

# The Judges- Round and Round They Go

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Recently I taught a set of classes about the time of the Judges. The [background to this time in history](#) is one of a repeating cycle. To illustrate the idea of a cycle that goes round and round I decided to use a hoola hoop.

Each week, as we studied our way through the Judges I used part of the class time to review this cycle. Soon the children were able to explain this to the others in the class. The rattle sound the hoola hoop made as it turned added to the fun.

## How to Make a Wheel for Your Class

If a hoola hoop is not available then use any circular object that can be rotated and used in the same way. A bicycle wheel, hubcap, pizza pan or a round piece of cardboard would work just as well.

Write each of the stages of the cycle on thick card and tape them to the hoola hoop to form something like a wheel that can be rotated round and round.

Now it is time to review the cycle with the children in your class. Turn the wheel as you tell about each stage. (To remind you of what to say write the following notes on the back side of the papers.)

1. **SAFE WITH GOD:**  
God protected his people as they obeyed him.
2. **FORGET:**  
Then the people strayed from God and even started worshipping false Gods.
3. **HURT:**  
Because they left God they also left his protection. When the enemies began to hurt them they had no protection from God. This was a terrible time.
4. **HELP!**  
Finally, after so many bad things were happening, the people realised their mistake and cried out to God for help.
5. **JUDGE:**  
Even though the people forget God, God never forgot his people. When his people cried out for help he would send a hero (called a Judge) to save the day and turn them back to him. Sometimes these heroes were soldiers,

sometimes they were very clever. At least once they were a bit wild and crazy (Samson). God knew what kind of judge they needed. And the cycle continues...The judge would bring the people back to a time of safety with God (repeat number one again). Sometimes many years would pass but then, the people began to forget again...(and this is where you continue to number two and so on).

# Stories that Took Place During the Time of the Judges



[Deborah the Judge](#)



[Gideon and the Fleece](#)



[Gideon and the Midianites](#)



[The Birth of Samson](#)



[Samson and Delilah](#)



[The Death of Samson](#)



[Ruth and Naomi](#)



[Ruth and Boaz](#)



[God Answers Hannah's Prayer](#)



[Samuel- Helper in the Tabernacle](#)



[The Lord Speaks to Samuel](#)

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# Mustard Seeds and Matryoshka Dolls

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Teaching Jesus' parables to three and four year olds is challenging. [Pre-schoolers](#) struggle understanding abstract concepts. The figurative nature of the parables will largely pass them by because they usually think in more literal terms.

This morning the class I was teaching tackled the [Parable of the Mustard Seed](#). Jesus told a story about a farmer planting a tiny little seed. The seed sprouted and grew into the tallest of trees.

We began the class by sorting seeds. The children pulled the tiny mustard seeds from the pile and we marveled that such a tiny seed could grow into a large tree.

The three little boys I was teaching are also very small. They dream of the day when they can be big and strong like their dads. Great men begin as little boys.

Sometimes hands-on activities are helpful in helping pre-schoolers understand concepts. I chose a couple of these to stress the point about growth.

- First, I placed a tiny little paper circle on the table. Then, one at a time, I revealed a set of circles of ever increasing size. The children loved stretching their vocabulary to describe the sizes. Tiny, little, small, medium, bigger, enormous, giant and finally, super super huge.
- Secondly, I was able to make use of some Matryoshka (nesting) dolls that I had on hand. Seeing the sizes displayed in doll form helped the children relate to how they themselves are in the process of growing.

All in all it was a great class.

Sometimes my efforts in teaching seem extremely small. What difference will my teaching make in the bigger picture? This parable reminds me that God does great things from small beginnings.

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# The Puzzling Attraction of Puzzles

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Disorder and exposed edges cause us to be tense and unsettled. We fervently scan for those straight edges to establish a boundary and begin to sort things out. We aren't satisfied until everything is in its proper place and the picture is complete.

