

Struggles Timeline Unit



Outline of Lessons

<i>WEEK #1–Cycles of Sin</i>	
Sunday	God’s Warning; Joshua’s Warning “Cycles of Sin” Explained What is a “Judge”? Othniel, <i>Ehud</i> and Shamgar
Wednesday	<i>Deborah</i> , Barak and King Jabin
<i>WEEK #2–Strong and Weak Judges</i>	
Sunday	<i>Gideon’s</i> Weakness; God’s Strength, Part 1
Wednesday	<i>Gideon’s</i> Weakness; God’s Strength, Part 2 <i>Ibzan, Elon and Abdon</i>
<i>WEEK #3–Nation of Israel Declines</i>	
Sunday	<i>Samson</i> Triumphs Over the Philistines Corruption in Israel The Man and His Concubine Civil War Between Tribes
Wednesday	The Story of Ruth Boaz–“A Kinsman Redeemer” and a Foreshadowing of Christ

"STRUGGLES" Essential Knowledge and Skills



Essential Knowledge. Students will know that...

Lesson 1a	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. God warned the people against unfaithfulness as they entered the Promised Land. 2. During the time of the Judges, Israel continued in "Cycles of Sin." 3. Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar were Israel's first judges
Lesson 1b	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SW learn facts about Ehud and Deborah 2. SW learn to sing the "Judges" song 3. SW review the "Cycles of Sin" concept
Lesson 2a	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. God's strength overcomes our weaknesses. 2. God raised up Gideon to deliver His people. 3. Sin and disobedience result in consequences.
Lesson 2b	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. God's strength overcomes our weaknesses. 2. God raised up Gideon to deliver His people. 3. Sin and disobedience result in consequences.
Lesson 3a	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. God raised up Samson during a time of moral decline in His people. 2. The Philistines were a mighty power with which God's people will have conflict over a long period of time. 3. Even though Samson made a mistake, God allowed him to strike a great blow against the powerful Philistines. 4. The people of Israel continue to decline because of immorality and corruption.
Lesson 3b	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ruth, a Moabite woman, forsook her pagan heritage in order to cling to the People of Israel and to the God of Israel. 2. God rewarded Ruth for faithfulness in a time of national unfaithfulness by giving her a new husband, Boaz. 3. Ruth is an ancestor of David and also Jesus. 4. Boaz foreshadowed Christ's work of redemption when he redeemed Ruth to be his wife.

SKILL OBJECTIVES IN "STRUGGLES" Students Can...

1. Define and explain "Cycles of Sin."	<i>Refer to Struggles Booklet pages for explanation and chart of "cycles of Sin."</i>
2. Name all the Judges of Israel by singing "The Judges Song."	<i>Refer to "Struggles Booklet" pages for lyrics to song</i>
3. Define these words: "Cycles of Sin," "unfaithful," "judge" and "Kinsman-Redeemer"	<i>See Vocabulary pages in Booklet</i>



STRUGGLES Lesson 1A–Cycles of Sin; Intro. to Judges

OBJECTIVES:

1. God warned the people against unfaithfulness as they entered the Promised Land.
2. During the time of the Judges, Israel continued in “Cycles of Sin.”
3. Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar were Israel’s first judges.

Stories That Will Be Highlighted:

1. God’s Warning from Deuteronomy
2. Joshua’s Warning from Joshua 23-24
3. The People Fall Into Idolatry--God Sends Enemies to Test Them
4. Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar

ESSENTIAL SKILLS:

Student can explain “Cycles of Sin”

Introduction:

1. As students arrive, hand them their “STRUGGLES” booklet and have them answer the questions on the page “God’s Instructions.” Give about 5 minutes after the bell to work on it and then save until later.
2. Turn to **Joshua 23 and 24** to read about Joshua’s warnings to the people before he died.

LESSON: PART 1–CYCLES OF SIN

1. **Judges 1.** The Tribes of Israel fail to completely take their land as God directed.
2. **Summarize verses 1 - 20.** **Judah** and **Simeon** take their land. Defeated Adoni-Bezek and cut off his thumbs and big toes.
 - ◆ **Verse 21.** Benjamin Fails to take Jerusalem
 - ◆ **Verses 22 - 29.** Manasseh and Ephraim fail to take their land
 - ◆ **Verse 30.** Zebulun fails
 - ◆ **Verse 31-32.** Asher fails
 - ◆ **Verse 33.** Naphtali fails
 - ◆ **Verse 34-36.** Dan fails
3. **Judges 2:1 - 3.** God calls them to account by sending His **Angel** to announce judgment.
4. **Judges 2:11 - 19.** The people do evil and follow after idols.

