

LearningCycles

BEFORE JUDGE JUDY

Deborah, Samson &
Gideon

Written by Tracey E. Herzer



LICENSING TERMS



Single organization. Licenses are normally issued to a parish, school, or other single-entity, non-profit organization. If you serve more than one parish or school, each should purchase its own license. A diocese may use a standard license within its own office. For information about diocese-wide licenses and discounts, please contact us.



Copies and sharing. You are allowed to make unlimited copies of this resources for use within your own organization. You may also email these to members of your organization (e.g. parishioners, parents, volunteers, and staff) or participants in your program, and we encourage you to share them widely.



Posting to websites. You may not post this resource as a whole to any public web site without explicit permission. You are allowed to publish reasonable excerpts. Please request permission or clarification for other uses.



Adaptations. You are permitted to modify the resource for use in your own organization without permission. We encourage you to adapt the work to best suit your community.



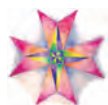
Prohibited uses. You may not use this resource outside your organization or distribute it to anyone outside your organization. You may not sell copies of these materials in any form.



Thank you! We appreciate you following our honor system (and copyright law). Your licensing fees support the creative team that developed this resource, and funds additional work like this.



Questions? Please contact us at resources@pastoralcenter.com or 844-727-8672.



The Pastoral Center in partnership with



LeaderResources

© 2005 Tracey E. Herzer. All rights reserved. Distributed by The Pastoral Center / PastoralCenter.com

Scripture readings from *New Revised Standard Version Bible: Catholic Edition*, copyright © 1989, 1993 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Table of Contents: Judges

Introductory Materials

About LearningCycles

Recruiting Leaders – Job Descriptions for Volunteers

A General Schedule for Class Structure

Cycle Materials

Theological Overview of this Cycle

Letter to Parents about this Cycle

Story for this Cycle

Suggested Resources for this Cycle

Activities Overview – Grid

Cycle Lesson Plans

Art Workshop

Publishing Workshop

Drama Workshop

Movie Workshop

Story Workshop

Kitchen Workshop

Music Workshop



About LearningCycles

What is LearningCycles?

LearningCycles is an innovative approach to faith formation. It takes seriously the spiritual development of children while providing creative and exciting activities that engage children in a whole new level of learning and retention. The rotation-style model means that children work on the same story or concept for several weeks, using different learning approaches in each workshop room they visit.

Ideas for possible workshops:

Art
Storytelling
Music
Group Activities
Cooking

Science Experiments
Games
Drama or Puppets
Movies
Geography or Map Excursions

Easy to Adapt

You can use the activities in this resource for shorter learning center events, normal classroom use, intergenerational gatherings, and more. Adapt what you find here to best suit your faith formation situation.



Recruiting LearningCycles Leaders

LearningCycles make it VERY easy to increase your number of volunteers, by dividing jobs into manageable parts. Here are some ways that parishioners of ALL ages can be involved:

CYCLE LEADERS sign up as part of a team of 2 or 3 adults who will teach one 4-6 week cycle. Teachers remain in the same workshop room each week of the cycle and teach the same lesson plan to different classes each week. Workshop rooms may use skills in areas as music, dance, cooking, quilting, gardening or painting, but you don't have to have a special skill in order to help. Teachers can sign up to help read stories, turn on computers, make popcorn, hand out art supplies, etc.

SHEPHERDS commit for the entire school year, but they never have to prepare or teach a lesson! Shepherds work in teams and travel with their class through each of the different workshops. Shepherds are the essential relationship part of this program, learning the children's names, providing continuity of leadership and being a friendly, safe presence in the classroom each week.

CYCLE COORDINATORS are needed for each different cycle. These people manage the details of a cycle, contacting all the volunteer teachers for that cycle, distributing the lesson plans, making sure supplies are purchased, etc.

Some churches have also used:

DECORATING TEAM A resourceful group of people is needed to create and plan new and evolving learning spaces. These folks might be interior designers, or they may be people who are just addicted to home improvement shows or have a knack for decorating inexpensively! Churches who share space or don't have the budget for large-scale renovations will need a group of creative thinkers to come up with props or posters that can be used on Sunday, but safely stored away during the week.

