

Israel's Downfall

Joshua 23 - Judges 3

PPT Title

Israel's Downfall

Main Point: We must each have a relationship with God.

PPT Verse

Key Verse: *After that generation died, another generation grew up who did not acknowledge the Lord or remember the mighty things he had done for Israel. They abandoned the Lord, the God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of Egypt.*
- Judges 2:10, 12 NLT

Props: Big, hand-made pink construction paper Mother's Day card

BACKGROUND/REVIEW

Teacher: Prior to teaching, choose a child that you know to have a caring mother. Arrange for him or her to stand up and discuss all of the things his or her mother does to care for her family.

Say: For the past four weeks, we have learned about the Israelites while they were under the leadership of a faithful man named Joshua. This period of time was a great time for God's people. They were faithful to God, they obeyed God, and they took care of any sin right away. God blessed the people during this time.

Ask: Can anyone remember how God blessed the people while Joshua was leading of them? *God stopped the Jordan River so they could cross, Rahab hid the spies, God made the walls of Jericho fall down, He won many battles for them, He stopped the sun from moving across the sky.*

Say: God gave Joshua and the Israelites many military victories. Listen to what the Bible says about Joshua:



*The Lord had commanded his servant Moses to do all of those things. Moses had passed that command on to Joshua. **And Joshua carried it out. He did everything the Lord had commanded Moses.***



Say: Over many years, God gave Joshua victory over all of the people he fought in the land. The Bible lists 31 kings that Joshua killed (Joshua 12:9-24) along with multiple towns and regions that he conquered (Joshua 11:15-18). After the Israelites took all of that territory, Joshua divided the land as an inheritance to the tribes of Israel, as God had instructed (Joshua 11:23). However, there were still some people to overcome. It was left up to each tribe of Israel to conquer the people in the land they were given (Judges 1). The Bible gives us two reasons that God left some people remaining in the land.



One reason was that if all the people of the entire land of Canaan were wiped out right away, the wild animals that lived there would be too great in number, compared to the number of Israelites. These wild animals would make it unsafe for the Israelites to live in the land. God knew that the number of Israelites would increase as more and more children were born and grew up. Eventually, there would be enough Israelites to

outnumber the wild animals (Deuteronomy 7:22).



The other reason God allowed some of the people to remain was to teach and to test the Israelites (Judges 3:1). New generations of Israelites had been born and raised in the Promised Land. These new generations had not fought in wars. God wanted those who had no experience in battle to learn how to fight, just as their parents and grandparents had (Judges 3:2). And God wanted to see if these new generations of Israelites would obey Him by destroying the strangers and staying far away from their false gods (Judges 3:4).

Say: Under Joshua's leadership, the Israelites were sure to completely destroy all of the people that they fought, just as God had commanded (Joshua 10:40). This may sound very harsh to us. **Ask:** Does anyone remember why God insisted that all of the Canaanites must be destroyed? **Listen for answers. Ask someone to read Deuteronomy 20:18 from the powerpoint, or look it up and read it aloud.**



This will prevent the people of the land from teaching you to imitate their detestable customs in the worship of their gods, which would cause you to sin deeply against the Lord your God. - Deuteronomy 20:18 NLT

Say: God commanded the Israelites to destroy all of the people in Canaan, because if the Israelites lived among these people, **the Israelites would begin to worship false gods** just like the Canaanites. This is VERY important! It will be the key to what we will study for the next several weeks.



Many years before Joshua's time, God had made several promises to Abraham. Let's look at those important promises:

"I will bless you and make your descendants into a great nation. You will become famous and be a blessing to others. I will bless anyone who blesses you, but I will put a curse on anyone who puts a curse on you. Everyone on earth will be blessed because of you." - Genesis 12:2-3 CEV

Descendants means children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, and so on. Abraham's descendants were the Israelites. Did God keep the promises He made to Abraham to bless his descendants? Let's think about the blessings God gave the Israelites. God **chose the Israelites** to be His own special people. God **rescued them** from slavery. He **delivered them** through the wilderness. He **fought many battles** for them. He **gave them** the Promised Land. When God promised that everyone on earth would be blessed through Abraham, He meant that one day He would **send the Savior** of the world through the Israelites. One day God would send the Messiah, Jesus Christ, to be born to a young Israelite woman named Mary (Galatians 3:8).

Ask: Is there any doubt that God kept His promises? *No.*

Say: And after all that, God simply wanted the Israelites to worship Him alone.

Call child up, with whom you have pre-arranged to discuss his or her mother.

