey God's commands once Joshua was gone? They disobeyed.

Refer to the Ten Commandments Poster. The Israelites were guilty of breaking the Ten Commandments by worshipping the false gods and goddesses of the Canaanites. They put other gods before the Lord and bowed down to idols.

Judges 2:14–15**Slide #8**

They were disobeying the first two commandments. This was not okay. Follow along in your Bibles as I read the next two verses. Read Judges 2:14–15.

How did God feel about Israel's worship of these false gods? He was angry. How did God punish the Israelites for their disobedience? He gave them over to their enemies.

God no longer gave Israel victory over their enemies. Instead, God brought enemies against Israel to attack them and plunder them. Plunder means that their enemies would come in and steal their food and their other possessions.

What happened when Israel tried to march out to fight back? Look in verse 15. The hand of the Lord was against them for harm.

Wow! That's a scary thought. Whenever Israel tried to march against their enemies, God was against them and caused them to lose their battles. They were in terrible distress!

Judges 2:16**Slide #9**

Who will read what God would do when the Israelites repented of their disobedience and cried out to him for deliverance? It's in Judges 2:16.

Assign a reader.

Who would God raise up to save the people? Judges.

These judges weren't like those we have in our courtrooms who decide if people are guilty or innocent. They were military leaders God raised up to rescue the Israelites by fighting against their enemies. The judges in the Bible were chosen by God to lead the Israelites to victory. God would be with the judge and help him save the people because God is merciful.

Refer to the Attributes of God Poster. Who will read the definition of merciful for us? Choose a reader. Kind to those in misery; withholds deserved punishment.

In the book of Judges, God didn't withhold punishment, but he delivered his people from punishment when they cried out to him in their misery and distress.

Israel's Cycle in Judges**Slide #10**

Refer to the Lesson Theme Poster. What we just read in the second chapter of Judges happened over and over: 1) The Israelites sinned by worshipping false gods; 2) God became angry and sent enemies to punish them; 3) The Israelites cried out to God to forgive them; 4) God raised up a judge to deliver them from their enemies; 5) The Israelites thanked God for saving them and giving them

peace. But, once they had peace and safety, the Israelites would forget what God had done for them and turn back to idols. This started the whole cycle again!

How many years do you think this went on? Any guesses? Write guesses on the board.

The Israelites continued to do these same things again and again, for about 300 years! Write 300 on the board.

Judges 3:7–11

Slide #11

Slide #12

Slide #13

Turn to Judges 3 and follow along as I read verses 7–11. This is an example of the cycle we just discussed. Read the passage.

What evil did the Israelites do in verse 7? Served the Baals and the Asheroth.

Yes. Remember that the Baals and Asheroth were false gods and goddesses the Canaanite people worshipped. And now the Israelites were worshipping them, too. Note: The different spelling of Asheroth from Ashtaroth indicates the idols/images of the goddesses.

How did God respond? He became angry.
Refer to the Attributes of God Poster. What attribute of God means he cannot sin and hates all sin? Holy.

Right. Because God is holy, he can be angry at sin and not sin! Because God is just, he must punish sin. He loved Israel and wanted them to obey. When they disobeyed, he punished them—not to be mean but to help them learn that they had sinned so they would turn back to him and repent.

In this account in Judges, God punished Israel by sending the king of Mesopotamia against them to oppress them. What does it mean to oppress someone? Allow discussion. Using power and authority to treat others harshly or with cruelty.

Slide #14

How long did this king rule over Israel and oppress them, making them serve him? Look at the end of verse 8. Eight years.

Oppress: using power and authority to treat others harshly or with cruelty
What did the people finally do in verse 9?

Cried out to the Lord.

When Israel cried out to the Lord, that means they prayed and asked God for forgiveness and help. That was what God was waiting for.

What did God do next? It's step four in the cycle. He raised up a judge, or deliverer.

This first judge God raised up was Othniel, who was Caleb's nephew. Othniel was the son of Caleb's younger brother Kenaz. Remember Caleb, who spied out the land with Joshua? Caleb remained faithful to God for his whole life. He even trusted God to help him fight giants when he was 85 years old!

What did Othniel do in verse 10? He went out to war against the king of Mesopotamia.

Othniel led the Israelites in battle against this king who had been oppressing the people. And God gave him victory! He defeated the king and led Israel for 40 years of peace and rest before he died.