 **CYCLES OF SIN:** (SW turn to the page in the booklet) *The people for many years lived under this cycle of behavior:*

Idolatry ➡ Bondage ➡ Repentance ➡ Deliverance ➡ Rest

 **EXAMPLES OF THE CYCLES:**

- 2:13--They forsook God.
- 2:14--God’s anger toward Israel
- 2:15--Calamity befalls them
- 2:16--God raises a judge and delivers them
- 2:18--The LORD had pity on their groaning
- 2:19--Judge dies; they behave even worse than before
- 2:20--God angry again
- 2:21--God will no longer drive them out before the people and He will leave them.

5. **Judges 3:1-4.** God leaves certain nations to live in Israel alongside His people because of their unfaithfulness and also to test them to see if they will obey.
6. **Read Deuteronomy 7:1-3.** What were God's instructions to His people before they went into the land of Canaan? (Students have answered these questions in their booklet)
- ◆ *Destroy, make no covenants, and show no mercy.*
 - ◆ *The Israelites were to make no marriages with the people of the land because they would be exposed to idol worship, and their children would be raised with idolatry.*
 - ◆ *They were commanded to destroy altars; break down sacred pillars, wooden images, and burn carved images.*
 - ◆ *They were to be a holy people, people for Himself, special treasure above all peoples.*
 - ◆ *God will love you, bless you, bless the fruit of your womb, fruit of your land, your grain and new wine and your oil, cattle, flocks. No one will be barren, sicknesses taken away, enemies destroyed, God will drive out those nations, deliver their kings into their hands, and no one will be able to stand against them.*
 - ◆ *But!! If they do not keep God's commands, and so, they will go through great STRUGGLES!*

LESSON: PART 2—OTHNIEL, EHUD AND SHAMGAR.

1. Student should turn in their booklets to "Judges In Israel" page 1:
 - ◆ *TW assign each of the first 3 judges (Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar) to one of the students and let them read the texts and fill out the questions pertaining to that judge. This will only take about 5 - 10 minutes.*
 - ◆ *Use an overhead sheet of this page and now fill out the answers together.*

2. Especially emphasize the story of **Ehud**, the left-handed judge who kills Eglon, king of Moab. We will study more about him in our next lesson.
 - ▣ *In many of the stories we will read about in the book of Judges, the people seem very barbaric, savage, and uncivilized. Remember that they were building a nation from scratch--they had to build their homes, plant the land, etc. Also, the nations that were left behind had very few moral laws and they did not know God. In many ways, they were very barbaric!*

 - ▣ *What are some things we have learned about God today?*
 - ◆ *He does what He says He will do.*
 - ◆ *He is merciful and forgiving.*
 - ◆ *He blesses those who obey Him.*
 - ◆ *He punishes those who disobey Him.*
 - ◆ *God does not want His people to act like the people of the world.*



STRUGGLES Lesson 1B–Ehud, Deborah and Barak

OBJECTIVES:

1. SW learn facts about Ehud and Deborah
2. SW learn to sing the “Judges” song
3. SW review the “Cycles of Sin” concept

STORIES TO BE HIGHLIGHTED:

1. Ehud
2. Deborah, Barak, Sisera and Jael

ESSENTIAL SKILLS:

Define “Cycles of Sin,” and “Unfaithful.”

Introduction:

1. As students arrive, have them fill in the blanks on the “Judges in Israel” page in the booklet up through the blanks on **Ehud**, judge #2.
2. TW direct the student’s attention to the “Cycles of Sin” page in the booklet. Review what this means. Have them mentally use this diagram as we study the 2 judges tonight to see if their stories fit the diagram.
3. Have students turn to the “*Judges Song*” in their booklet. Sing this together, practicing the name pronunciation.

LESSON: PART 1--EHUD

1. Read Judges 3:12 - 30 to learn about **Ehud**.
2. Read 3:12—the people of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD. God strengthened the king of Moab, **King Eglon**, and he defeated Israel. They served him 18 years.

