

The First Judges

1

BIBLE PASSAGE: Judges 3:7-31

MAIN POINT: The Israelites forgot about the one true God.

KEY PASSAGE: Isaiah 33:22

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Whom does God use in His plan? God uses people in His plan.

SMALL GROUP OPENING

(15–20 MINUTES)

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LARGE GROUP BIBLE STUDY

(10–15 MINUTES)

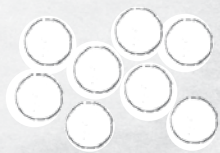
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SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES

(20–25 MINUTES)

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Leader BIBLE STUDY

Following Joshua's death, the Israelites were without a leader. They fell into a cycle of sin that can be seen during each reign of the judges. The cycle is marked by an A-B-C-D-E pattern. Let's look at the first judge, Othniel, to see this pattern.

First, the people fell into Apostasy. They turned away from God and served other gods. (Judg. 3:7) Next, they experienced a period of Bondage. God was angry with the Israelites, and He gave them into the hand of the king of Aram. (v. 8) Third, the people Cried out to God. (v. 9) God sent a Deliverer to save them. (vv. 9-10) Finally, they had Ease in the land. (v. 11) Then Othniel died.

This pattern continued with Ehud. The people had again turned from God. Their apostasy made God angry. He sent them into bondage by strengthening the king of Moab to defeat Israel. The Israelites served the king of Moab for 18 years.

The Moabites were well-fed, especially the king. They enjoyed the fruit of the Israelites' labor while the Israelites went hungry. By thrusting a sword into the king's belly, Ehud disemboweled the king and left him dead on the floor of his room. The fat covered over the handle of the sword so that Ehud could not remove it.

After Ehud delivered Israel, the Israelites struck down the Moabites and there was peace in the land for eighty years. But Ehud would die, and they would need another judge to lead them. The Israelites needed someone better than a judge; they needed a king who would save them not only from the consequences of their sin, but the sin itself. That was all part of God's plan. God sent a true Deliverer; His Son, Jesus, died for our sin and delivered us forever from the oppression of sin and death.



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The BIBLE STORY

The First Judges

Judges 3:7-31

Joshua had died. Without a strong leader, the Israelites began to disobey God. Nothing good ever happened when the Israelites disobeyed God. **God** wanted the people to love and obey Him, so he **gave them a leader called a judge.**

When a judge led the people, the Israelites obeyed God. But when the judge died, the people forgot God and bad things happened. So the Israelites cried out to God again for help. Then God gave them another judge.

Othniel (AHTH nih el) was the first judge. God was with Othniel, and Othniel led the Israelites into battle. God helped the Israelites win. The land was peaceful for many years, then Othniel died. With no leader, **the Israelites forgot about God.** God was angry. **He let the king of Moab attack the Israelites and defeat them. The Israelites had to serve the king of Moab** for 18 years.

The Israelites were sad. They remembered how good it had been when they loved and obeyed God. They **cried out** to Him, **“Save us!”** So **God chose Ehud (EE huhd) to save them.**

The Israelites sent Ehud to the king of Moab with a gift. Ehud made himself a sharp sword. He hid it under his clothes. Then Ehud went to the king of Moab, who was a very fat man. **Ehud said, “I have a secret message for you.”** **The king told all his attendants to go away so he was alone with Ehud.**

When the king stood up, Ehud reached under his clothes and **pulled out his sword. Ehud killed the king.**

Then he ran away, locking the doors of the room behind him.

Ehud was gone **when the king's servants came in. They found the king's room locked** and thought he was using the bathroom. They waited, but the king never opened the door. **When they unlocked the door, the king was dead** on the floor!

When Ehud got away, he blew a ram's horn and became the leader of the Israelites. They fought the Moabites and won. They had peace in the land for 80 years.

Ehud died, and the Israelites forgot God again. When they remembered how good they had it when they loved and obeyed God, they cried out to Him, "Save us!" God sent a third judge, Shamgar (SHAM gahr), to save them.