RESOURCE TEAM This "big picture" group can be comprised of all your cycle coordinators, as well as interested parents. Together the group handles trouble-shooting, long-range plans and communication to the entire church. For churches that already have a catechist or formation team, that committee can provide the functions of a Resource Team.



General Class Structure

1. **OPENING ACTIVITY** (10-15 minutes, as children arrive)

Welcome students and make sure everyone has a nametag. Opening activities give early arrivers something to start on immediately and provide a warm, busy room for children to enter. The activity could be simply drawing or decorating your nametag. It could also be coloring sheets or simple games. Check the “Filler Activities” of your lesson plan for ideas or ask your Cycle Coordinator.

2. **INTRODUCTIONS** (approximately 10 minutes)

- Introduce yourself: Tell students about you – your family, how long you have been at this church, what kind of work you do, what your hobbies are, why you signed up to help teach, etc.
- Introduce the cycle story or theme: Ask children what they’ve been studying or have done in other rooms on other weeks. Talk about the basic theme or season (see the Overview p. 6 for some ideas). Read the story to children.
- Introduce your activity: Tell the children which part of the story your room is focusing on, and perhaps ask them to re-tell you that part of the story in their own words.

3. **WORKSHOP ACTIVITY AND REFLECTION** (approximately 25-30 minutes)

See attached lesson plans for specific instructions about the main activity. Supplies should be in your classroom, but if you need help, ask your cycle coordinator. If you run low on supplies, please tell your coordinator so they can plan accordingly.

If children finish early, you can use any of the “Filler Activities” provided in each lesson plan. In addition, you may use activity sheets (see “Suggested Resources for this Cycle”) as “quiet work” for the early finishers while they wait for everyone to complete the task.

Try to plan your time so that children finish the activity and still have a few minutes to process the class by journaling or drawing. Encourage them to take their work seriously, and try to foster a semi-quiet atmosphere that allows children to think about what they have heard, seen and experienced. Ask questions like “What did you learn today?” or “How did you feel while doing this activity?” Connect your activity back to the story. Studies show us that quiet reflection time is what helps move items from short-term memory into long-term memory so this piece is VERY important!

4. **CLEAN UP** (approximately 5 minutes)

Have children help clean up and make sure everyone has their papers, jackets, etc. If parents come to the classroom to pick up their children, this is a good time to praise children in front of their parents. This is also a good time to discuss any concerns or questions quietly with parents. Tell the children goodbye. Thank them for coming.



Theological Overview of this Cycle

The book of Judges contains intriguing stories of well-known Old Testament characters like Samson and Delilah, but it also introduces students to characters they may not be as familiar with, such as Gideon or Deborah. We are excited to introduce these lesser-known stories to your children but want to be upfront about the fact that some of these stories contain adult-like themes of violence, lust and revenge. We have tried to handle these topics in age-appropriate ways, but you will want to review the material carefully before beginning this cycle. We think it is always a good idea to gather your teachers together for a Bible study on the scripture before beginning a unit, but even if you don't usually do this step, we suggest you make time to do it for this unit, if possible.

The time of the judges begins after the death of Joshua and extends until the anointing of the first king (Saul) by Samuel, who was the last of the judges. If you have previously done a unit on Joshua or Samuel or Saul, you may wish to help children put this story in chronological context by referencing those stories. Also, if you completed the timeline from the "All About the Bible" cycle, you may want to reference this era on your chart.

The book of Judges describes life after the Children of Israel have arrived and settled into their Promised Land of Canaan. Over time, the people have become lax about their commitment to God and God's ways. They seem to have forgotten the incredible journey that brought them out of Egypt with Moses; they've stopped remembering the signs they were shown while they wandered in the wilderness, and they have ceased to be actively grateful for living in the land God promised them.

As we read this part of the story of the Children of Israel, it is easy to remember times in our own lives when we let our commitment to God fall behind other things on our priority list; we felt like this was an important point to make to the children. Even when we fail to live up to our commitments, God is still there and will listen when we call.