VOCABULARY: “UNFAITHFUL”

✦ *Not loyal to God; disobedient to God’s laws. God’s people began to be unfaithful during the time of the judges by following after idols and ignoring His laws. God always punishes unfaithfulness.*

3. King Eglon allied himself with the **Ammonites** and the **Amalekites**, and took possession of the City of Palms.
4. When the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, He raised up **Ehud** the son of Gera, the Benjamite, who was a left-handed man!
5. The children of Israel sent tribute money to Eglon by Ehud.
6. When the money was delivered, the men headed back, but Ehud returned to Eglon alone to give him a “Secret message.”
7. **Read vs. 20 - 22.** Ehud is alone with Eglon and reaches with his left hand to his right thigh for his dagger, kills him.
8. Eglon is so fat that the dagger goes all the way in and his fat closed over it--all his insides came out! Yuck!!
9. Ehud rallies the armies and kills 10,000 Moabites. The land has rest for 80 years.

10. (Have students check their blanks on Ehud to see if they were correct.)

- ☐ *God continued to show His own people that if they would turn to Him and obey Him, he would give them victories over their enemies. But if they disobeyed, there would be trouble from these same enemies.*
- ☐ *Again and again, God proves Himself to be more powerful than even the strongest nations on the earth.*

LESSON: PART 2--DEBORAH

1. Have the students quickly fill out the section on **Shamgar** in their booklet. Have them fill out the section on **Deborah** while the lesson is being told:
2. **Judges 4:1-2.** After Ehud's death, the people do evil again and the LORD sells them into the hand of **Jabin** king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor.
3. **Read 4:3.** **Sisera** was his army commander. Jabin's army had **900 chariots of iron!** Israel was harshly oppressed for 20 years and they again cried out to the LORD. (Does this "cycle" sound familiar?!)
4. **Read 4:4 - 5.** Deborah was a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth. She would sit under the palm tree of Deborah to judge.
5. **Read 4:6 - 7.** Deborah sent for **Barak** the son of Ahinoam from the tribe of Naphtali to go up against Jabin's army with 10,000 men. She said that God would give them over to Barak.
6. **Read 4:8 - 9.** Barak would not think of going without Deborah. She said that she would go, but that he should realize that the glory of the battle would go to a woman.
7. **Read 4:10 and 13.** Barak gathers his army, Sisera hears this and gathers *his* army and chariots.
8. **Read 4:14 - 16.** The LORD routs Sisera and his army! Sisera flees on foot.
9. **Read 4:17 - 18.** He tries to hide in the tent of Heber the Kenite. Heber's wife Jael hides Sisera under blankets in the tent. "Don't be afraid," she says.
10. **Read 4:19 - 20.** When he asks for water, she gives him milk. He tells her to keep watch and to tell no one that he is there.
11. **Read 4:21 - 22.** She takes a tent peg and a hammer and drives it through his temple while he is sleeping, and kills him! Gross! She came out to meet Barak and showed him the dead Sisera in her tent.
12. **Read 4:23 - 24.** God subdued Jabin the king of Canaan and the Israelites grew stronger and stronger. After this the land had rest for 40 years.

- ☐ *What woman got the glory for this battle at Mount Tabor? Jael!*
- ☐ *Take a look at the "Song of Deborah and Barak" in chapter 5. Especially look at verses 24 - 30 that talk about Jael and her victory over Sisera, and poor Sisera's mother looking for him through the window.*
- ☐ *God frequently uses the "weak" things and people of the world to overcome the strong in the stories of the Bible. This is to show His great power over all things. When God is on our side, we need never feel weak or helpless!*

 **QUICK CHALKBOARD RACES!!**

1. Which judge was left-handed? *Ehud*
2. Who was Caleb's nephew? *Othniel*
3. Who killed 600 Philistines with an ox goad? *Shamgar*
4. Who sat under a palm tree to judge Israel? *Deborah*
5. Who used a double-edged dagger? *Ehud*



STRUGGLES Lesson 2A–Gideon’s Weakness–God’s Strength

OBJECTIVES:

1. God’s strength overcomes our weaknesses.
2. God raised up Gideon to deliver His people.
3. Sin and disobedience result in consequences.

STORIES TO BE HIGHLIGHTED:

1. God Sends His Angel to Call Gideon to Lead His People
2. Gideon’s Requests for Signs From God
3. Gideon Leads God’s People Against the Midianites

ESSENTIAL SKILLS:

Students can sing “The Judges Song.”

Introduction:

1. Review Judge’s names by learning to sing “The Judges Song.”

LESSON: PART 1–GOD CALLS GIDEON

1. Have students look in their booklet at the “**Enemies**” page. Direct their attention to “**Midianites**,” the enemy of God’s people that we will study today.
 - ◆ Because of Israel’s sins, God delivered them over to the Midianites.
 - ◆ Their oppression was very great. The Israelites had to live and hide out in mountain caves and dens.
 - ◆ Whenever they would plant crops, and the crops would grow, the Midianites and Amalekites would come and camp there and destroy everything, leaving nothing to eat.
 - ◆ **Read Judges 6:6**–Israel became greatly impoverished because of the Midianites and they cried out to the LORD for help. (Cycles of sin!!)