Christ Connection: After God's people sinned, the judges helped God's people obey God again. But the judges could not change the people's hearts and make them love God. God had a plan. He sent His Son, Jesus, to change His people's hearts and save them from sin forever.



**WANT TO
DISCOVER
GOD'S WORD?
GET
MORE!**

Invite preschoolers to check out this week's devotionals to discover that God chose ordinary men to rescue His people from their enemies—ordinary men whom God empowered by His Spirit (Judg. 3:10) for His glory. Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information, check out www.lifeway.com/devotionals.

Small Group OPENING

SESSION TITLE: The First Judges

BIBLE PASSAGE: Judges 3:7-31

MAIN POINT: The Israelites forgot about the one true God.

KEY PASSAGE: Isaiah 33:22

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Whom does God use in His plan? God uses people in His plan.

Welcome time

- “Help, Help, Help” song
- offering basket
- Allergy Alert download
- favorite toys related to the Bible story theme

Play the unit theme song in the background as you greet preschoolers and follow your church’s security procedures. Set an offering basket near the door to collect at an appropriate time. Post an allergy alert, if necessary. Set out a few favorite theme-related toys, such as puzzles and blocks.

Activity page

- “What Is Different?” activity page, 1 per child
- pencils or crayons

Invite preschoolers to look at the two pictures and circle the differences in the second picture.

SAY • Remember when Joshua told the people to worship God? The Israelites said they would worship only God. Well, in today’s Bible story, the Israelites forgot about God and disobeyed Him. God wanted His people to love and obey Him. Let’s find out what God did to turn His people’s hearts back to Him.

Sing an action song repeatedly

Lead preschoolers in singing an action song such as “If You’re Happy and You Know It,” “Wheels on the Bus,” or “Hokey Pokey.” Choose one song, and each time you finish singing say, “Let’s sing it again!” Lead preschoolers in singing the song repeatedly.



SAY • Sometimes doing the same thing over and over again is fun. Sometimes it is boring. Sometimes doing the same thing over and over again is wrong. In our Bible stories for the next few weeks, the Israelites did the same thing over and over again. They forgot about God! Forgetting about God is a wrong thing! God had a plan to turn His people's hearts back to Him each time. Let's find out what it was.

Match helping vehicles

Print the "Helping Vehicles Cards" on heavyweight paper and cut them apart. Place the vehicle cards in a basket or bag. Display the people or objects cards in a grid on the table or floor. Invite a preschooler to select a helping vehicle card from the basket and guide her to match it to the corresponding people or objects card. Continue playing until the preschoolers have made all the matches. Play again, this time display the helping vehicle cards and place the people or objects cards in the basket.

SAY • These vehicles help people with different things they need. In our Bible stories for the next few weeks, God's people found themselves in need over and over again. God didn't send a car or truck. He sent people to help. These people were called judges.

Transition to Bible study

To gain the attention of all the preschoolers to move them to Bible study, show the countdown video, flip off the lights, or clap a simple rhythm for the children to copy. Invite preschoolers to "help" each other move to Bible study by holding hands.

- "Helping Vehicle Cards" printable
- heavyweight paper
- scissors
- basket or bag

Note: Keep the "Helping Vehicle Cards" for next week's session.

- countdown video (optional)

Large Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: The First Judges

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BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Whom does God use in His plan? God uses people in His plan.

Introduce the Bible story

SAY • Who tells you what is right and wrong? Who helps you know what do? Your mom and dad? Your teachers? Other grown-ups? Other kids? In today's Bible story, God's people kept doing the wrong thing, but God sent people to help them know what to do. These people were called *judges*.

Watch or tell the Bible story

Open your Bible to Judges 3.

SAY • There is no book like the Bible because no other book has God's words in it. God gives us His true words in the Bible. Our story comes from the Book of Judges.

Show the Bible story video "The First Judges" or tell the Bible story in your own words using the script provided.

