

THE THREAD

DISCOVERING THE THREAD OF THE GOSPEL THROUGH THE BIG-PICTURE STORY OF THE BIBLE

PART 2: A PEOPLE RISE. A PEOPLE FALL.

LESSON 1 || THE PERIOD OF JUDGES

SESSION SNAPSHOT

NARRATIVE PASSAGE: Judges 2:6-19

GOSPEL FOCUS: Romans 10:14-15

STUDENT TAKEAWAYS:

- Grasp that even through all of God's faithfulness to the Israelites, they still forgot about Him and turned to other gods.
- Understand the importance of spreading the Gospel in word and actions.
- Identify specific ways in which they can communicate the Gospel in their context.

OVERVIEW:

The history of God's people is sometimes hard to watch. Over and over again, they blew it. Big time. (Now, before we judge them, if we were in their shoes, you can bet we'd have a similar track record.) But despite their crummy track record, God still worked through His people. Why? Because God's plan couldn't be thwarted by the sin of His people. This is the first lesson in Part 2 of The Thread. In Part 2, you'll learn the story of Israel establishing itself as a nation. In this lesson, you'll introduce your students to the judges of Israel. You'll highlight the cycle the people underwent as they grew as a nation, a cycle that included turning their backs on God. But you'll also see how the Israelites' failure only highlighted the need for a Redeemer and for getting the message of that Redeemer to the world.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO:

Each *Thread* lesson comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These short videos are designed to help you grasp the lesson's main point as you prepare to teach.



BIBLE BACKGROUND

The Bible Background is designed to help you provide the basic context for the passages you'll be studying.

- **WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "CONTEXT"?** In every YM360 Bible study lesson, we encourage teachers to help students know *who* wrote a particular book, *when* it was written, and *why* it was written.
- **WHY TEACH CONTEXT?** Grasping the big-picture view of God's story of redemption is difficult for teenagers without understanding the context of the books and passages they're studying.

JUDGES

- *Author:* Judges is one of several books in the Bible where the author is not definitively known. Church history holds Samuel as a potential author, but most scholars concede that no solid textual evidence strongly supports that viewpoint.
- *Time frame:* The events of the book of Judges took place over a two to three-hundred-year time frame between Joshua's death and the rise of Samuel and Saul. The timeline of the writing of the book is hard to pin down. Some think it was mostly completed by the time David was king, while others hold that it was completed by the time Babylon conquered Judah.
- *Purpose:* The purpose of Judges was to highlight what un-godly leadership did (and can do) to God's people. And yet, it also served to show that the people would rally to godly leadership. As much as anything, it highlights the fickle nature of Israel and her leaders and how quickly the people forgot all that God had done for them.

ROMANS

- *Author:* Paul is the author of Romans.
- *Time frame:* Romans was probably written from Corinth in the winter of 56-57 AD.
- *Purpose:* Since the church in Rome had not received comprehensive theological teaching on salvation and other implications of following Christ, Paul wrote Romans to ensure a good understanding of such things. In addition, since many Jewish Christians were rejecting some of the new Gentile converts, a level playing field needed to be given to all believers. This is what Paul was advocating for in Romans.

LESSON PLAN

The Lesson Plan contains four elements:

- **GETTING STARTED**— An introductory activity designed to prepare teenagers to engage with God and the truth of His Word.
- **THE STORY**— A section featuring a narrative from Scripture that helps teenagers know God better through learning the story of the Bible.
- **THE THREAD**— A special emphasis where teenagers discover the Gospel thread coursing throughout the story of the Bible.
- **WRAPPING UP**— An application-focused segment helping teenagers ask the question, “How am I impacted by what I learned today”?

GETTING STARTED

- *Goal:* Students will start thinking about how quickly we forget things right before our faces.
- *Set-Up:* If you have a projector screen in your room, you can play this game using your computer. You’ll want to find images of a lot of random objects. (Our searches for “random objects” and “junk drawer” turned up some perfect pictures.) If you don’t have a screen, arrange to bring 10-20 small objects (paper clip, coin, eraser, rock, marble, etc.) and something to cover them up with (a cloth or towel). You’ll want to have the objects covered under the cloth when students arrive. Also, bring enough scrap pieces of paper and pens/pencils for everyone to write down their answers.