☐ *Whenever we disobey God, terrible consequences can happen--however, He warns us that these consequences can happen. God continually warned His people to obey Him. They were to be a “Holy” people, separated from the world. Remember, that God was preparing His nation for the eventual coming of His Son.*

2. **Read 6:7-10.** God sends a prophet to remind them that He brought them out of slavery in Egypt, but that they had not obeyed. This was to let them know that their current situation with the Midianites is a ***direct result*** of their disobedience.
3. God sends His Angel to Gideon. He is busy threshing wheat in a winepress to hide it from the Midianites.
4. **Read 6:12**–“*The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!*”---I wonder if Gideon was surprised to be called a “man of valor”?

5. **Read 6:13 - 14**—Gideon asks why all these bad things are happening if God is really with them. The Angel tells Gideon to save Israel from the hand of the Midianites because God is sending him!
6. **Read 6:15**--Gideon says, "How can I save Israel?" He is the least in his father's house and the least tribe in Israel!

▣ *Gideon thought he was a "nobody" and that he was of no use to God. It may be that sometimes today we feel the same way. We think to ourselves, "What could I do that would help change the way things are?" Gideon didn't think he could do anything about this terrible situation the Israelites were in. Let's see what God has in mind for Gideon...*

7. **Read 6:16**—God reassures Gideon: "*I will be with you.*"

▣ *Do you think that if God told you to go and fight the Midianites and that He would be with you that you would believe it? We know, don't we, that God has this power, but Gideon needed convincing--he was not sure that God was as powerful as he had been told as a child.*

LESSON: PART 2—GIDEON ASKS FOR A SIGN

1. **Read 6:17-18**—Gideon asked the Angel to stay and to show him a sign that it was really God's Angel that he was talking to.
2. **Read 6:19**—what food items did Gideon prepare for his Angel guest? (a young goat, unleavened bread from an ephah of flour, and broth in a pot)
3. **Read 6:20 - 21**—the angel instructed Gideon to put the bread and meat on a rock and to pour out the broth. His staff touched the meat and bread, and fire came out of the rock and consumed the food! Then the Angel disappeared.
4. **Read 6:22**—Gideon realized that he was speaking to the Angel of the LORD face to face. He became afraid, but God spoke to him and told him he would not die.
5. **6:24 - 26**—Gideon built an altar there to the LORD. God told him to go and cut down the altar of **Baal** and **Asherah** pole that belonged to his father, and to build an altar to God in its place and offer one of his father's bulls on it. Gideon and his men did it at night because they were afraid of the people!

▣ *Idol worship was so much a part of the people's lives at this point, that Gideon was afraid for his life if he took down these idols!*

6. **6:28 - 30**—in the morning, the men of the city saw what had been done and found out it was Gideon. They demanded of Gideon's father that he be brought out to die.
7. **6:31 - 32**—Joash wisely said to the people that Baal could take care of himself! In other words, this "Baal" was obviously false, because he needed people to see about his business! And was not powerful enough to overcome Gideon and his friends. Gideon's name was now changed to "**Jerubbaal**".

LESSON: PART 3—GIDEON RAISES AN ARMY.

1. **Judges 6:34 - 35.** The Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon and he blew his trumpet to gather his army--his men came from the tribes of Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali. However, Gideon still needed to be reassured that God would save them, because the Midianites had now joined forces with the Amalekites and they were encamped in the Valley of Jezreel. Listen to the sign that Gideon asks God to show him:

◆ *Verse 37--fleece of wool on the threshing floor--dew on the fleece, but dry ground.*

◆ *God makes it so.*

◆ *Second sign--fleece dry, ground wet.*

◆ *God makes it so!*

▣ *God wants us to know that He can do what He says He will do. He has given us many signs throughout the ages, and His beautiful creation is another proof of His great power.*

▣ *What is the greatest sign that He has given us? The resurrection of His Son, Jesus from the dead!*



STRUGGLES Lesson 2A–Gideon, Part 2

OBJECTIVES:

1. God's strength overcomes our weaknesses.
2. God raised up Gideon to deliver His people.
3. Sin and disobedience result in consequences.