Slide #15

Refer to the Lesson Theme Poster. Do you see how this account shows the cycle on our poster? The Israelites did each of these things: worshipped false gods, were punished when God sent enemies, and cried out to God. Then God sent Othniel, a judge, to deliver them, and they had peace and rest. But was that the end of it?

Judges 3:12

Slide #16

Who will read Judges 3:12 to find out what happened after Othniel died? Assign a reader.

What did the Israelites do again? Evil. Worshipped idols.

There they go, back to the first step in the cycle. Notice that even though Israel was unfaithful to God, God remained faithful to them. He didn't leave them; he was still there waiting to help them when they cried out to him, and he sent another judge to lead them out of trouble.

Slide #17

Slide #18

Slide #19

Pass out the Class Notes to the students.

Let's begin the Class Notes. Match the shapes to find the answers. Then write the words in each sentence. How did the people live at first? Who will read #1? Choose a reader. Joshua. Have students complete #1.

What did the Israelites do shortly after Joshua died in #2? Choose a reader. False gods. Have students complete #2.

And #3, how did God punish them? Choose a reader. Enemies. Have students complete #3.

Who will read #4 about God's attributes? Choose a reader. Faithful. Have students complete #4.

How about #5? Who did God raise up when the Israelites cried out for help? Choose a reader. Judges. Have students complete #5.

And #6? This is the fifth step in the cycle. Choose a reader. Peace. Have students complete #6.

How long did this cycle go on? Who will read #7? Choose a reader. 300. Have students complete #7.

Look at #8. Who was the first judge? Choose a reader. Othniel. Have students complete #8.

Idolatry Today

When we read about the cycle the Israelites repeated for 300 years, we may think, "How can they make the same mistakes over and over like that? They sure were terrible sinners." But, we have the same sin problem and can be just as stubborn to sin and slow to repent. We may not worship Baals or idols, or bow down to statues like the Israelites did, but we can still be guilty of idolatry.

Slide #20

Refer to the Ten Commandments Poster. Whenever we make anything more important than God, it's idolatry. Putting anything in our lives above God is disobeying the first commandment.

Idolatry: putting anything in our lives above God
Luke 18:22–24

Refer to the Books of the Bible Poster. Let's go to the New Testament and look in the Gospel of Luke. Turn to chapter 18. Let's see what Jesus said about idolatry. In this passage, a rich young man came to Jesus and asked him how he could have eternal life. When Jesus told him to keep God's commandments, the man said, "I've done that since I was kid." He thought he was a good person.

Slide #21

Let's see what Jesus said next. Who will read Luke 18:22–24? Assign readers.

A lot of people are like this young man. He thought he was a good person doing a good job obeying God's commands. But none of us can keep God's commands perfectly because we are all sinners.

What did Jesus tell him he still needed to do in verse 22? Sell all that he had and give it to the poor; then follow Jesus.
How did the ruler feel when he heard this? Sad.

He felt sad because he was very wealthy. Giving all his things to the poor to follow Jesus was not something he wanted to do. The rich young ruler had put his money and possessions before God, and that's why Jesus told him to sell them and give to the poor. His possessions were his idol because he was not willing to give them up to follow Jesus.

Jesus may ask us to give up the very thing that is most important to us—the thing we love the most. Jesus wants to know that he is truly our Lord and that we love him more than anything else.

If we truly love Jesus, should we be willing to give up anything he asks us to? Yes.

In this case, the rich young ruler was guilty of idolatry just like the Israelites were, but riches were his idol instead of a false god like Baal.

Print and cut out the Idol Strips before class. Fold them and put them in a container for students to draw from.

Show the container with the Idol Strips inside. We're going to play a game like charades to get us thinking about what can be idols today. Things that are possible idols are written on the papers in this container. I'll choose students to come up and draw a paper strip. You will act out what is on the paper without speaking while the rest of the class will try to guess what you're acting out. These things can all become idols in our lives. Remember, an idol is anything we love more than God. Who would like to start? Choose a volunteer to begin the game. Have students act and guess the idols as time allows.

Slide #22

Great job acting and guessing, everyone! Let's finish the Class Notes. Who will read #9? Choose a reader. Anything. Have students complete #9. And #10, what was the idol in the young ruler's life? Choose a reader. Riches. Have students complete #10.