FIRST, distribute slips of paper and something to write with. Explain that you’re going to play a quick game to test their memory. Explain that you’re going to show them a collection of objects for a few seconds. Their goal is to see how many they can remember. Then, if you’re using the projector screen, display the pre-selected images on the screen. If you’ve brought physical objects to display, uncover them. Allow students to look at the objects for 10-15 seconds. Then, cover the objects back up or remove the image from your screen. Then, instruct them to quickly take their scrap sheets of paper and write down as many objects as they can remember. This is to be done individually. No teamwork!

Once you’ve given them a minute or two to write down their answers, see who was able to remember the most items. Did anyone get them all? If not, ask them if they thought they could get a more complete list if they were able to work together and give them a shot. When you’ve finished, **ask the following questions:**

- Was the game easier or harder than you thought it would be? Why was it so easy to forget something right there in front of your face?
- Why was it easier to get a more complete list when you could communicate with each other? How does communicating with others help our memory?

FINALLY, explain to the students that you’re continuing your study of the big-picture story of the Bible. Explain that you’re starting to look at a new stage in the life of the Israelites. **Say something like:**

- We’re picking up the story with the Israelites having already settled in the Promised Land. We’re going to watch over the next few weeks as they try to build and govern a nation. Today, we’re about to see an up-close example of how a lack of communication led to some intense forgetfulness on the part of the Israelites. We’ll also see how crucial it is for us to communicate with the world around us.

TRANSITION TO THE STORY.

THE STORY

- *Goal:* Students will discover that even through all of God's faithfulness to the Israelites, they still forgot about Him and turned to other gods.
- *Set-Up:* Students will need a Bible or a Bible app. You may find that a dry-erase board is helpful in jotting down some notes, but it's not essential.

FIRST, explain that in this lesson, you'll be looking at a sample passage from a period of Israel's history where judges ruled the people. This was before Israel asked God for a king to rule them. Explain that judges were kind of like Presidents or governors. And like our leaders, some were good and some...not so much. If you'd like, use the Connecting The Dots section below to review or fill in the gaps between your last lesson and this one.

CONNECTING THE DOTS

As you teach *The Thread*, there will naturally be some gaps in the story. This is an optional way for you to fill in some of the gaps between the last lesson you taught and this one. Use it to review or connect the dots to the events surrounding the passage.

- The Lord explicitly commanded Israel not to intertwine themselves with the people remaining in the land.
- The Lord promised to remain faithful to all of His promises if the people obeyed Him. He also promised punishment if they chose not to listen to Him.
- The people did not obey, and they got caught up in the religious practices of those remaining in the land. They began bowing down to and worshipping foreign gods.

Explain to the students that you're going to be looking at a passage that shows just how easy it was for the Israelites to forget all of the incredible things that God did for them. (It's almost crazy to read the words on the page and see how bad their memory was!)

THEN, read or have a student read Judges 2:6-9. When you've finished, lead students in a brief discussion.

Ask something like:

- **What jumped out to you in those verses?**
 - Of course, *answers here could vary*, but the main things that should jump off the page are in verse 7. The people served the Lord all the days of Joshua and the elders that outlived him. Those elders had seen all of the great work God had done over the years for Israel. (If using a dry-erase board, jot these things down on the left half.)
- **What are some of the great things the elders saw God do for Israel?**
 - *Answers will vary.* Deliverance from Egypt, parting the Red Sea, manna from heaven, water from a rock, etc. (Jot the students' answers down on the left side of the board, too.)
- **We know that the people of Israel were far from perfect and struggled to obey quite a bit (like we all do). But what impact do you think it had on their relationship with God that they had seen so many amazing things up close and personal in their lifetime?**
 - *Answer:* All they had seen and been a part of must have served as a reminder of God's goodness. Even as they struggled to obey and drifted from the Lord, these memories must have been great reminders to return to Him.

NEXT, read or have a student read Judges 2:10. Then, ask:

- **What jumped out at you in that verse?**
 - *Answers here could vary*, but the main (and startling) thing we read in this verse is that a whole generation didn't know the Lord.