ESSENTIAL SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE:

1. Review "The Judges Song"
2. Review vocabulary words, "Judge" and "unfaithful."

STORIES TO BE HIGHLIGHTED:

Gideon Raises an Army to Fight Midian
God Narrows Gideon's Forces Down
Gideon is Victorious
Highlights of Abimelech, Tola, Jair

Introduction:

1. While waiting for others to arrive, fill out "Struggles Booklet" entries on the judges Abimelech, Tola and Jair.
2. Review the lesson from Sunday about God's Angel and His visit to Gideon.
3. TW have students get out their "Struggles" booklet and be ready to fill out information on Gideon.

LESSON: PART 1–GOD NARROWS GIDEON'S FORCES DOWN

1. **Judges 7:1 - 8.** The LORD tells Gideon that there are too many soldiers with him. He tells Gideon that Israel will claim the glory for the victory with this many people. "Whoever is fearful and afraid" were to go home. **22,000** returned, but **10,000** remained.
2. There were still too many! God weeded them out by giving them a test at the water's edge—those who got down on their knees to drink the water were eliminated; those who lapped from their hand to their mouth (**300**) were allowed to stay and fight.

 *Can you imagine fighting a major battle with only 300 men??! I wonder what Gideon was thinking about all of this?*

LESSON: PART 2–GOD REASSURES GIDEON AGAIN.

1. **Read Judges 7:9 - 14.** God reassures Gideon again. Verses 9-10--God sent Gideon and his servant down to the Midianite camp to listen to what they were saying:
 - ◆ **Verses 12-14--**The number of the Midianites was like locusts!
 - ◆ Gideon overhears one of the soldiers telling about a dream he had--a barley loaf had tumbled into the Midianite camp and collapsed a tent.
 - ◆ His companion tells him it is because God has delivered them into Gideon's hand!
2. **Read Judges 7:15-18.** Gideon gives instructions for the battle:

- ◆ Verse 15--Gideon worships God, then gives assurance to his men that God will deliver them
- ◆ Verse 16--Gideon divides them into 3 companies, gives each man a trumpet, an empty pitcher and a torch inside the pitcher. *What kind of weapons are these?!*
- ◆ Verses 17-18--the men were to blow the trumpets at the edge of the camp and say "The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!"
- ◆ Verses 19-23--At this tremendous battle cry and sound of crashing pitchers, and with the torches lit, the Midianites turned on each other in the camp and killed each other. Those who were not killed turned and ran and were pursued by Gideon's men. Two Midianite princes were killed.

☐ *Have you noticed how creative God has been with the victories He gives the people? It should be obvious to everyone that their strength and victory was entirely in the hands of God--which He and He alone could bring about.*

☐ *God's great strength was displayed by winning this battle with 300 men armed with pitchers, torches and trumpets! Gideon's forces were too weak to have overcome the great Midianite army alone. But they had God on their side, so they became strong.*

☐ *If God is on our side and we obey Him today, He can make us strong enough to overcome any struggle that we might face.*

3. Read 7:33-35--so sad! The Israelites turn back to Baal worship after Gideon's death; they did not remember God! They again became "unfaithful" to God by serving other gods.

VOCABULARY REVIEW: "UNFAITHFUL"

- *Not loyal to God; disobedient to God's laws. God's people were unfaithful during the time of the judges by following after idols and ignoring His laws. God always punishes unfaithfulness.*
- *This unfaithful way of life is one of the behaviors that contributed to the "Cycles of Sin" that the Israelites were always experiencing during these years.*
- *How do you think God feels when we are unfaithful to Him today? What will happen to us if we are unfaithful? Do you know anyone who is unfaithful to God? How can someone be unfaithful to God today?*

☐ *Can you give me some reasons why you think the Israelites forgot God and were unfaithful to Him? (Let kids consider why the Israelites might have forgotten God--examples below)*

- *Perhaps they forgot to teach their children the laws*
- *They wanted to be like the other peoples around them and worship idols*
- *They forgot what God had done for them*
- *They did not love God*

4. SW fill in the portion of their booklet on Gideon.

5. At this point, have students contribute what they found out about **Abimelech, Tola, and Jair**. Fill in the blanks on the “More Judges in Israel!” page if you have not done so.

Enrichment Activity: Chalkboard Races–“Judges Clues”

Included on this CD is a Chalkboard Races game to review the judges we know so far. Divide group up into boys and girls, or whatever mixture you would like—but you need to have two teams. Send one person at a time from each team up to the board to write down the answer to one of the questions on the sheet. Whoever answers correctly first (by writing it on the board) will receive one point for their team. For the next question, send another person up from each team. At the end of the game (whenever you decide it's over), tally up the points and hand out candy.