Ask: What things does your mother do for you? **Ask lots of questions and draw answers out of the child if needed.** Well, first of all she gave birth to you, right? Does she wake you up for school in the morning? Does she feed you breakfast, do the laundry, cook supper? What else does she do for you? Does she drive you to sports practice or music rehearsal? **If the child is not expressive, ask the group to raise their hands and list things moms do for their families.** Now, imagine it's the day before Mother's Day.





Your mom walks by your room and sees you working hard on something. **Hold up your hand-made card.** She tries not to be nosy, but the pink construction paper catches her eye, and she can't help but notice you are going all out on a Mother's Day card. She smiles to herself and walks away, thinking, "Motherhood is hard work, but at times like this, it is all worth it." So, the next day, your Mom is all excited about receiving your card. She is sitting in the kitchen sipping coffee when you come down the stairs with your card. Mom is all warm inside. You walk toward her...and right past her! Bewildered, Mom watches as you walk out the door and go to the new neighbor's house. She sees you ring the doorbell, and hand your beautiful card to the neighbor! That neighbor has never done anything for you! **Ask the child:** How would your Mom feel about that? **Let him or her respond. Ask for answers from the group. Make a point of the word jealous. Ask:** Would his/her Mom be wrong to be jealous? *No.*

Say: It would be only natural for his/her Mom to be jealous. She would be jealous because of the overwhelming love she has for her child and their relationship.

Say: This might be a small taste of how God feels about his people choosing to worship a false God. Actually, this isn't even a fair comparison. Don't get me wrong. Mom's are great. But they are *not* the Creator of the universe (Genesis 1:1). They didn't create life out of nothing and they are not all-powerful (Genesis 2:7; 18:14). **God is perfect and He alone deserves our worship and praise.** Did you know that the Bible says that God is a **jealous** God? In fact, the Bible even says that one of God's names is **Jealous!**

PPT Verse

Do not worship any other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.
- Exodus 34:14

The Hebrew word for Jealous is qanna' (pronounced kan-naw'). It means God will not stand for any rival. This is not the same word used for envy - like when someone has a new toy that you really want. That is a greedy type of jealous. The word Jealous that is used to describe God is a righteous jealousy. Just like the Mother's jealousy, it is because of His love for His children and His relationship with them. God desires worship because He deserves it, and because it is the absolute best thing for His children. If we are worshipping anything else, we are on the path to destruction (2 Peter 2:1; Jeremiah 13:15-25).

JOSHUA'S FINAL WORDS



The Lord let Israel live in peace with its neighbors for a long time, and Joshua lived to a ripe old age. One day he called a meeting of the leaders of the tribes of Israel, including the old men, the judges, and the officials. I am now very old. You have seen how the Lord your God fought for you and helped you defeat the nations who lived in this land. There are still some nations left, but the Lord has promised you their land. So when you attack them, He will make them run away. - Joshua 23:1-4 CEV

Joshua knew he was about to die. He had some very, very important things to tell the Israelite leaders. Usually, a person's last words are extremely important. No one has ever talked about the weather, or the score of a sports game on their death bed. With just a short time left to live, a dying person will give their most important advise to the people they care about. **Ask:** If someone that you respected very much was about to die, would you want to listen to their final words? *Yes!*

Say: Joshua instructed the Israelites:

PPT

1. Obey the Law
2. Stay away from other people
3. Don't worship false gods
4. Stay faithful to God

Be sure that you carefully obey everything written in The Book of the Law of Moses and do exactly what it says. Don't have anything to do with the nations that live around you. Don't worship their gods or pray to their idols or make promises in the names

of their gods. Be as faithful to the LORD as you have always been. - Joshua 23:6-8

Joshua continued by telling the people that God had kept every promise He had made (Joshua 23:14). Joshua reminded them that God defeated all their enemies and gave them the good land He had promised them. Joshua also reminded them that God demanded that they worship Him only. Joshua had a very stern warning for the Israelites.



The Lord is our God. He gave us this wonderful land and made an agreement with us that we would worship only Him. But if you worship other gods, it will make the Lord furious. He will start getting rid of you, and soon not one of you will be left in this good land that He has given you. - Joshua 23:15b-16 CEV

In fact, Joshua told the people that they would *not* remain faithful to God (Joshua 24:19).

But the people spoke to Joshua. They said, "No! We will serve the Lord." - Joshua 24:21

Ask: Ask for a show of hands. Who thinks the Israelites will obey God? Who thinks the Israelites will disobey God?