- **Wow, that sounds bad. Those first four verses seemed pretty positive, right? And then we get this bleak verse. What can we guess must have happened for this to be true?**
 - *Answer:* Not only did the elders pass away, but their whole generation eventually died. When that happened, a new generation that wasn't around to see all of the fantastic works God had done for Israel came after them.
- **So, how do you think things went for them? Do you think not knowing the Lord or His actions was a big deal? What kind of impact do you think it had on them as a people?**
 - *Answers will vary.*

Draw a line down the middle of the board (vertically). Explain to the students that we're going to jot down what happens next on the right side of the board and see if there's a noticeable difference.

THEN, read or have a student read Judges 2:11-15. Ask if they feel like things escalated pretty quickly. Someone could have just shrugged off verse 10 and thought it wouldn't have much of an impact on the people, but that clearly wasn't the case. **Ask:**

- **What jumped out to you in these verses?**
 - Put the students' answers down on the right side of the board. Some answers may include: the people did what was evil in the sight of the Lord; they abandoned the Lord; they went after other gods; they provoked the Lord to anger; the Lord's anger was kindled against them; He sold them into the hands of enemies, and so on.

NEXT, explain to the students that you're going to give them a little context for what's going on here. The Lord had commanded the Israelites to drive out all of the inhabitants of Canaan when they entered the Promised Land. As usual, Israel disobeyed. So, many Canaanites remained in the land and worshipped their gods. Explain that this is what the passage meant when it talked about the Baals and Ashtaroht. Explain that the people had forgotten about the Lord and all He had done. On top of that, the influences of the people the Lord had commanded them to drive out of the land remained. The people eventually gave in to these influences and began following other gods.

THEN, read Judges 2:16. Explain to the students that the judges' primary role was to give military and civil leadership over the people. Two of the most famous judges were Gideon and Samson. **Ask:**

- **How was God's provision of judges to the people of Israel a sign of His love and grace towards them?**
 - *Answer:* The people were clearly out of control and were getting destroyed by outside forces. They had no real leadership and couldn't pull things together in the state they were in. It would have been just of God to leave them alone and watch them get destroyed. The provision of judges, however, was a sign of His grace to the people.
- **How do you think it went? Do you think it got better?**
 - *Answers will vary.*

Read or have a student read Judges 2:17-19. And then **ask:**

- **What jumped out to you in these verses?**
 - *Answer:* Write their answers on the right side of the board. It's okay if it's getting cramped on that side. It will help illustrate the point. Some answers should be: they didn't listen to the judges; they turned from the ways of their fathers; they chased after other gods; they didn't stop their stubborn ways, and so on.
- **Is it hard for you to believe that God was faithful and gracious to Israel even though they turned away from Him? Why or why not?**
 - *Answers here will vary.* Most of us would have been so fed up with them and their stubbornness that we would have let them go. But God is faithful and gracious over and over again, even in the midst of His people's rebellion.

Have the students look at the board. Have them think about the difference between the left and right halves.

Say something like:

- We drew this dividing line on the board after we read verse 10. That was the point when everything changed, and it went from this (point to the left half) to this (point to the right). Does anyone remember what happened in verse 10? Why was that the dividing line?
 - o *Answer:* Have someone read verse 10.

FINALLY, wrap up this section by explaining to the students that the two sides of the board are so drastically different because a generation came up and did not know the Lord. Say something like:

- What we just read is a sad picture of what happens when people don't know the Lord and what it means to follow Him. We all know people like that all around us. In the next section, we're going to look at our calling as followers of Jesus for how we should interact with those around us that don't know the Lord.

IF STUDENTS DON'T HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, TRANSITION INTO THE THREAD, WHERE YOU WILL FIND THE CONNECTION OF THE GOSPEL TO THE BIG-PICTURE NARRATIVE OF SCRIPTURE.

THE THREAD

FIRST, instruct students to turn to Romans 10. If you choose, while they are finding the book of Romans, provide them with some brief context for the book by referencing the Bible Background. Before you get to the passage we're going to discuss, ask:

- Can anyone give me a nutshell version of the Gospel? What is the "good news" of Jesus Christ?
 - o *Answer:* We were born into sin and have chosen to rebel against God. The wage of that rebellion is death. While God would have been just in letting us suffer that punishment, He was gracious toward us. He sent His son, Jesus, to live the life we were supposed to live and suffer the death we were supposed to suffer. Jesus was crucified on the cross, but three days later, He rose from the dead and conquered death. Because of His life, death, and resurrection, all who trust in Him will be saved, have abundant life here on earth, and enjoy eternal life with God.
- How do people come to a place where they can learn to believe in and trust Jesus?
 - o *Answer:* They have to be told! How will they know if they do not hear?