Another reason we felt this unit was important is because it represents the classic human dilemma of making poor choices and then calling on God for rescue. During the developmental years of childhood, children are learning everyday that they have the power to make decisions. As they grow older, they begin to see consequences that arise from good or bad choices. We want children to see that even though time and time again God was willing to send prophets, kings and judges to help the Children of Israel when they asked, there were also consequences for some of the decisions they made.

In some ways, the stories of the Judges are tough lessons to hear and to teach. But this is part of teaching our children what authentic faith looks like. It is important for them to hear from faithful adults that living the Christian life isn't always easy and nobody gets it right 100% of the time. Sometimes we make bad decisions or don't live up to our original commitment... and sometimes there are difficult consequences we have to live through as a result of our decisions... but the God who loves us is faithful and walks with us every step of the journey. May this unit strengthen you on your journey.

God's Peace to you,
Tracey E. Herzer



Letter to the Parents for this Cycle

(We suggest you mail this letter to all parents with a copy of the cycle story, plus the Theological Overview)

Dear Parents –

We are beginning a unit where we will study the judges of Israel, using the book of Judges from the Bible. Although there were twelve judges, we are going to narrow our focus to just three of them: Deborah, Gideon and Samson. Our lessons will be geared toward helping the children see that there are consequences to decisions we make – bad or good. We will also use these stories to show how God uses lots of different, and imperfect, people.

There are stories in the book of Judges that deal with very adult themes like lust, violence and revenge. Obviously, we work very hard to cover this material in the most age-appropriate ways possible, but your children may raise additional questions at home. You may want to read over the enclosed story that summarizes the tales of Deborah, Gideon and Samson. In addition, you may wish to see our Theological Overview for this unit or discuss the topics with your clergyperson or religious educators.

In this unit, our lesson plans are geared to illustrate the following main points:

Key Concepts and Life Application:

- God listened when the children of Israel called out to be saved
- God provided judges to help rule the Israelites
- Some of the judges made good decisions and some made bad decisions
- There are consequences to the decisions and choices we make – but God is with us always

We hope you will reinforce these ideas with your child. Elementary-age children are in a crucial developmental stage as they begin to make more independent choices. For this reason, we felt a cycle on responsibilities and consequences was extremely important.

We hope you will take some time to talk with your children about making good choices, but also take time to remind them that they are loved, even when they make bad choices. They are loved by you and they are loved by God. Being loved doesn't change the fact that sometimes we have to live through unpleasant consequences... but it is very important for children to be reassured that the relationship is still there.

The stories of the Children of Israel and the God who loved them are the perfect example of that.

Enjoy the Journey!
Tracey E. Herzer



Story: Before Judge Judy

To be read each week of the cycle

Judges is the seventh book of the Bible and the second book in the “History” section. Judges begins after the death of Joshua, who led Israel in the battle of Jericho. After Joshua died, Israel forgot about God but when they were captured by another army, they begged God to save them. God sent a judge to help them, but when they got tired of living God’s way, they began to do things they knew were wrong. Every time they were captured, they asked God to save them... and God sent another judge. Some judges made good decisions and some made bad decisions. There were a total of 12 judges, but we’re going to study 3 of them: Deborah, Gideon and Samson.

Deborah – Judges, chapters 4 & 5

The Israelites forgot about God until they were captured by the Canaanites and then they prayed for God to save them. Deborah was a prophetess and judge who would sit under a palm tree and settle arguments for people. One day, she sent word to Barak, an Israelite army commander, that God told him to go fight Sisera, the commander of the Canaanite army. Barak said he would go if Deborah went with him. They went to the battleground and Deborah reminded Barak that God would go with them. When the battle got fierce, Sisera ran away and hid in the tent of a woman named Jael, who gave him a blanket and some milk, but when he lay down to sleep, Jael killed him with a tent peg. When Barak came looking for Sisera, Jael showed him what she had done. Deborah and Barak were glad that their enemy could no longer hurt them. They sang a song to God and there was peace in the land for 40 years.