Use the bolded version for younger preschoolers.

Talk about the Bible story

SAY • **The Israelites forgot about the one true God.** They disobeyed God, and bad things happened. They cried out to God. God sent judges to help them. When the judge died, the people would do it all over again.

Point to the Bible story picture on the giant timeline or big

- Bible
- "The First Judges" video
- Bible Story Picture Poster

- Main Point Poster
- Giant Timeline or Big Story Circle

story circle as you ask the following review questions:

1. Who were the leaders God gave Israel? (*judges*)
2. What happened when a judge led Israel? (*The people obeyed God.*)
3. What happened after a judge died? (**The Israelites forgot about the one true God.**)
4. Who did God use to defeat the King of Moab? (*Ehud*)
5. What happened after the Israelites defeated Moab? (*peace in the land*)

Learn the big picture question

SAY • Our big picture question is, *Whom does God use in His plan? God uses people in His plan. The Israelites forgot about the one true God.* The judges helped the people turn back to God, but the judges could not change the people's hearts and make them love God. God had a plan. He sent His Son, Jesus, to change His people's hearts and save them from sin forever.

- Big Picture Question Poster
- Main Point Poster

Practice the key passage

Open your Bible to Isaiah 33:22. Read the key passage aloud several times. Sing together the key passage song "He Will Save Us."

- Key Passage Poster
- "He Will Save Us" song

SAY • Our key passage tells us that God is our Judge, God is our Lawgiver, and God is our King. *God uses people in His plan*, but He is the One in charge of everything. God has power over people and uses them to work out His good plan.

Transition to small groups

Small Group ACTIVITIES

SESSION TITLE: The First Judges

BIBLE PASSAGE: Judges 3:7-31

MAIN POINT: The Israelites forgot about the one true God.

KEY PASSAGE: Isaiah 33:22

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Whom does God use in His plan? God uses people in His plan.



LOW PREP

Play “Here Comes the Judge”

Choose one preschooler to be the judge. Explain to preschoolers that they may walk around the room freely, but when you call out “Here comes the judge!” they must all walk over to the judge. When the judge says, “Follow God!” preschoolers must work together to form a line behind him. Once a line is formed, select a new judge and play again.

SAY • Great job following the judge! **The Israelites forgot about the one true God.** After God’s people cried out for help, the judges rescued them and helped them obey God again. But the judges could not change the people’s hearts and make them love God. God had a plan. He sent His Son, Jesus, to change His people’s hearts and save them from sin forever.

Sing a song

Sing this song to the tune of “Muffin Man”:

“Do you know *the judges, the judges, the judges?”

Do you know *the judges?

*They helped God’s people out!”

*Sing again, substituting *Othniel*, *Ehud*, and *Shamgar*.

SAY • **The Israelites forgot about the one true God.** God allowed their enemies to attack them, and God’s



LOW PREP

people needed help. Even though they had disobeyed Him, God sent judges to help His people. The judges helped the Israelites obey God again. We sin and disobey God like the Israelites did, but God sent us the best help of all—His very own Son. Jesus changes our hearts and saves us from sin forever.

Search for Js

Hide magnetic letters in a box filled with shredded paper. Invite preschoolers to search for letters. Challenge preschoolers to find the letter *J*.

SAY • *J* is the first letter of the word *judges*. After **the Israelites forgot about the one true God**, the judges helped God’s people obey God again. But the judges could not change the people’s hearts and make them love God. *J* is also the first letter of Jesus’ name. God sent Jesus to change His people’s hearts and save them from sin forever.

- box
- shredded paper
- magnetic letters

Tip: For younger preschoolers, instead of using the entire alphabet, just hide the letters *J-U-D-G-E-S*.

Sequence scenes

Print the “Judges Sequencing Cards” on heavyweight paper and cut them apart. Assist preschoolers in putting the scenes in the correct order. Review the Bible story as preschoolers work.