STRUGGLES Lesson 3A–The Nation of Israel Declines

OBJECTIVES:

1. God raised up Samson during a time of moral decline in His people.
2. The Philistines were a mighty power with which God's people will have conflict over a long period of time.
3. Even though Samson made a mistake, God allowed him to strike a great blow against the powerful Philistines.
4. The people of Israel continue to decline because of immorality and corruption.

ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

1. Review "The Judges Song."
2. Review the concept of "The Cycles of Sin."

Introduction:

1. As they arrive, have students fill in the rest of the blanks in their "Struggles" booklet.
2. As a group, fill in the blanks on Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon.

LESSON: PART 1–SAMSON OVERCOMES THE PHILISTINES. JUDGES 13 - 16.

1. The **Philistines** were a mighty people who were very powerful during this time period. They lived on the western and southern edge of Israel. Remember, that God's people were supposed to have rid the land of all these people—the Philistines were idol worshipers also—but they had failed.
2. The tribe of Dan had failed miserably to take their land, and the Philistines were rulers over them for 40 years.
3. At this time, God raises up Samson, a very unusual man, to deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines.
4. **Note to teacher:** Turn to the "Struggles" booklet and find the page on Samson. This is a very familiar story which the kids can probably tell you, so fill in the blanks together to see what they remember of the story.
5. Some things we can learn from the Samson story:
 - ◆ *Samson's parents were interested in doing what God asked—they took great care to follow the angel's instructions concerning how Samson was to be brought up.*
 - ◆ *Samson was a flawed (not perfect) leader in many ways—he did not seem to be concerned about marrying an Israelite woman—he looked for a wife among the Philistines; he got mixed up with a "harlot"—a prostitute named Delilah, who eventually got the secret of his strength from him. This was his downfall, because the Philistines were able to overpower him and put him in prison. Having ungodly friends can lead to our downfall!*
 - ◆ *Even though Samson was not perfect, God used him to strike a great blow against the Philistines. God uses imperfect people to bring about His will.*



How many ways can think of that Samson is like Christ?

- ◆ Angel announced his birth
- ◆ The Spirit of God cam upon Him so that he could perform great signs
- ◆ He was a deliverer at his death.

LESSON: PART 2—ISRAEL DECLINES BECAUSE OF IDOLATRY AND IMMORALITY.

1. The last chapter in the book of Judges tells us about the decline of Israel in several ways:
 - ◆ *Idolatry grew among the people*
 - ◆ *The whole tribe of Dan became idol worshipers.*
 - ◆ *People became very "immoral" which means that they were personally and sexually sinful, lived outside of God's laws and were corrupt and evil.*
 - ◆ *Whole tribes became immoral which led to a civil war between the tribes!*
2. **Terrible Immorality!** Turn to Judges 19. Listen to this story of terrible sin among God's people. **Summarize Judges 19:1 - 15.** A Levite from the tribe of Ephraim had a "concubine"—a woman who lived with him who was not his wife. They visited her father in Bethlehem for several days, and then journeyed back to their home, staying the night in a place named "Gibeah" which belonged to the tribe of Benjamin.
3. **Read 19:16 - 21.** They almost had to spend the night in the open square because no one offered to take them in, until an old man saw them and insisted on taking them home because it was not wise to spend the night in the open square.
 - ▣ ***Does this sound familiar? I seem to remember a story about Lot and some angels in the town of Sodom!***
4. **Read 19:22 - 26.** Men from the city came to the house and wanted the traveler brought out so they could "know him carnally." (Just like in Sodom! The sin of homosexuality again! This time among God's people!) But they offered the man's concubine to them instead. She was sexually abused all night and left for dead on the doorstep!
5. **Read 19:27 - 30.** The man then cut his concubine up into 12 pieces with a knife and sent the 12 pieces throughout the tribes of Israel limb by limb. *"All who saw it said, 'No such deed has been done or seen from the day that the children of Israel came up from the land of Egypt until this day. Consider it, take counsel and speak up!'"*
6. This caused civil war between the tribe of Benjamin and the rest of Israel. Thousands of men were killed on both sides in the war. The tribe of Benjamin was almost wiped out!