Gideon – Judges, chapters 6, 7 & 8

After a while, the Israelites again forgot about God until they were captured by the Midianites. They prayed for God to save them. One day, an angel appeared to Gideon and told him he had been chosen to save Israel. Gideon asked for signs that God would be with him. Gideon put a fleece (lamb’s coat) on the ground and asked God to make the fleece wet and the ground around it dry. When this happened, Gideon knew that God would be with him, so he gathered up 32,000 Israelites to go fight. But God didn’t want the Israelites to think they won the battle on their own, so he told Gideon to let anyone go home who was afraid. 10,000 men left. Then God told Gideon to take the men to the river for a drink and only keep men who lapped their water like a dog. Then only 300 men were left in the army. Gideon gave each man a trumpet and a pitcher with a torch inside. Late that night, they snuck to the Midianites’ camp. They broke their pitchers. They blew their trumpets and shouted, “For God and Gideon!” The noise and light scared and confused the Midianite army so much that they ran away and the Israelites were saved.

Samson – Judges, chapters 13-16

Once again, the Israelites forgot about God until they were captured by the Philistines. They prayed for God to save them. One day, an angel appeared to a woman and told her she would have a son, but that he was never to cut his hair. As Samson grew, he obeyed these vows and the spirit of God was with him. He was so strong that he once killed a lion with his bare hands. Another time he won a battle using only the jawbone of a donkey and he even carried huge city gates to the top of a hill. Samson loved a woman named Delilah, but Samson’s enemies told her if she could find out what made him so strong, they would give her money. Three times she asked Samson about his strength, but each time he lied to her. Finally, he told her the truth about his vows. When Samson fell asleep, the Philistines came and shaved his long hair. He was too weak to fight them and they blinded him and made him a slave. One night they brought Samson into a big party and put him between two pillars so they could make fun of him. Samson prayed to God for strength one more time. He pushed the two pillars so hard that the house fell down and everyone in the building died, including Samson.

Stories re-told by Tracey Herzer



Suggested Resources for this Cycle

VIDEOS

There are several animated videos on Samson including **The Greatest Adventure Stories from the Bible: Samson and Delilah**, produced by Hanna-Barbera in 1997. There is also a volume in **Greatest Heroes and Legends of the Bible – Samson & Delilah** hosted by Charlton Heston.

Another option is the live action **The Bible Stories: Samson & Delilah**.

Some of the above DVD options can be purchased from us at <https://pastoral.center/dvds-learningcycles>.

For your youngest classes, you may want to use portions of the full-length VeggieTales video **Minnesota Cuke & the Search for Samson's Hairbrush – A Lesson in Dealing with Bullies**. Veggie Tales are available through many local stores or also on Amazon.com.

Another option is to move away from the actual Bible stories about the judges and instead use a movie about making choices. There is one called **Doing the Right Thing (part of the You Can Choose! series)**. This series is geared toward character education for children grades K-5 and is available at <http://www.goodcharacter.com/YCC/YouCanChoose.html>

A possible resource to use for older children OR for group leaders or parents who are looking for more information is The Bible Project's video on Judges, which can be found at <https://thebibleproject.com/explore/judges/>.

ACTIVITY PAGES

If you are looking for a filled activity, the link below includes Samson / Judges themed coloring pages:

<http://www.coloring.ws/samson.htm>



Activities Overview for this Cycle

WORKSHOP	SUMMARY OF PLANS	FOCUS
ART	Mobile of Judges (trumpet, fleece, torch, tent pegs, palm leaves, etc.)	Using symbols to help us remember the Judges stories
PUBLISHING	Play Samson games and Consequence Worksheet	Learn about consequences
DRAMA	Play “Who Am I?” game and “Question Cube”	Review of all characters in all stories of the unit
MOVIE	Watch movie and then compare & contrast that with the story	Hear the story presented in a different way
STORY	Hear stories and play games that relate to the choices the judges made	Learn about Making Choices
KITCHEN	Make army flatbread	Learn about ancient armies
MUSIC	Sing songs & play games that relate to the themes of obedience and choices	Choosing to obey God’s voice



Judges: Drama Workshop

Bible Reference for the Cycle:

The book of Judges, chapters 4-8 and 13-16

Main Verse for the Cycle:

Whenever the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge, and he delivered them from the hand of their enemies... (Judges 2:18) *(New Revised Standard Version of the Bible)*

Key Concepts and Life Application:

- God listened when the children of Israel called out to be saved
- God provided judges to help rule the Israelites
- Some of the judges made good decisions and some made bad decisions
- There are consequences to decisions and choices we make – but God is with us

Summary of Class Plans:

In this workshop, children will go over the different characters found in the judges stories and use pantomime to act out their character while the rest of the class guesses “Who Am I?”