SAY • **The Israelites forgot about the one true God**. God would send a judge to rescue the Israelites from their enemies and turn them back to God. This happened over and over again because the judges could not change the people’s hearts and make them love God. God had a plan. He sent His Son, Jesus, to change His people’s hearts and save them from sin forever.

- “Judges Sequencing Cards” printable
- heavyweight paper
- scissors

Tip: Consider using the “Judges Sequencing Cards” with preschoolers each week of this unit to reinforce Israelites’ cycle of apostasy. You may want to laminate the cards.

- yarn
- scissors
- assorted beads
- alphabet beads, *J* only
- clear tape

Option: Use chenille stems in place of yarn for younger preschoolers.

Make *J* bracelets

Cut lengths of yarn based on the wrist sizes of your preschoolers. Place tape on one end of the yarn to prevent unraveling. Provide an assortment of beads including beads with the letter *J* on them. Invite preschoolers to string beads on their yarn to form a bracelet. Make sure each preschooler includes at least one *J* bead on her bracelet. Tie the ends of the yarn together to secure the beads and complete the bracelet.

SAY • God sent judges to help His people. Every time a judge died, the Israelites forgot God and bad things happened. We are like the Israelites and forget about God, too. When we wear these bracelets, we can look at them and remember *J* is for *Jesus*. God sent His Son, Jesus, to change our hearts and to save us from sin forever.

Snack

Play the countdown video to signal the end of activities. Guide preschoolers to clean their areas. Take a restroom break and wash hands. Gather preschoolers for snack time. Thank God for the snack.

Before serving the snack, ask a preschooler to help you serve the snack. Remind preschoolers that **the Israelites forgot about the one true God**. The judges helped the Israelites obey God again, but the judges could not change the people's hearts and make them love God. God sent Jesus to change His people's hearts and save them from sin forever.

Transition

When a child finishes his snack, guide him to throw away any trash. He may select a book or puzzle to examine, play quietly with play dough or a favorite toy, or color the Bible story coloring page.

Offer the journal page and invite preschoolers to draw a picture of how a parent or other adult helps them. Remind preschoolers that God sent judges to help His people. Pray for the children.

SAY • God, thank You that when we don't love You and disobey You that You make a way to turn our hearts back to You. Change our hearts to love You and obey You. Thank You for sending Jesus save us and change our sinful hearts. Amen.

If parents are picking up their children at this time, tell them something that their child enjoyed doing or did well during the session. Distribute the preschool big picture cards for families.

- countdown video (optional)
- Allergy Alert download
- snack food
- paper cups and napkins

- books
- puzzles
- play dough
- Journal Page printable, 1 per child
- Bible Story Coloring Page
- crayons
- *Big Picture Cards for Families: Babies, Toddlers, and Preschool*

Journal Page

God Judges His People

Key Passage: Isaiah 33:22

Big Picture Question: Whom does God use in His plan? God uses people in His plan.

Session 1: The First Judges
Judges 3:7-31
The Israelites forgot about the one true God.

Session 2: Deborah and Barak
Judges 4-5
God sent judges to help His people.

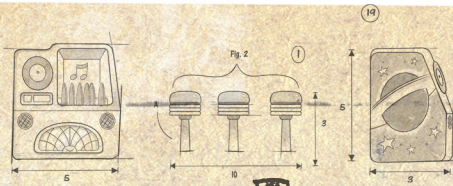
Session 3: Gideon
Judges 6-8
God gave Gideon victory over his enemies.

Session 4: Samson
Judges 13-16
God made Samson strong.

Session 5: Ruth and Boaz
Ruth 1-4
God gave Ruth a family.

Session 6: Eli and Boy Samuel
1 Samuel 1-3
God spoke to Samuel.

