

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 14: The Period of the Judges



Session Snapshot

Narrative Passage: Judges 2:6-19

Gospel Focus: Romans 10:14-15

Student Takeaways:

- Students will grasp that even through all of God's faithfulness to the Israelites, they still forgot about Him and turned to other gods.
- Students will understand the importance of spreading the Gospel in words and actions.
- Students will identify specific ways in which they can communicate the Gospel in their specific contexts.



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 in spite of their crummy track record, God managed to work 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 be learning the story of Israel seeking to establish itself as a nation. In this lesson, you'll be introducing your students to the concept of the judges. You'll be highlighting 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 are short videos designed to help you grasp the main point of the lesson as you prepare to teach.

To access your *Thread* lesson 14 Teacher Prep Video, login to your Lesson Manager, navigate to lesson 14, and click on the "Background" tab. You'll notice the Teacher Prep Video near the top of the Lesson Manager window.



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 his-

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tory holds Samuel as a potential author. But, most scholars concede that there is no solid textual evidence to strongly support 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 writing of the book is hard to pin down. One school of thought has it being mostly completed by the time David is king, while the second holds that it was completed around the time that 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, it was essential that a level playing field be given to all Believers. This is what Paul was advocating for in Romans.



Lesson Plan

The Lesson Plan contains four elements:

- An introductory activity called Getting Started designed to prepare teenagers to engage with God and the truth of His Word.
- A section entitled The Story featuring a narrative from Scripture that helps teenagers know God better through learning the story of the Bible.
- A special emphasis entitled The Thread where teenagers discover the Gospel thread coursing throughout the story of the Bible.
- An application-focused segment called Wrapping Up 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 that are right in front of our faces.
- **Set-Up:** If you have a projector screen in your room, you can play this game by just using your computer. You'll want to search the Internet for an image of a lot of random objects. (Our searches for "random objects," and "junk drawer" turned up some really good images.) If you don't have a screen, arrange to bring 10-20

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small objects (paper clip, coin, eraser, rock, marble, etc.) along with 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 memories. 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 image on the screen. If you've brought objects to display, uncover them. Allow students to look at the objects for 10-15 seconds. Then, cover the objects back up, or, click off the image on your projector. 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. Could the whole class remember all of the items together? 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 that was just right there in front of your face?**
- **Why was it easier to get a more complete list when you were able to communicate with each other? How does communicating help our memory?**

FINALLY, explain to the students that you're continuing your look at the big-picture story of the Bible. Explain that you're actually 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 already having settled in the Promised Land. We're going to watch over the next few weeks as they try and build and govern a nation. Today, we're about see an up-close example of how a lack of communication led to some intense forgetfulness on the part of the Israelites. We're also going to see how crucial it is for us to communicate to the world around us.**

Transition to The Story.

The Story

- **Goal:** That 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 a dry-erase board to be 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 would ask God for a king to rule. 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 do a little review and/or fill in the gaps from your last lesson and this one.

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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 as a way to review and/or to 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 good 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 their gods.**

Explain to the students that you're going to be looking at a passage that shows just how easily it was for the Israelites to forget all of the amazing things that God did for them. (It's almost crazy to read the words on the page and see how bad their memory actually 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?**
 - o 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 you're 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?**
 - o 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, as well.)
- **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 the Lord that they had seen so many amazing things up close and personal in their lifetime?**
 - o Answer: All that they had seen and been a part of must have served as a good reminder of God's goodness. Even as they struggled to obey and drifted from the Lord, these memories must have been good reminders to turn back to the Lord.

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

- **What jumped out at you in that verse?**
 - o Answer: Answers here could vary, but the main (and startling) thing we read in this verse is that there was a whole generation that didn't know the Lord.
- **Wow, that sounds bad. Those first three verses seemed pretty positive, right? And then we get this bleak verse. What can we guess must have happened for this to be true?**
 - o Answer: Not only did the elders pass away, but also their whole generation eventually died. When that happened, a new generation came after them that wasn't around to see all of the amazing works God had done for Israel.
- **So, how do you think things went for them? Do you think not knowing the Lord or what he had done was a big deal? What kind of impact do you think it had on them as a people?**

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o 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 just escalated pretty quickly. Someone could have just shrugged off verse 10 and thought it wasn't going to have much of an impact on the people, but that clearly wasn't the case. Ask:

• **What jumped out to you in these verses?**

o 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 of the Canaanites remained in the land and were worshipping their gods. Explain that this is what the passage meant when it talked about the Baals and Ashtaroath. Explain that the people had forgotten about the Lord, and all that He had done. However, the influences of the people the Lord had commanded them to drive out of the land remained. The people eventually gave into these influences and began following other gods.

THEN, read Judges 2:16. Explain to the students that the "judge's" 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?**

o Answer: The people were clearly out of control, and were getting hammered by outside forces. They had no real leadership, and couldn't pull things together in the state they were in. God would have been just 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?**

o Answers will vary.

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

• **What jumped out to you in these verses?**

o Answer: Write their answers on the left side of the board. It's OK 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 whored 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?**

o 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.

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Have the students look at the board. Have them think about the difference between the left half and the right half. 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 reason the two sides of the board are so drastically different is because there was a generation that 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 to those around us that don't know the Lord.**

If students don't have any questions, transition into The Thread and see seeing where you might find the connection of the Gospel to the big-picture narrative of Scripture.

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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 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 wages 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 Answers will vary.

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 Answers: 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 Answers: 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.

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- **Have you ever heard the quote, “Share the gospel always, 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 say 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?**
 - o Answer: Again, the new generation didn’t know the Lord, and didn’t know about 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?**
 - o 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:** That students will be able to identify specific ways in which they can communicate the Gospel in their specific contexts.
- **Set-Up:** You may find a dry-erase board is helpful to jot down some of your students’ responses.

Lead students in a final discussion. Ask:

- **One of the age-old questions about grace is: If grace is true, does it really matter what I do? In other words, is disobedience a big deal? What do you think? Explain your answer.**
 - o Answers will vary.

THEN, have a student reread Titus 2:11-14. Really draw their attention to verse 12. 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?**
 - o 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 is what is keeping you from talking to others about Jesus, what does that say about where you are looking to find your satisfaction/fulfillment/peace/security/etc.?**
 - o It says that we’re looking for all of those things in our status, friends, acceptance, etc.
- **Where should you find those things? Where created to find them?**
 - o 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?**
 - o When we truly come to a place where we know that we are accepted and fulfilled in Jesus,

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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 truly find everything in Jesus. This involves us cultivating that relationship on a daily basis. The next step is to identify practical ways we can share the gospel with those around us.
- **What are some areas God has placed you where you could look around and say, "They do not 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 when they truly find their identity in Jesus, sharing the Gospel will become much more natural. 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 the way 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 *Tracing The Thread* devotional journal, remind students that 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'll be utilizing the digital devotions included in the *Thread* curriculum, remind students how you'll be making them available, i.e., Instagram, Facebook, etc.**
- **Use the Social Media guide to stay in touch with students via text or Twitter, and to encourage them to follow through with reading their devotions.**

We Want To Hear From You . . .

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