Materials Needed:

- Copies of “Who Am I?” clues from pages 26-27 – cut apart
- Bowl or bag for clue cards
- Square box for Question Cube (we used one about 8” square)
- Copy of questions from page 28 for the teacher
- Black permanent marker – thick tip
- Simple props, if you have them
- Fabric pieces for costumes, if you have them

Materials Needed for Filler Activity

- Plastic army men or other figures
- Large shallow box with sand
- Paper
- Crayons and/or markers

Workshop Lesson Plans:

- **BEFORE CLASS** – You will need to cut apart the clues for “Who Am I?” and put them in some kind of bowl or bag for children to draw out.
- **BEFORE CLASS** – Create your Question Cube. Using a dark marker, write these words on your box, one word on each side: WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY, FREE POINT!



- You can refer to “A General Schedule for Class Structure” (included in the Introductory Materials) for ideas on how to introduce yourself and the story, as well as how to plan your class time appropriately.
- Welcome students as they enter. When it is time to start, read the cycle story about the judges. After you have finished, tell the class that instead of asking them questions about the story, you are going to play a couple of games with them to review the details.
- Divide the class into 2 teams. Most of our elementary-age kids love playing “boys against the girls”, but do whatever works best for your class numbers.
- Have the first volunteer from one of the teams come draw a “WHO AM I?” slip out of the bag or bowl that you have prepared. They will have to act out this character to their team and try to get them to guess the name that is on the piece of paper. If you have fabric pieces or simple props to use in your drama room, children can use them, but remind them that these aren’t meant to be elaborate plays, just simple scenarios.
 - **For younger students** – you will have to whisper the clue to them and possibly help them think of how to act it out.
 - **For older students** – if you want to make the game more challenging, have the teams create clues for each other instead of using the pre-made clues.
- For the second game, you can either keep the same teams or divide the class up again into different teams.
- To begin the game, a volunteer from the first team rolls the Question Cube. If it lands on the side that says “WHY”, that person needs to come up with a question to ask the other team that starts with the word WHY.
- If the person can’t come up with a question, the teacher can help by supplying one of the questions from page 28 or other questions he or she chooses.
 - **For older students** – to make this game more interesting, we awarded 5 points if the person came up with a question, but only 3 points if the teacher provided the question. This helped make sure that the students were really trying to come up with legitimate questions, which also helps them retain the story facts better.
- If the other team answers the question correctly, they get a point. If they do not answer correctly, the players on the first team (but not the person who originally asked the question) have a chance to earn that point.
- Play until you have run out of time or questions. Finish up by saying something like this (in your own words):



- *You have really learned a lot about our stories. I'm proud of you for all the things you remembered. There are lots of fun and interesting things in these stories, but the most important thing I want you to remember is that God is with us. God was with the judges when they made good decisions and God was with the judges when they made bad decisions. Sometimes there are unpleasant consequences to the choices we make, but God is always there. Let's close our time with a prayer:*
- *Dear God, thank you that you are always with us. Help us to make good choices and to do the things we know we should do. Help us treat other people like we would want to be treated. Remind us that no matter what choices we make, you are always walking with us. We ask these things in the name of your Son Jesus, Amen.*
- After your prayer, give the students a few minutes of quiet to write or draw in their journals. Ask them to focus on what they have learned from the characters in today's stories.
 - *Which character from the stories are you most like?*
 - *Which character do you admire? Why?*
 - *Which character do you least admire? Why?*

Filler Activity:

- There is so much great action in these stories, that students could easily choose one story and put on an impromptu play. We found several books that contain lots of skits that we always keep in our drama room, but you can also find short plays on the Internet. Here's the link to a short, funny skit about Samson and Delilah, written by Bob Snook: <http://bobsnook.org/stg/ot/samson.htm>
- If that first activity is not possible, you can always give the students blank paper and crayons to draw scenarios from the stories.