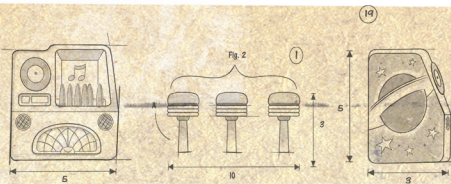




**The LORD is our
judge, the LORD is
our lawgiver,
the LORD is our
king; it is he who
will save us.**

Isaiah 33:22

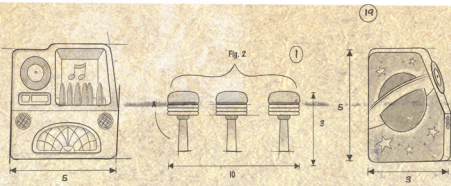




The LORD is our
judge, the LORD is
our lawgiver, the
LORD is our king;
he will save us.

Isaiah 33:22

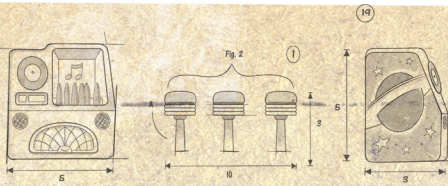




For the LORD is our
Judge, the LORD is
our lawgiver, the
LORD is our king.
He will save us.

Isaiah 33:22





The LORD is our
judge; the LORD
is our lawgiver;
the LORD is our
king; he will
save us.

Isaiah 33:22



The Israelites
forgot about the
one true God.





What Is Different?

INSTRUCTIONS: Look at the two pictures. Circle the four differences in the bottom picture.

DOWNLOAD THE
TGP FAMILY APP



KEY PASSAGE: Isaiah 33:22

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

- Whom does God use in His plan? God uses people in His plan.

BIBLE STORY:

THE FIRST JUDGES

- The Israelites began to disobey God after Joshua died.
- God let Israel's enemies defeat them and rule over them.
- God sent a judge when the Israelites cried out to Him for help.
- Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar were the first judges.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS:

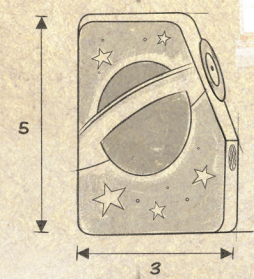
- What sins do you do over and over again? Ask God for help.
- Who are the leaders has God put in our lives? How can we follow them?

FAMILY ACTIVITY:

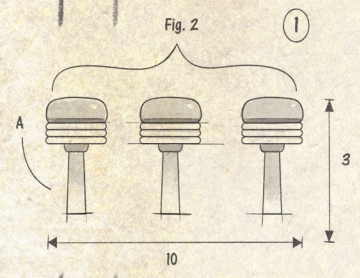
- Play a game of "Follow-the-Leader" through your neighborhood.
- Go further: Write, decorate, and send thank-you cards to leaders whom God has placed in your life. Consider including a gift card as well.

Preschool Activity Pages
Unit 9, Session 1

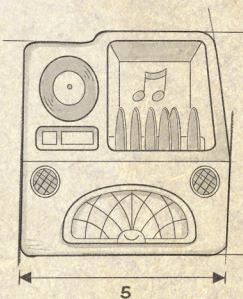
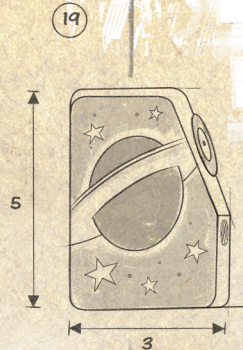
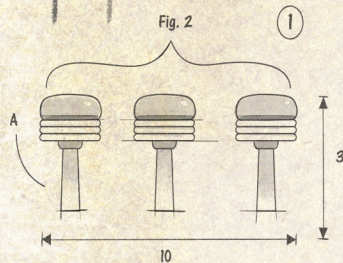




Whom does God use in His plan?