▣ *Read again Judges 21:25—"Everyone did what was right in his own eyes." This was a very low point in Israel's history! Can you tell me all the things that were wrong with God's people?*

- ◆ *They were idol worshipers*
- ◆ *They were law breakers—immoral and corrupt*
- ◆ *They were not in harmony with each other*
- ◆ *They had no strong leadership*
- ◆ *They were **unfaithful** to God.*

▣ *What is very sad is that many of these things can be said about Christians today! In some places, Christians do what is right in their own eyes instead of what God has said is right in His word. Some of God's people live immoral and corrupt lives—they do not follow God's plan for their lives; they are not in harmony with each other—they fight and bicker; sometimes there is no strong leadership; some are unfaithful to God. We must not let these things happen to us today!*



STRUGGLES Lesson 3B–The Story of Ruth

OBJECTIVES:

1. Ruth, a Moabite woman, forsook her pagan heritage in order to cling to the People of Israel and to the God of Israel.
2. God rewarded Ruth for faithfulness in a time of national unfaithfulness by giving her a new husband, Boaz.
3. Ruth is an ancestor of David and also Jesus.
4. Boaz foreshadowed Christ's work of redemption when he redeemed Ruth to be his wife.

ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

1. Review "The Judges Song"
2. Define the word "**Kinsman-Redeemer.**"

INTRODUCTION:

1. Today we will be reading in the book of Ruth. The events of the book of Ruth take place during the time of the Judges, but were written later. We are not sure who wrote this little book or when exactly it was written.
2. The story takes place in the country of Moab. Who were the Moabites? Do you remember any stories that we have studied so far that involve the Moabites? (Let the students help you remember. Don't forget, they are on the "Enemies" page in our "Struggles Booklet.")

LESSON: PART 1–RUTH'S DECISION AND DEVOTION. CHAPTER 1

1. **Ruth 1:1 - 2.** A man of Bethlehem (have you heard of that town before?), **Elimelech** went with his wife **Naomi** and their two sons to Moab to get away from a famine. This was during a time of punishment for the sins of God's people.
2. **Read 1:3 - 5.** Elimelech died. His sons married Moabite women—**Orpah** and **Ruth**. They remained in Moab for about 10 years. Then the two sons also died leaving the 3 women alone—a very difficult situation for women in those days.
3. **Read 1:6.** Naomi heard that the LORD had visited His people in giving them bread—God had delivered His people once again! Naomi prepared to go home to Bethlehem. Both of the daughters-in-law prepared to go with her.
 - ◆ *Naomi encouraged both of the girls to go back home because she had no other sons for them to marry.*
 - ◆ *This was a very emotional time, because the girls loved Naomi very much.*
 - ◆ *Orpah decided to stay in Moab, but Ruth clung to Naomi.*
4. **Read 1:15 - 17.** This is one of the most beautiful passages in the Bible and shows Ruth's love and devotion to Naomi. These words have been put into a song which is often sung at weddings.
 - ◆ *The Moabite religion worshiped the god Chemosh by burning live children.*
 - ◆ *Worship of this god also involved much prostitution. Perhaps Ruth longed for something better for her life!*
 - ◆ *This event shows that Ruth had a good character and longed for a better life ruled by the one true God.*
5. **Read 1:19 - 20.** Ruth and Naomi returned to Bethlehem and Naomi changed her name from Naomi ("pleasant") to Mara ("bitter").

- ◆ *Naomi could have been bitter because her husband and both her sons were dead. Now she had nothing and was very poor.*
- ◆ *But she still had Ruth! We will find out what a blessing that became as we go through our story.*
- ◆ *They arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.*

LESSON: PART 2–RUTH MEETS BOAZ. CHAPTER 2

1. **Read 2:1**–Naomi had a kinsman (relative) of Elimelech who was wealthy. His name was.
2. **Read 2:2**–Ruth went to glean grain (that means, pick up the scraps of grain that were leftover) by following the reapers of Boaz' field.
 - ◆ *God had made provisions in His law for the poor and the widows. People who owned grain fields were not to harvest the corners so that the poor could come and gather.*
 - ◆ *The reapers were also not to pick up any stalks of grain they dropped, so that the poor and destitute could follow along after them and pick up their leavings. This was called "gleaning."*
 - ◆ *Ruth and Naomi were certainly considered poor! They had no one left alive to support them, so this was their only way of surviving. Things were very hard for widows in those days.*
 - ◆ *In other nations, it was even more difficult for women—there were no such provisions for them. They often had to resort to prostitution and begging in order to survive. But God was always concerned with the welfare of His people, men and women. There were many laws that were given so that the poor could survive.*
 - ◆ *Ruth was young and strong and wanted to help Naomi in this way. She was not ashamed to go and glean alongside the reapers of Boaz' field.*
3. **Read 2:4 - 7.** Boaz saw Ruth when he came out to inspect the fields, and he asked about her. He found out that Ruth had been good to Naomi, his kinswoman.
4. **Read 2:8 - 13.** Boaz told her that she could always glean in his field and drink water with his reapers and that no one would harm her. He did this because of Ruth's kindness toward Naomi. Boaz even told his reapers to leave extra grain for Ruth to pick up! Boaz seemed to be a kind and generous man!
5. **Read 2:19 - 23.** Ruth reported all of Boaz' kindness to Naomi when she got home that evening. Naomi knew that Ruth had found a good situation and told her not to glean in any other field.