WHO AM I?

Cut the following clues apart and allow children to draw from a bowl.

<p>I used to sit under a palm tree and help people settle their arguments.</p> <p><i>(Deborah)</i></p>	<p>I was both a judge and a prophetess.</p> <p><i>(Deborah)</i></p>
<p>Judge Deborah told me God's message: that I should go fight Sisera and the Canaanite army.</p> <p><i>(Barak)</i></p>	<p>When Barak & Deborah & their army came to fight, I got scared and ran away.</p> <p><i>(Sisera)</i></p>
<p>When Commander Sisera came to my tent, I pretended to be nice to him, but then I killed him.</p> <p><i>(Jael)</i></p>	<p>One day, an angel appeared to me while I was farming and told me that I should save Israel from the Midianites. I wasn't so sure.</p> <p><i>(Gideon)</i></p>
<p>I got down on my knees to drink water and then Gideon sent me home and said I didn't have to fight.</p> <p><i>(someone in Gideon's army)</i></p>	<p>We were sleeping one night and then we heard trumpets and saw lots of lights. We were afraid and ran away.</p> <p><i>(Midianite army)</i></p>

<p>An angel appeared to me and told me I would have a baby who should never cut his hair.</p> <p><i>(Samson's mother – or Manoah's wife)</i></p>	<p>I was very, very strong and once I killed a lion with my bare hands.</p> <p><i>(Samson)</i></p>
<p>I begged Samson to tell me the secret of his great strength.</p> <p><i>(Delilah)</i></p>	<p>We paid Delilah to find out Samson's secret, and when we did, we snuck in, shaved his head and captured him.</p> <p><i>(Philistines)</i></p>
<p>After I was captured, I was put between 2 pillars. I asked God for strength once more and destroyed the building.</p> <p><i>(Samson)</i></p>	<p>Make up your own</p> <p>WHO AM I?</p>
<p>Make up your own</p> <p>WHO AM I?</p>	<p>Make up your own</p> <p>WHO AM I?</p>
<p>Make up your own</p> <p>WHO AM I?</p>	<p>Make up your own</p> <p>WHO AM I?</p>

Questions for Question Cube

WHO QUESTIONS?

- Who was the strongest judge? (*Samson*)
- Who did Deborah send for? (*Barak*)
- Who tempted Samson and begged to hear his secret? (*Delilah*)
- Who did the Israelites call upon when they were in trouble? (*God*)
- Who told Gideon he'd been chosen to save Israel? (*an angel from God*)

WHAT QUESTIONS?

- What did Barak tell Deborah would have to happen for him to go fight? (*She had to go with him*)
- What did Samson's mother vow to do? (*Never cut Samson's hair*)
- What did Gideon's army carry when they went to the Midianites? (*trumpets and torches inside jars*)
- What did Jael use to kill Sisera? (*a tent peg*)

WHEN QUESTIONS?

- When did Gideon believe that God would go with him? (*When he saw the wet fleece*)
- When did Samson lose his strength? (*When the Philistines cut his hair*)
- When the battle was over, what did Barak & Deborah do? (*sang a song of praise to God*)
- When Gideon's army charged the Midianites, what did they shout? (*"For God and Gideon!"*)

WHERE QUESTIONS?

- Where did Gideon's army hide their torches so the Midianites wouldn't see the light? (*in jars, which they broke when they got to the Midianites' camp*)
- Where did Sisera go when he ran away from the battle? (*to Jael's tent*)
- Where did Samson die? (*in the building he pushed down with the pillars*)
- Where is the book of Judges in the Bible? (*7th book of the Old Testament*)

WHY QUESTIONS?