Say: We will see very soon. Joshua died at the age of 110.

THE NEW GENERATION

Say: *Israel served the Lord as long as Joshua lived. They also served Him as long as the elders lived. Those were the elders who lived longer than Joshua did. They had seen for themselves everything the Lord had done for Israel. - Joshua 24:31*

Say: Okay, the Israelites were faithful to God as long as Joshua and the leaders lived. So far, so good. But if we turn in our Bibles just a couple of pages, look what we find. Judges 1 tells of many battles that were fought by the tribes of Israel after Joshua's death. But the Israelites did not kill the enemy, or even drive them out of the land. One tribe after another made slaves out of the people. In Judges 3, we read:



*So the people of Israel lived among the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, and **they intermarried with them**. Israelite sons married their daughters, and Israelite daughters were given in marriage to their sons. **And the Israelites served their gods.** - Judges 3:5-6 NLT*



The Israelites did **not** obey God. They did **not** destroy the people around them. They didn't even stay away from the people. Instead, they lived among them, they married them, and worst of all, they started to serve their false gods! This is exactly what Joshua warn the people about, and it was even the very first commandment that God had given to Moses. The first of the Ten Commandment is, "*Do not put any other gods in place of Me.*" (Exodus 20:3) This disobedience is tragic. As we study the book of Judges, we will learn that this is the beginning of **years** and **years** of terrible trouble for the Israelites.

Application: There are two major lessons we can take away from this page in history.

Say: First, we must look at the *reason* the younger Israelites did not choose to obey God. The Bible gives us the exact reason:

PPT

They did not know the Lord.

*All of the people of Joshua's time joined the members of their families who had already died. Then those who were born after them grew up. **They didn't know the Lord.** They didn't know what he had done for Israel. They deserted the Lord, the God of their people. He had brought them out of Egypt. But now the people of Israel followed other gods and worshiped them. They served the gods of the nations that were around them. They made the Lord angry because they deserted him. - Judges 2:10, 12-13a*

Please do not miss this important point. **The new generation did not know the Lord.** It was not enough that their parents were faithful to God. It was not enough that their parents obeyed the Lord. None of the people in the new generation KNEW God. (This generation included millions of people by that point.) The Bible even tells us that they didn't know what God had done for their ancestors. We don't know if that is because their parents and grandparents did not tell them, or if this generation simply would not listen when the stories were told to them. Either way, *in just one generation*, the Israelites went from living in blessings to living under a curse. Because they did not KNOW God, they did not worship Him and their lives would soon be in ruins.



The same is true of us. It is not enough for your parents to know God! It is not enough for your parents to obey God! It is not enough for your big brother or big sister to follow God! Each one of you must have a personal relationship with God. Seek to know Him (Psalm 105:4). Pray and ask God to show Himself to you (Matthew 11:25-27). Read God's Word, the Bible (Psalm 119:11-16). The Bible promises that if you look for God with all your heart and soul, you will find Him (Deuteronomy 4:29). Then you will worship Him and give Him the praise He deserves, and you will be on the path of blessing.



Secondly, we see that the Israelites allowed the people around them to influence them in their evil ways. Now, there is a difference between our lives and the lives of the Israelites. God commanded the Israelites to get rid of all the people around them, but we certainly are not commanded to do that. In fact, we are commanded to go to all the people of the world so we can tell them about Jesus (Acts 1:8). We have something the Israelites did not have. We, as God's people today, have been given the **Holy Spirit** (2 Corinthians 1:22). All Christians have God's Holy Spirit living inside of them (1 Corinthians 3:16). The Israelites did not have the Holy Spirit. Because of the Holy Spirit inside of us, we are empowered just like the believers in Acts. We are able to be *in the world*, but not be *like the world*. But, even the strongest Christian struggles with the temptations in the world. Don't ever think you are too strong to fall into sin! Be on guard every day! Ask God to keep you far from sin (Matthew 6:13). It is only through the power of God and the Holy Spirit that we remain pure in a sinful world (1 John 4:4).

So be careful. When you think you are standing firm, you might fall. You are tempted in the same way all other human beings are. God is faithful. He will not let you be tempted any more than you can take. But when you are tempted, God will give you a way out so that you can stand up under it. - 1 Corinthians 10:12-14

Next week we will see the terribly sad consequences of the Israelites' unfaithfulness to the Lord. We will also see that God, in His mercy, sent Judges, or "deliverers," to help His people when they turned back to Him.

PPT Main Point

Main Point: We must each have a relationship with God.