Application

Slide #23

Refer to the Lesson Theme Poster. Today, we saw the cycle of disobedience that Israel repeated for hundreds of years. The Israelites turned away from God. Then God would punish them by sending enemies to conquer them and make their lives difficult. The people would cry out to God, and God would show his mercy and love by sending a judge to deliver them from their enemies. The Israelites would have peace, usually as long as the judge lived, and then they would disobey again.

What sin did the Israelites keep doing to start this cycle? Worshipping false gods/idols.

What can we learn from this cycle in the book of Judges? We learn attributes of God: he is holy and just, so he must punish sin, but he is also merciful and faithful to help his people when they turn to him. We also learn that idolatry is when we put anything in our lives before God.

Idols can be many different things if they are more important to us than God. An idol can be our friends. It can be schoolwork or getting good grades. It can be sports. It can be money or buying new things. Sleep can even be an idol if we would rather do that than get out of bed to go worship God at church or to read our Bible and pray. It can be clothes, toys, video games, or the latest gadget. These things are not bad. In fact, they are blessings from God. But we must be careful not to let things turn into something we care about and love more than God.

Think about it: Do you have idols in your life? You can pray and ask God to help you put him first. God may want you to give up that idol, or you may need to make some changes and be sure that thing you really like doesn't take up all your thoughts and time. When you ask God for forgiveness, he'll forgive you and help you make the change.

Lesson Review

We all learn best with review and repetition! We encourage you to play a lesson review game.

Bible Baseball

Students will answer questions and run the bases!

Materials

Review Questions
Three chairs set out for bases
Optional: gift wrap tube and a large balloon

Instructions

Print one copy of the Review Questions for your use. Set out chairs as bases. Have the students line up by the home base area facing you (at the pitcher's mound). Each student up to "bat" will have a chance to answer a review question. If he can answer it correctly, let him run the bases. If he can't answer correctly, give the answer and ask him to go to the end of the line and try again.

You may want the students to sit on the chair at each base while they wait to run to the next base or have them run all the way around and return to the line. Repeat the questions until all the students have run around the bases.

For some added fun, you can use a gift wrap tube as a bat and toss a large balloon for students to hit after they answer each question.

Box Toss

Students will answer review questions then toss the beanbag at the holes in the box to gain points for their team.

Materials

Review Questions
Medium-sized cardboard box
Scissors or knife
Four beanbags
Masking tape

Instructions

Print one copy of the Review Questions for your use. Use scissors or a knife to cut two or three holes in the bottom of the box. Make sure they are large enough for a beanbag to easily pass through. Label each hole with a point

number: 5, 10, and 15. Use masking tape to make a tossing line several feet away from the box.

Divide the class into teams. Have the teams line up behind the line across from the box. Give each team two beanbags. Alternate asking each team a review question. Students who answer correctly will toss the beanbags at the target holes in the box to earn points for their team. If they answer incorrectly, they may toss the beanbags for fun without the points counting. Students will go to the end of the line after tossing the beanbags. Keep score for both teams. Continue play until all questions have been answered correctly and students have all had a chance to toss the beanbags.

Draw Dice

Teams will answer questions and complete a simple drawing to win. Who will finish their drawing first?

Materials

- Review Questions
- One drawing area for each team (paper, white board, etc.)
- Pencils or white board markers
- One die

Instructions

Print one copy of the Review Questions for your use. Divide the class into two teams. Give each team a sheet of paper and a pencil, or divide the white board in half. Draw a mouse on the board as an example.

Ask the first team a question from the lesson. If they answer correctly, have them roll the die.

To begin drawing their mouse, each team must wait until they get a six. They will then draw the mouse's body on their paper or the board. After they have drawn the body, as they give correct answers to the questions, they can continue to draw the other parts of the mouse according to the numbers they roll.



They can draw according to the numbers below:

6 = body

5 = nose

4 = whiskers

3 = eyes

2 = ears

1 = tail

Continue giving each team a turn to answer a question and roll the die. Repeat the questions as necessary. The first team to finish their mouse wins.

You may choose to draw a simple object from the lesson, such as a crown, an open Bible, a fish, etc. Be sure to assign numbers (as above) to each part of the object to be drawn before the game begins.