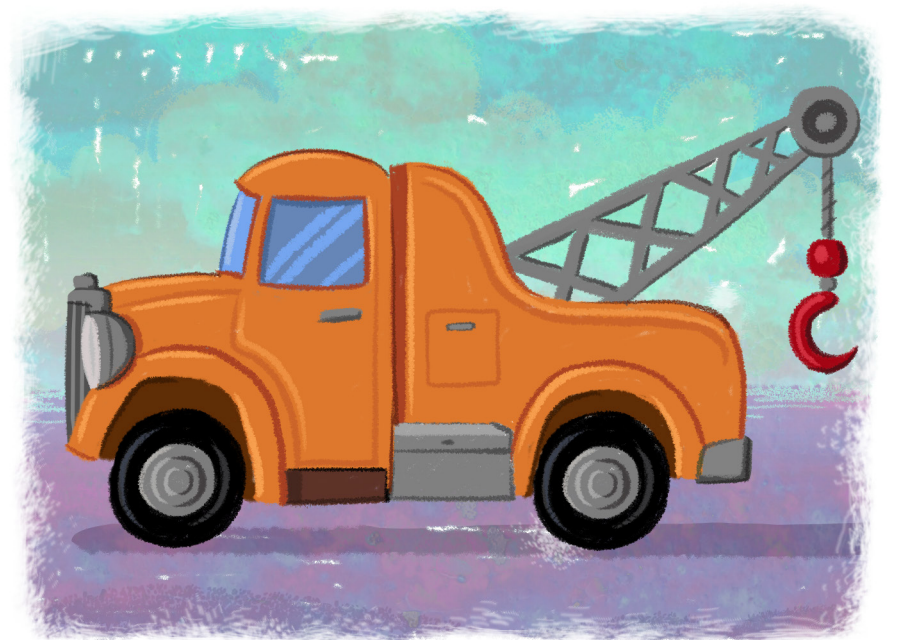
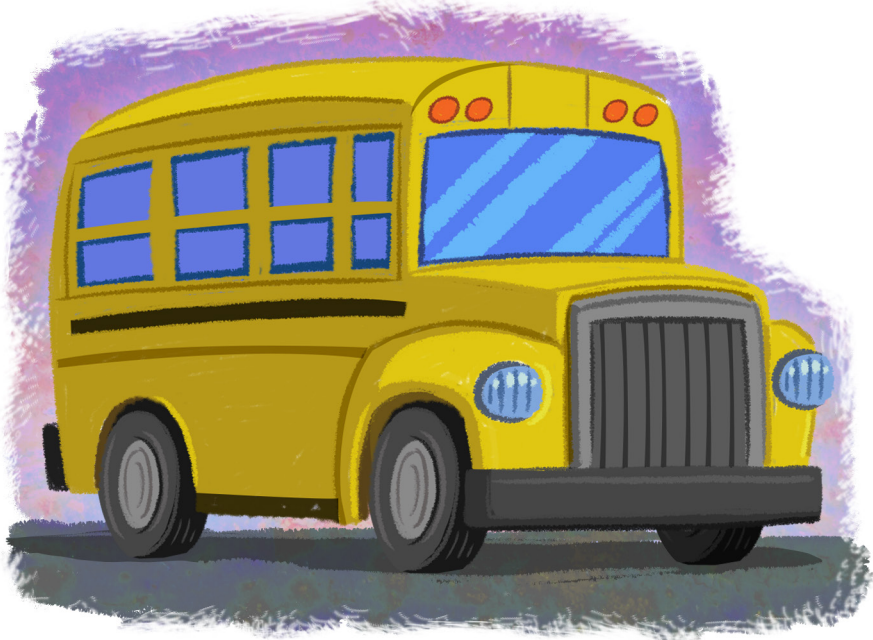
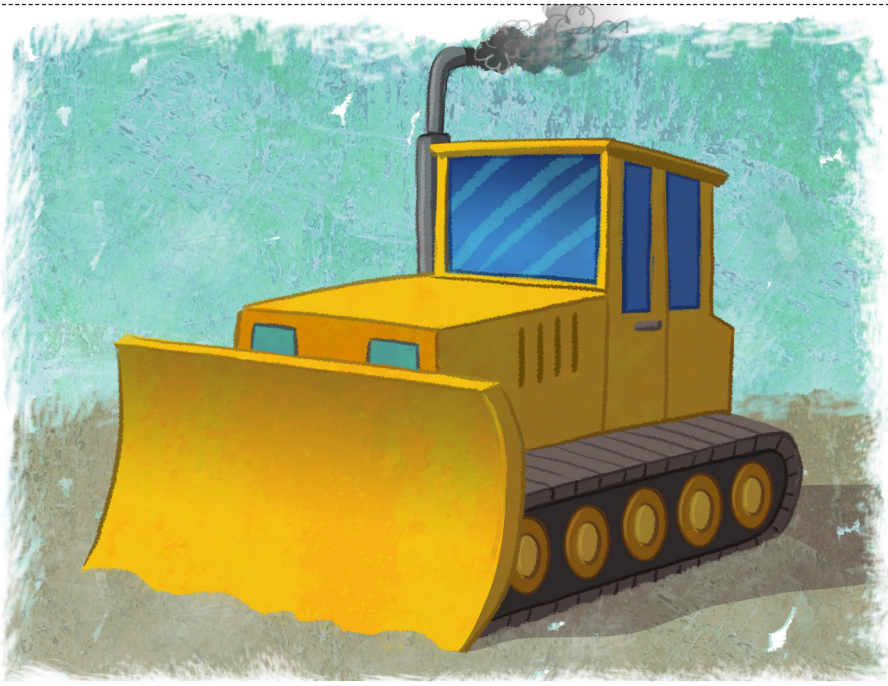


