



stories
of the *Judges*



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Our Mission:

At Youth Ministry Conversations, we believe you know your group best. This means our resources look a little different than what you may have experienced in the past. We try and create a “buffet” of material so you can choose and pick what works best for your group. You will find ideas, instructions, and possibilities in this packet all related to the theme of “The Stories of the Judges.” How you use them, and how you structure your study is up to you. We hope you enjoy this resource and return in the future to check out other materials.

This Study:

The Book of Judges has it all: action, adventure, betrayal, and even a hefty serving of some rather morbid humor. More importantly, the Book of Judges takes an unflinching look at the world as it is, violent flaws and all, and still asks the question: where is God? This study encourages students to get to know the people God chose to lead Israel, when Israel was beginning a spiral into self-destruction. They aren't just imperfect; some of them actually make some pretty tragic decisions. Still, through the bad decisions, the chaos, and even a civil war, God worked through their lives, just as God wants to work through our lives.

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The Writers:



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Ehud: What Makes Us Different

Focus: Ehud is a judge who used what others may have considered to be a weakness to become his way of serving God. Ehud didn't let what made him different hold him back. He allowed God to make it into a strength by which he would impact his world.

Scripture:

- Judges 3:12-31

Supplies:

- Bible
- Blank note card
- Writing utensil
- Half sheets of paper or larger
- Scissors
- Tape

Background on Scripture and topic:

We noted in lesson one that the book of Judges shouldn't necessarily be read chronologically. It is almost like a spiral, circling around variations of the same general pattern. Today's Scripture focuses on the second major Judge, Ehud, and this story is full of suspense, a bit of wordplay, *and* hilarity. No -- really, you *are* allowed to laugh a little!

Israel has done evil in the sight of God, and so God has empowered King Moab to rule over the Israelites. Israel cries out for a deliverer, and Ehud quietly enters the scene. Ehud is actually pretty unusual for his time, because he is left-handed. At the time, being left-handed wasn't just a quirk or difference from everyone else: it would have been construed as an abnormality, a *weakness*. (Hopefully, none of our left-handed folks feel this is still true today!) The world was designed for right-handed people. But what society considered to be his weakness actually became the key to his strength and success as a Judge. Craftily, he quietly forms a plan to use the fact that he is left handed to sneak in a sword and set Israel free from King Moab's rule.

Parent Email prompt:

Tomorrow, we will continue our study of Judges and learn about Ehud, the second major Judge. When God allowed King Moab to rule over the Israelites, the Israelites cried out: and God quietly sent Ehud. Ehud was left handed, which for his time was a little respected and very rare trait. It was what made him different. Instead of letting that hinder him...he used what made him different to deliver Israel from King Moab's rule. Warning: This chapter is rated PG - 13 for some violence.

Text Prompt the night before:

Tomorrow, we will continue our study of Judges and learn about Ehud, the second major Judge. When God allowed King Moab to rule over the Israelites, the Israelites cried out: and God quietly sent Ehud. Ehud was left handed, which for his time was a little respected and very rare trait. It was what made him different. Instead of letting that hinder him...he used what made him different to deliver Israel from King Moab's rule. Warning: This chapter is rated PG - 13 for some violence.

Game: Who's the Leader?

Have all students get into a big circle. You will explain the game first. Then ask for a volunteer to step out momentarily -- this person will return and stand in the middle of the circle later. After that person has left, you will ask for a volunteer to be the leader. The leader will be charged with sneakily picking a dance move that everyone else must imitate. (They can start the first motion before the volunteer who stepped out returns.) The leader must continually change up the dance move, and the group must follow suit without revealing who the leader is to the person in the middle.

When the volunteer who stepped out returns, she stands in the middle of the circle. This person must try to guess who the leader is who is changing the dance moves. Allow three tries. Find new volunteers to play each role for as long as time allows!

Prayer Time:

For the prayer time, make sure every student has a note card and writing utensil. Tell each student to pick one side of the note card -- you are going to lead them through a prayer writing exercise. On the notecard, each person should make a list of what might make her different from other people.

For each item on the list, the student should consider: what if other people thought that way of being different were a weakness? How might that make the student feel? If applicable, the student can write down how others might think that difference could be a weakness.

After a few minutes, everyone should fold up her paper in her hands and say a prayer over what she wrote. Remind students that this is a quiet prayer: encourage them to be honest about everything they wrote. God will listen to anything we have to say.

Activity: Give Yourself a Hand!

Have each student trace his or her own hand on a piece of paper and write their name on the back of it. Tape that paper to the back of the student.

Give the whole group time to walk around and write one *positive* description of the person whose back they are writing on. Adjust time limit for the size of your group! At the end, remove the paper from the student's backs and hang onto them until later, when you will redistribute them to the students.

Scripture Reading: Ask two students to split reading Judges 3:12-31.

Large Group Discussions:

- What surprised you most about the story of Ehud? What challenged you? What may have made you laugh?
- How do you feel about God allowing King Moab to rule the Israelites for eighteen years?
- How do you think God may have communicated with Ehud?
- Who did Ehud tell about his plan to kill King Moab?
- How was Ehud able to sneak a sword into King Moab's chambers?
- Why do you think no one suspected Ehud might be left handed?

Small Group Discussions:

- What kind of qualities make our society think a person is strong?
- What kind of qualities make our society think a person is weak?
- What do you think Ehud's thought of people who were left handed?
- Why do you think God chose Ehud to be a judge?
- What is something you might consider a weakness for yourself? What do you imagine God thinks about that weakness?
- Have you ever been in a situation where something that made you different also made you stronger? What happened?
- What are things society thinks are weak that you think God considers to be strengths?

Small Group Activity:

Ask everyone to pick up their notecards from the prayer activity. Each student should take a pencil and look back at the list of what makes her different. Copy that list onto the back of the card, and then, mark a large X on the first side of the card. Now, write down how each of the listed differences can be made into a strength...how each of those differences can be used to make a positive impact on the world. After a couple of minutes, tell them, to turn to a neighbor (in twos or threes) and repeat after you:

“God has made you different. God has made you strong. God can use what makes you different, and you can change the world.”

Redistribute the handprints from earlier.

Tangible Item they leave with: The handprint with encouragement

Remind Youth:

Stories in Judges are strange. Ehud's story has some violence, it has some weirdness, and it even has a little morbid humor. Still, God is at work in Ehud. When the Israelites cried out for a deliverer, God chose Ehud because of what made him different -- being left handed. Think about what makes YOU different -- and know that, whatever it is, God can use what makes you different make an impact on the world.