*It is no wonder we say we “work” puzzles. The process doesn’t seem like “play” at all.*

It is work. Yet, even when there is no outside competition involved, we find pleasure in that work. It is a quest for the solution. A desire to find the answer to the problem. Figuring out how the pieces fit together. Consciously or not, all of us are looking for answers. God, in his wisdom has created us curious and hungry to ‘know’. It sometimes feels like very hard work and yet we still seek.

As teachers we can walk alongside children and guide them in the important Christian-life-skill of looking for answers and seeking truth. Throughout their lives truth will always be found in God.

*You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water. Psalm 63:1, NIV*

[A good lesson plan](#) for Bible Class should include challenging and pleasurable [learning activities](#) that motivate children to think.

Challenges don't have to be complicated. One simple activity is an adaptation of jig-saw puzzles. [Click here for written instructions and links to good online teaching pictures you can use.](#)

Or watch this 2 minute training video below.

May God bless you as you help children seek answers.

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# Keep it Simple: Stick Figures

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There is something unassuming about a simple stick figure. It is not a great work of art. It does not have moving parts nor is it usually animated.

Yet, at a camp last week some student teachers used stick figures to illustrate a Bible story for kids. The kids were enthralled.

Why was that?

Kids are constantly stimulated by all sorts of colourful graphics on T.V., laptops and tablets. What was it that they found so interesting about these simple figures?

Personally, I think that the unassuming imperfection of a simple stick figure relays a certain genuineness that children can't help but recognise. By keeping the visual aid simple the teachers communicated the following to the children:

1. I drew this for you.
2. I don't mind if you see me trying and making mistakes. I'm willing to share the "real me" with you.
3. This story is more important than my inadequacies so I want to share this with you.
4. God uses me (and you) for good when we put our pride to the side.

***Here's an encouragement for today. Strive to give your best effort when you teach children but remember God can use even our most humble gifts to advance His kingdom.***

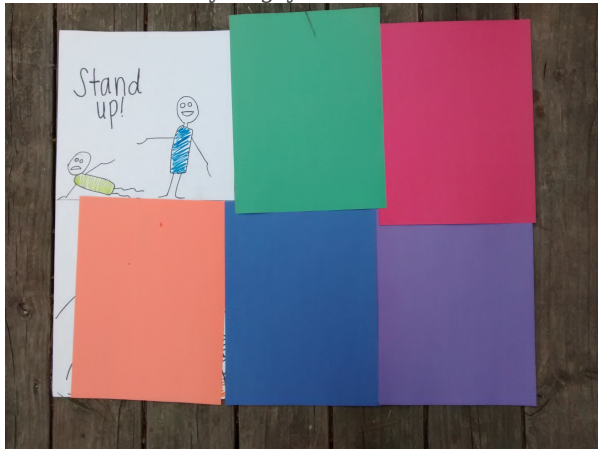


# Supplies Used in this Story-telling Method:

- A Bible and chosen Bible story  
In the example above the story that was used was that of [Paul and Barnabas in Lystra \(Acts 13 and 14\)](#)
- Paper (in this case it was a poster board)
- Markers or a pen

## Instructions:

1. Read over the event in the Bible and outline the story. In the example above the outline was:
  1. Paul heals the lame man in Lystra
  2. The people of Lystra begin to worship Paul and Barnabas like they were gods
  3. Paul tells them that only God should be worshipped. He is the giver of all gifts. He made everything around them. But the people would not stop worshipping them.
  4. Some angry men from another town came and started saying bad things about Paul and Barnabas. They made the crowd very angry.



5. The crowd became so angry that they threw stones at Paul until he fell down and they said he was dead.
  6. After the crowd left Paul got up. He and Barnabas left Lystra and continued on to other cities to teach about Jesus.
2. Divide the paper into sections.
  3. Draw the scenes of the story on each of the sections.
  4. Before class begins cover each of the scenes with paper.
  5. Remove the papers one at a time as you tell the story to the children. (By waiting to reveal pictures one at a time you will help the children maintain a sense of anticipation.)

