



Leader tip: With the Mandalorian reference in the message, the “Mandolin, DeLorean, or Mandalorian” is a great game to use with the lesson!

<https://www.downloadyouthministry.com/p/mandolin%2C-delorean%2C-or-mandalorian/games-mandolingame.html>

[Slide 1] We are beginning a three-week series on the book of Judges! I must be honest; this is one of the weirdest books of the Bible. It's amazing! In it you'll find war, bad guys, good guys, strong men, powerful women, people taking tent pegs to the skull, and a guy pooping his pants. The book opens with Joshua's death, but still centuries before Israel would have a king. The people were supposed to continue conquering the Promised Land, but instead, they stopped and began living with the Canaanites – in spite of God's command not to do so. Some have said it was Israel's Wild West. Throughout the book, a common theme gets repeated, even as the last verse:

[Slide 2] *Judges 21:25 (NLT) In those days Israel had no king; all the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes.*

Judges is also a challenging book for many because there is so much violence in it; is this what God wanted? Amid all this lawlessness, a handful of judges would rise up and lead Israel for periods of time, but the same downward spiral repeats throughout the book: the Israelites turned away from God, they were punished by outsiders, God called a judge to lead them to repentance and freedom, and then it happened again but even worse.

[Slide 3] Let me set the stage a bit<sup>1</sup>:

- We don't know who wrote Judges!
- Jewish tradition claims Samuel was the author, but it also claims he wrote the books of Samuel, most of which is set after his death, so that doesn't really give a lot of confidence.
- It was most likely written around 1000BC, but we're not entirely sure. If so, that means the book of Judges is around 3000 years old.

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<sup>1</sup> NIV Archaeological Study Bible (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 1088.

- A major theme is God's faithfulness; despite the Israelites breaking the covenant over and over, God stayed faithful to them.

Today we're looking at the story of Ehud in Judges 3. He's kind of like the Lone Ranger in this ancient Israelite Wild West. You guys know who the Lone Ranger, is right? It was an incredibly popular TV show from 1949-1957? Let me give you a reminder:

[Slide 4, "The Lone Ranger Hi Ho Silver Away", <https://youtu.be/rZlqg0gBcYM>, length 0:26]

Confused? Let me show you a modern-day version of the Lone Ranger; someone turned something you've all seen into a Western style trailer:

[Slide 5, "The Mandalorian - Spaghetti Western Trailer (Updated!)", [https://youtu.be/IJH\\_RbnrGUs](https://youtu.be/IJH_RbnrGUs), length 2:12]

Got the vibe? Western. Lone Ranger. This is the way.

[Slide 6] *Judges 3:12-17, 19b-23, 27-30 (NLT) <sup>12</sup> Once again the Israelites did evil in the Lord's sight, and the Lord gave King Eglon of Moab control over Israel because of their evil. <sup>13</sup> Eglon enlisted the Ammonites and Amalekites as allies, and then he went out and defeated Israel, taking possession of Jericho, the city of palms. <sup>14</sup> And the Israelites served Eglon of Moab for eighteen years.*

We're only on chapter three and already this was becoming a downward spiral. The author wrote "once again" because this had already happened several times in Judges already! While this passage made fun of Eglon, the reality is that he was a scary and powerful enough guy that he had conquered the Israelites and kept them enslaved for 18 years. Is anyone here 18 years old? Imagine your entire lifetime being enslaved. Even the baby years you can't remember.

[Slide 7] *<sup>15</sup> But when the people of Israel cried out to the Lord for help, the Lord again raised up a rescuer to save them. His name was Ehud son of Gera, a left-handed man of the tribe of Benjamin. The Israelites sent Ehud to deliver their tribute money to King Eglon of Moab. <sup>16</sup> So Ehud made a double-edged dagger that was about a foot long, and he strapped it to his right thigh, keeping it hidden under his clothing. <sup>17</sup> He brought the tribute money to Eglon, who was very fat.*

There's something interesting going on here with the names. Ehud's name means "loner."<sup>2</sup> As in, he was literally the original Lone Ranger. Very cool.

Ehud was introduced as a trickster, kind of a Loki in the biblical cinematic universe. One of the clues is that it was pointed out that he was a left-handed Benjamite. What's the big deal? "Benjamite" means "a son of the right hand."<sup>3</sup> Crazy. Being a leftie was considered peculiar and unnatural<sup>4</sup> back in the day – some people even thought of it as a disability<sup>5</sup> - but ends up a strength in this story.

Eglon's name was also a doozy; it loosely translates "little fat bull."<sup>6</sup> So his name was "fat cow," and the Bible still thought it was important to clarify that he was "very fat." If Eglon ever got to read this, I think he would have been like, "What the heck, people?"

There's a hint at why Ehud being left-handed plays a part in this story; when he hides his dagger, it's on the opposite leg of what most people would do – which means when he's searched, the soldiers might not find it.

Now back to the story: Ehud paid the tribute and then made like he was leaving, but then turned back and:

[Slide 8] <sup>19b</sup> He came to Eglon and said, "I have a secret message for you." So the king commanded his servants, "Be quiet!" and he sent them all out of the room.

I mean, who doesn't love a good secret?

<sup>20</sup> Ehud walked over to Eglon, who was sitting alone in a cool upstairs room. And Ehud said, "I have a message from God for you!" As King Eglon rose from his seat,

[Slide 9] <sup>21</sup> Ehud reached with his left hand, pulled out the dagger strapped to his right thigh, and plunged it into the king's belly. <sup>22</sup> The dagger went so deep that the handle disappeared beneath the king's fat. So Ehud did not

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<sup>2</sup> J. Clinton McCann, *Judges* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), Kindle location 1055.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, Kindle location 1067.

<sup>4</sup> K. Lawson Younger, JR, *The NIV Application Commentary: Judges/Ruth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2002) 128.

<sup>5</sup> McCann, *Judges*, Kindle location 1081.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, Kindle location 1055.

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