FINALLY, when you've finished, read or have a student read Romans 10:14-15. Then, ask:

- What does this passage say about how people learn to believe in Jesus? Is this answer different than what we just said?
 - o *Answer:* This passage is clear. People must hear about the good news of Jesus in order to believe in Him and be saved.
- What calling does this passage put on believers?
 - o *Answer:* The passage calls us to preach the good news. It doesn't mean we have to literally give sermons to people, but it's clear that we have to talk to them about the Gospel.
- Have you ever heard the quote, "Share the gospel always, and if necessary, use words?" According to this passage, what's the problem with this quote?
 - o *Answer:* Romans 10:14 is brutally clear: people need to hear the Gospel. Do we really think that every person who sees our lives will automatically think to become Christians? Sure, our lives need to back up what we believe, but we have to use words! We have to talk to people and share how great our God really is!

- So, think back to the dividing line we drew on the board. What did we say the problem was here?
 - *Answer:* Again, the new generation didn't know the Lord or what He had done for Israel.
- So, thinking about what we say happened here (pointing to the board) and knowing what the Romans passage we just read says, what is our responsibility to the world around us? What are the consequences of us not spreading this message?
 - *Answer:* Our responsibility is to share the good news of the Gospel with the world around us. If we don't, how will they hear? If they don't hear, they'll never know the life that God has for them.

WRAPPING UP

- *Goal:* Students will be able to identify specific ways to communicate the Gospel in their context.
- *Set-Up:* You may find that a dry-erase board is helpful to jot down some of your students' responses.

Lead students in a final discussion. Ask:

- Why do you think it's so easy for us to forget the Lord? Could part of the problem be that we don't talk about the Lord and what He's done in our lives very much? What keeps us from talking about Jesus to those around us?
 - *Answers here will vary.* Take some time to talk to the students about their answers. More than likely, many of the answers will revolve around some sort of fear or embarrassment. Use this as an opportunity to dig into what they are afraid of.
- If fear keeps you from talking to others about Jesus, what does that say about where you are looking to find your satisfaction/fulfillment/peace/security/etc.>?
 - It says that we're looking for all of those things in our status, friends, acceptance, etc.
- Where should you find those things? Where are we meant to find them?
 - All of those things are found in Jesus. We were created for God. But we go looking for them in things that can never provide.
- When we truly find those things in Jesus, how do you think it will impact us sharing the Gospel with others?
 - When we come to a place where we know that we are accepted and fulfilled in Jesus, those fears won't seem like anything. That will free us to talk more and more about Him. In fact, we'll probably want to talk about Him more than ever.
- So, what are some practical steps we can take to begin to overcome whatever is holding us back from sharing the Gospel?
 - The first step is coming to a place where we genuinely find everything in Jesus. This involves us cultivating that relationship on a daily basis. The next step is to identify practical ways to share the Gospel with those around us.
- What are some areas God has placed you where the people around you don't know the Lord? How do you begin to change that? How can you have "beautiful feet" in that situation this week?
 - Help them think through their answers and develop some practical ways they can begin to leverage the influence and spaces God has given them for the Gospel.

WRAP UP the lesson by reminding students that sharing the Gospel will become much more natural when they truly find their identity in Jesus. That doesn't mean it will always be easy. Remind them that they still need to look for practical opportunities and be intentional about sharing (actually using words to talk to people) about Jesus. **Ask them if this changes how they look at the places God has placed them. Once students have had a chance to respond, ask if anyone has any further thoughts or questions.** Then, close in prayer.

- If you've purchased the corresponding devotional journal, remind students they'll be working through Week 14 this week. Encourage them to keep up with the daily devotions and to give memorizing this week's verse their best shot.
- If you're utilizing the digital devotions included in the Thread curriculum, remind students how you'll be making them available, i.e., Instagram, Facebook, etc.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU . . .

- Do you have questions about a lesson?
- Something that worked particularly well that you want to share?
- Something that didn't work that you want to bring up?

We value your feedback! Please do not hesitate to email us with your questions, comments, or concerns at feedback@youthministry360.com.