VOCABULARY—KINSMAN-REDEEMER.

- ➡ *There was an interesting law that God made for the Israelites concerning **widows**: A widow's brother-in-law (or nearest male relative) could marry the woman after the death of her husband in order to produce children for his dead brother's name. The firstborn child would inherit the dead man's property. This was one of God's laws so that tribal lands would stay in the families (or tribes) it had been assigned by God.*
- ➡ *This kind of marriage was called a "Levirate" marriage. The word "Levirate" actually means "husband's brother."*
- ➡ *The technical or legal name for the man who married his brother's widow was the "**Kinsman Redeemer**" because he "redeemed" his brother's name by taking his widow for a wife and possibly by buying back the land which belonged to his brother so that it would not be sold out of the family or tribe.*

LESSON: PART 3–BOAZ DESIRES TO “REDEEM” RUTH. CHAPTER 3.

1. **Ruth 3.** Because of Ruth’s kindness, Naomi sought to find a husband for Ruth using the laws of the Levirate Marriage. She assumed that Boaz was her nearest relative and arranged for Ruth to make her situation known to Boaz.
2. **Read 3:1 - 5.** Naomi told Ruth to lie down at the feet of Boaz’ bed when he and his reapers were winnowing (or threshing) barley after the harvest in the threshing floor. Ruth obeyed Naomi.
3. **Read 3:6 - 9.** At midnight, Boaz got up and noticed Ruth. Ruth told him that he was her near kinsman and that she wanted him to “take your maidservant under your wing.”
4. **Read 3:10 - 13.** Boaz was delighted to do this, but there was a relative that was more closely related to Naomi than himself, so he would have to bargain with him for the privilege of marrying Ruth.

LESSON: PART 4–BOAZ MARRIES RUTH. CHAPTER 4.

1. **Read 4:1 - 5.** Boaz goes to the gate of the city and gathers 10 elders of the city along with this closer kinsman of Naomi’s to discuss the matter of Ruth.
2. Boaz explains that the man needs to redeem (or buy back) the land that belonged to Elimelech that Naomi had sold when she returned to Bethlehem.
3. **Read 4:6 - 12.** The man was not willing to do this and gave his right to the land and to Ruth over to Boaz. Notice the interesting way the people had of negotiating a contract in those days–taking off a sandal and giving it to the other person! The people at the gate where they were negotiating blessed and praised Boaz for the thing he was doing in redeeming Ruth.
4. **Read 4:13.** Ruth and Boaz marry and Ruth has a son!
5. **Read 4:14 - 16.** The women of Bethlehem tell Naomi that Ruth is better to her than seven sons would have been.
6. **Read 4:17 - 22.** Ruth is the ancestor (great-grandmother) of David! And also, we will see later, the ancestor of Jesus, Himself!



HOW DOES BOAZ REMIND US OF CHRIST?

1. He was a “**Kinsman-Redeemer**” who bought back Naomi’s land and married Ruth, providing the family with a son and keeping the tribal land in the family. He “redeemed” her.
2. The idea of the **kinsman-redeemer** is an important picture of the *work of Christ*. According to the Law of Moses, the kinsman-redeemer must:
 - ✓ *Be **related** to those whom he redeems*
 - ✓ *Must be **able to pay** the price of redemption*
 - ✓ *Be **willing** to redeem*
 - ✓ *Be **free** himself*
3. Jesus was **related** to the people He redeemed, He was **able to pay the price** of redemption (His life’s blood), He was **willing** (He came to earth of His own free will), and He was **free** from sin Himself.

☐ **HOW ARE WE LIKE RUTH?**

1. Ruth was a *foreigner* in a strange land. We also are foreigners in the world.
2. Ruth had *no way to redeem herself* or find herself a new husband. We have no way to redeem ourselves from sin without a "kinsman-redeemer"—Christ.
3. Ruth became the *bride* of Boaz, her kinsman-redeemer. We (the church) are the **bride** of Christ, our kinsman-redeemer.