Four in a Row

Students will answer questions and add a marker for their team onto the grid. Which team will be the first to get four in a row?

Materials

Review Questions

Masking tape

Red and black paper circles or other markers for each team

Instructions

Print one copy of the Review Questions for your use. Use masking tape to make a 16-section grid on the floor. The grid should be four sections wide by four sections long. Each section should be equal in size. Use eight red circles and eight black circles cut from construction paper or other markers for the two teams.

Divide the students into two teams. Give each team eight markers. They will take turns answering the questions. If they answer correctly, they can put a marker in a square on the grid. The first team to get four markers in a row wins the game.

Goofy Golf

Hit the sock with the noodle? Teams must work together to answer the questions and putt to get a hole-in-one in this crazy golf game!

Materials

Review Questions
Swimming noodles or rolled up newspapers
Rolled up socks
Masking tape
Ten sheets of paper
Markers

Instructions

Print one copy of the Review Questions for your use. Use the markers to number sheets of paper 1–10 (use more or less depending on class size and time). Tape down the sheets of paper around the room in a random pattern to form a golf course. You may want to add chairs as obstacles in the path.

Divide the class into teams. Give each team a rolled up sock and a swimming noodle. Ask the first student a review question from the lesson. If he answers correctly, allow him to use the noodle to drive the rolled up sock toward the first sheet of paper labeled #1. Continue with the next team. Take turns allowing team members to answer questions and continue putting the socks along the course to each hole, continuing from where the last teammate left off. The sock must touch or roll over the sheet of paper to consider it in the hole. The first team to reach the tenth hole wins.

Racetrack

Who will reach the checkered flag first? Teams will race to the finish by answering review questions.

Materials

Review Questions
White board or chalkboard
Markers/chalk
Optional: paper cutouts for each team (cars, animals, circles, etc.),
tape/poster putty

Instructions

Print one copy of the Review Questions for your use. Draw a racetrack on the board. It may be as simple as a straight horizontal path or a curvy circle. Label "Start" and "Finish" (with a checkered flag) at either end of the track. Add numbers along the track (e.g., 1–10) at equal intervals between Start and Finish. The numbers will be used as placement points for the racers as they progress along the track.

Divide the class into teams. You may draw a different symbol (e.g., stick figure, circle, X or O) to represent each team at the Start, or use paper cutouts as team markers and stick them to the board with tape/poster putty.

Ask the first team a review question. If they answer correctly, move their marker or redraw their symbol along the track at #1. If they answer incorrectly, give the next team a chance to answer and move to the first number. If they do not know, give the answer and ask that question again later. Continue to alternate asking review questions and moving teams' markers along the racetrack according to the numbers along the track. The first team to reach the Finish wins!

Pick a Point

Answer the questions correctly to earn the right to pick a point.

Materials

Review Questions
Small paper strips
Cup or basket

Instructions

Print one copy of the Review Questions for your use. Write various numbers in increments of 5 or 10 on strips of paper to use as point cards. Put the point cards into the cup or basket. Divide students into teams of 4–5 students each. Have each team take turns answering a review question. After each correct answer, let a member of the team draw a point card from the cup.

The number of points on the cards will vary, so the score will have nothing to do with how skilled one team might be. Keep track of each team's points. If time allows, repeat the questions!

Toss for It

How many points? Toss for it! Students answer the questions and toss the beanbag to earn points for their team.

Materials

Review Questions
A deck of numbered cards, or numbers and "wild" written on index cards
One beanbag
Masking tape
Two baskets or containers for cards

Instructions

Print one copy of the Review Questions for your use. Place several rows of numbered cards facedown with a few inches between them to form a grid pattern (make sure to put several wild cards or Jokers down, too). Use the masking tape to make a tossing line several feet from the cards.

Divide students into teams and have them line up behind the tossing line. Ask the first student a review question. If he gives the correct answer, have him toss the beanbag onto a card. Turn the card over to reveal the points he receives for his team. Face cards or word cards are 10 points each. Wild or Jokers are also 10—plus another turn. All other cards are face value.

Have the student pick up his card and put it in the team's basket to be counted at the end of the game. Next team's turn. If a student gives an incorrect answer, he should go to the end of the line. Give the answer and repeat that question later. Continue taking turns until all the questions have been answered. Add more cards to the grid if necessary.

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