- Why was Jael nice to Sisera? (*so he would trust her and go to sleep*)
- Why did Gideon let the first 10,000 men leave? (*because they were afraid and God told him to let anyone go home who was afraid*)

Judges: Story & Games Workshop

Bible Reference for the Cycle:

The book of Judges, chapters 4-8 and 13-16

Main Verse for the Cycle:

Whenever the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge, and he delivered them from the hand of their enemies... (Judges 2:18) *(New Revised Standard Version of the Bible)*

Key Concepts and Life Application:

- God listened when the children of Israel called out to be saved
- God provided judges to help rule the Israelites
- Some of the judges made good decisions and some made bad decisions
- There are consequences to decisions and choices we make – but God is with us

Summary of Class Plans:

Students will hear stories and play games that help reinforce the idea that the choices we make influence the consequences that occur.

Materials Needed:

For Class activities:

- For younger classes – Some suggestions for stories about making choices:
 - **Miss Fannie's Hat** by Jan Karon
 - **The Empty Pot** by Demi
 - **Purple, Green and Yellow** by Robert Munsch
 - **A Bad Case of Stripes** by David Shannon
 - **Hunches in Bunches** by Dr. Seuss
 - **Alexander, Who Used to Be Rich Last Sunday** by Judith Viorst
 - **The Bernstein Bears and Too Much Pressure** by Stan & Jan Bernstein
 - **The Quiltmaker's Gift** by Jeff Brumbeau
 - **Harriet, You'll Drive Me Wild!** by Mem Fox
- For older classes – some books with choice-making scenarios:
 - **If You Had to Choose, What Would You Do?** by Sandra McLeod Humphrey
 - We also found a paperback book called **What's Right? What's Wrong?** – a Reader's Digest book for parents, but with lots of questions you can use.
 - There is a Christian version of the book **Would you Rather...?** written by Doug Fields and published by Zondervan



- Alternatively, you can find a list of questions online (search the Internet for “would you rather” or go to <http://wouldyourather.co.uk/> or make up your own.
- Game materials needed
 - For Gideon Relay
 - 2 sponges
 - 2 measuring cups
 - 2 bowls of water
 - 2 plastic tubs (to keep water from getting on the floor)
 - 2 towels (just in case)
 - For Character Coverup
 - Various colors of Construction paper
 - Marker
 - 2 rolls of toilet paper
 - 2 rolls of tape
 - For Samson Stack
 - As many empty boxes as you can find... all shapes and sizes
 - Flashlight Tag
 - Nametags – each person writes just their first name in fairly large letters
 - Flashlight – at least one, but 2-3 would be better.
 - Make sure you have good batteries in the flashlights!

For optional filler activities:

- Paper
- Crayons or Markers

Workshop Lesson Plans:

- **BEFORE CLASS** – for this workshop, you may want to move tables and chairs out of the way and invite children to sit on the floor. That way, you will have space to play the games.
- **BEFORE CLASS** – Decide which games you plan to include in your class time. Read the directions for that game and set out the materials you will need.
 - For Gideon Relay
 - Set out tables, sponges, measuring cups, bowls of water & plastic tubs
 - Have towels on hand to mop up any spills
 - For Character Coverup
 - Write out the names of various characters on pieces of construction paper
 - Set out toilet paper rolls and tape



- For Samson Stack
 - You may want to put a masking tape X where the “Samsons” should stand
- Flashlight Tag
 - Check battery flashlights
- You can refer to “A General Schedule for Class Structure” (included in the Introductory Materials) for ideas on how to introduce yourself and the story, as well as how to plan your class time appropriately.
- Welcome children as they come in and invite them to have a seat. When it is time to start, read the cycle story about the judges. Then ask the children some questions, such as:
 - What choices have you made today? (what to eat, wear, say, etc.)
 - What are your favorite things to make choices about?
 - What are your least favorite things to make choices about?
 - What are some choices we make about other people? (how to treat them, if we’re going to listen, how we act around them, etc.)
 - What are some choices we make about God? (if we believe in God, if we are going to do what we know is right, etc.)
- After your discussion about choices, choose a couple stories to read to the class.
 - **For Younger Classes (K-2nd)** – choose 2 or 3 stories from the list above or stories you know that deal with someone making a choice. After each story, review the events by asking things like:
 - What choice did _____ have to make?
 - What happened as a result of that choice?
 - Do you think that was a good consequence or a bad consequence?
 - How is this like (or unlike) any of the judges stories?
 - **For Older Classes (3rd – 5th)** Instead of reading the stories listed above (which are geared to younger children) pose questions to the class, giving them a scenario and asking them what they would do. Kids seem to love these questions and so this should be a fun activity for them, but also try to conclude with some discussion about how we make decisions and how the choices we make in real life can often lead to significant changes in our behavior.