## Adaptations:

- Draw the pictures as you tell the story. This will require planning ahead and a little practice.
- Ask another person to draw as you tell the story. Teenagers or adults could be the guest artist in your class.
- Older children can read the story from the Bible together with you and outline it. They could then plan out the scenes and draw them themselves.
- Instead of a number of scenes choose one scene and draw it together as a group.
- Use other mediums besides paper and markers:
  - Paints or chalk pastels

- Sidewalk chalk on the sidewalk, footpath or concrete
- Sharpie pens or any number of purchased products made to write temporarily on glass. The teacher or children can write on a window pane. (You will want to test this first to make sure it cleans up well with window cleaner).
- (for outside) Use a stick and draw in the sand.

## Extra Help for Drawing Stick Figures:

Here are a few helpful instructional videos I have found online.

- Drawing basic faces and emotions  
[Video \(almost 6 minutes\) at https://youtu.be/BFoIRV1Eo84](https://youtu.be/BFoIRV1Eo84)
- Adding dynamic actions to stick figures.  
[Video \(4 1/2 minutes\) at https://youtu.be/DkM6FgbQIGs](https://youtu.be/DkM6FgbQIGs)

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## I Have Skeletons in My Closet

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I have to be honest, Halloween is not exactly my favourite holiday. But one thing I really like about it is what happens afterwards. After the big rush (and sometimes even before) there are all sorts of skeletons on sale!

Why is this a good thing, you might ask? Why would I need to stock up on skeletons and stow them away in my closet?



It's simple...I'm a Bible teacher!

# Ezekiel and the Valley of Dry Bones

Bones and skeletons are great visual aids and conversation starters for the story of [Ezekiel and the Valley of Dry Bones](#) from [Ezekiel 37:1-14](#).

I love to tell this story of hope. This vision has the vital elements needed for a dramatic story. The kids love the “creepy” image of dry bones lying all over a valley. They can relate to how Ezekiel must have felt when the bones began rattling and coming together. Tendons and flesh formed on them and finally God breathed his spirit into them. If Ezekiel was hopeless because his people were in captivity he could finally understand how God had the power to bring a nation back to life.

## Teaching Items in Post-Holiday Sales Bins

As a teacher I am always on the lookout for items that will help me share God's Word in ways children can best relate to. No one has to spend a lot of money or buy new things to teach children about God. But if you live in a place where after-holiday sales provide extremely cheap items then this may be a great opportunity. What are the holidays where you live?

### After Christmas

- Creche and manger scenes (angels, wise men, animals, Joseph, Mary, Jesus, the manger itself), pictures of Jesus as a baby, stars and spices like the wise men brought. The obvious uses are for stories such as [The Birth of Jesus](#) and [Wise Men and a Star](#).
- Gaudy plastic strings of gold and silver garland can make great “treasure” when you later tell the [Parable of a Treasure & a Pearl](#).
- Greenery, artificial trees, candles and even twinkling lights bought in after-Christmas clearance sales really come in handy for costumes and acting out Bible stories later on.
- You're going to enjoy pulling twinkling lights out of storage when you tell the story of [Jesus Teaches about Salt and Light](#).

### After Valentines Day

- Heart decorations of all kinds. These could be used when talking about the heart.
- Stories that come to mind are [Let My People Go!](#) , [John the Baptist](#) and [The Parable of a Sower and the Seeds](#)

### After Easter

- This is the obvious time to find things like books and figurines to help you later tell the story of the [Burial and the Resurrection of Jesus](#).
- Since I teach infants and toddlers I sometimes use the little wind-up bunnies when I teach about [Day 6-God Created Animals & People](#).
- And I like to have a few plastic eggs on hand throughout the year so I can put verses or pictures inside and let the children hunt for them. They are also great for telling the story of death, burial and resurrection of Jesus with [Resurrection Eggs](#).

# After Halloween

- Skeletons for teaching about [Ezekiel & the Valley of Dry Bones](#)
- Candy and lollies if you use those as game prizes.

# After Thanksgiving

- We can give thanks throughout the year so I've sometimes used items on sale after this holiday to teach stories such as [Jesus Heals Ten Lepers](#).
- And all of plastic fruit comes in handy for teaching about [The Fruit of the Spirit](#).

Happy Teaching!

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