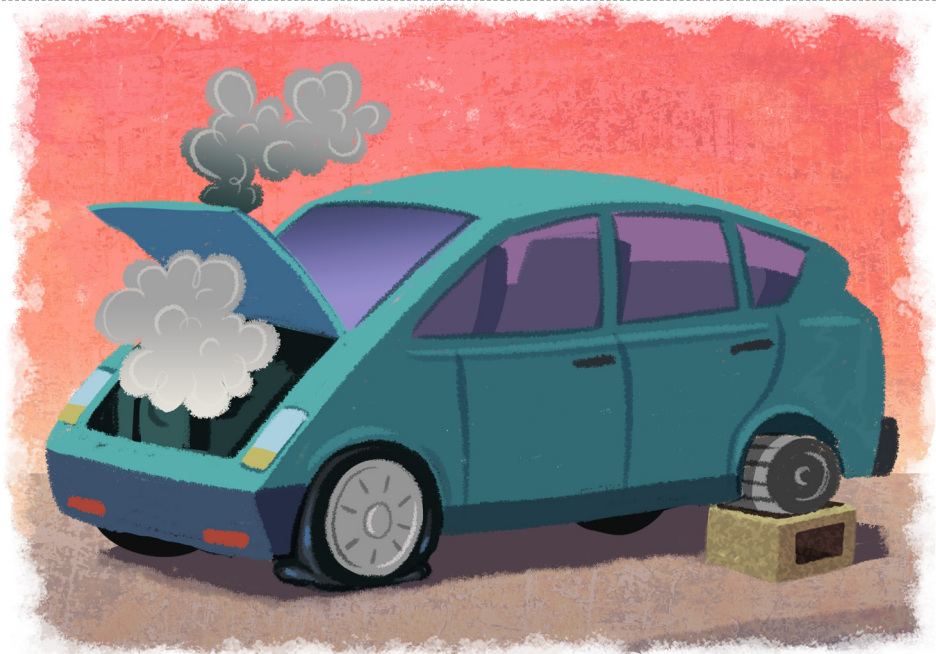
Whom does God use in His plan?



God uses people
in His plan.









God's people forgot about God.



God let Israel's enemies defeat them.



God's people cried out to Him for help.



God sent a judge to help His people.



God gave His people peace.