Here are some “would you rather” questions that we used:

- Would you rather be blind or be deaf?
- Would you rather end hunger or end hatred?
- Would you rather live without music or live without TV?
- Would you rather have no elbows or have no knees?
- Would you rather have a ridiculously large nose or ridiculously big ears?
- Would you rather experience life like a video game or a movie?



- Would you rather wear a bathing suit in the snow or a snowsuit at the beach in July?
- Would you rather have x-ray vision or control the weather?
- Would you rather read a book while you are upside down or read a book that is upside down?
- Would you rather have the amazing experience of walking on the moon or win \$500,000?
- Would you rather eat a lemon or a lime?
- Would you rather be able to fly or live to the age of 200?
- Would you rather get caught singing in the mirror or spying on someone you secretly like?
- Would you rather be stranded on an island alone or with someone you dislike?
- Would you rather always lose a game or never play a game?
- Would you rather give up your computer or your pet?
- Would you rather get free candy for one year or free potatoes forever?
- Would you rather have half school days everyday or no homework ever?
- Would you rather give a speech or run a mile?
- Would you rather make fun of a talk show or be on a talk show?
- Would you rather be famous or inspirational?
- Would you rather attend the Last Supper or discover Jesus' empty tomb?
- Would you rather be yelled at by a friend or by a stranger?
- After reading some stories and/or asking "would you rather" questions, you may wish to play one or more of the following games:
 - **Gideon Relay** – Remind the children about the story where Gideon puts out the fleece to see if God will really be with him. Tell the class you are going to do a relay based on this story, but remind them that when the fleece was wet, the ground around it was DRY... so they must be careful! Divide the class into 2 teams. At one end of the room have 2 tables – each one set with a bowl of water, a sponge and a measuring cup. (We placed our measuring cups inside shallow Rubbermaid tubs so we didn't get water everywhere!) Each team member ran to the table, soaked the sponge in the bowl of water and carefully squeezed water into the measuring cup. At the end of the relay, the team who managed to get the most water into their measuring cup, won!
 - **Character Coverup** – Write the names of each of the major characters from each story on a piece of colored construction paper and post the papers around the room. Give each team a roll of toilet paper. Ask a volunteer from the first team to tell you something about a character. If they give you a correct fact about a character, they get to tape one square of toilet paper onto that character's piece of paper. The goal is to completely cover up the paper.
 - **Samson Stack** – Have a stack of empty boxes at the end of the room. Ask for a volunteer to be "Samson". Divide the class into 2 teams. Each team member takes a turn running to the stack of boxes and adding one box to create a pillar (towers) on either side of Samson. See which pillar gets higher. Continue until one pillar topples.



- **Flashlight Tag** – If possible, you may want to play this game outside or in a larger area where there are more places to hide. Have someone (or 2 or 3 people) volunteer to be Gideon's army. They either cover their eyes or move outside the space where the rest of the class will be hiding. Everyone else finds a place to hide. When time is up, the army calls out loudly, "FOR GOD AND GIDEON" and they come charging into the space. In order to capture someone, they shine their flashlight on the person and call out their name. Then the found person helps the person (or people) with a flashlight find other people who are hiding.
- Make sure you leave time for students to write or draw in their journals before leaving. Remember, quiet reflection time is how they move things to long-term memory! 😊

Filler Activities:

- **Coloring** – Ask students to draw pictures of good choices they have made this week.
- **For younger students**, you can always fill up remaining time by reading more stories. See suggestions above or pull some suggestions from your own list of favorites.
- **More Games** – If you didn't use all the games listed in the lesson plan, you can use one or more of them as filler activities.

