



GIDEON THE JUDGE

JUDGES 6-7

GOAL

▶ **To help children understand how strong God is, especially when they are weak.**

CHARACTERS

▶ **Gideon:** God chose this unlikely and skeptical man to defeat the huge armies of Midian.

Angel: God sent an angel to summon Gideon for the task.

Israelite Army: Gideon's forces started out thousands-strong, but shrunk to a paltry 300 men by the time God was selecting the best soldiers for the task.

MEMORY VERSE

▶ **2 Corinthians 12:10:** When I am weak, then I am strong.

OVERVIEW

▶ **Read Judges 6-7:** Israel was crushed under the military thumb of Midian. God chose an unlikely and unwilling man, Gideon, to raise an army and throw off Israel's oppressors. Gideon, unsure of himself and scared to take on God's task, asked God to show him signs that God really wanted him to take on the Midianites. God gave him a number of signs to assure him that he was the right man for the job and that God would be with him. An army of 33,000 men assembled to fight the Midianites with Gideon. God scaled back his army from 33,000 to 300 to show that God is more powerful than Gideon or the Israelites ever fathomed.



SUGGESTIONS

Gideon wasn't a warrior or a leader, so he was sure God must have chosen the wrong man for this great task.

1. God sees Gideon's potential. We are introduced to Gideon when an angel of the Lord greets him as a "mighty man of valor." Gideon was just a regular guy, something he was quick to point out to God after He chose him to take on the Midianites. God knew that Gideon was capable of this task, even if Gideon doubted himself.

2. God provides assurance. Gideon asked God for a sign three times. Each time, God responded exactly as Gideon requested. God recognized Gideon's fear before he and his army of 300 men were to attack the Midianite camp. God gave him an opportunity to go down to the camp and spy on the enemy. While there, God gave Gideon yet another sign that God would give him the victory.

3. God's strength is sufficient. Gideon wasn't a strong warrior who had been trained how to fight. If God needed a warrior, He would have chosen one; God wanted Gideon to do this for Him. God explained everything Gideon needed to know moments after He called him to this task "But I will be with you, and you shall strike the Midianites as one man." Gideon would not need to rely on his own strength, but on the Lord's. The Lord's strength would make the work of defeating the entire Midianite camp as easy as defeating a single man.

PRE-LESSON ACTIVITY

Catch the Midianites

Divide the class into two teams: the Israelites and the Midianites. The Israelite team attempts to tag the Midianite team. When all the members of one team are tagged, switch roles.



**MEMORY
VERSE
MEANING**

- ▶ **2 Corinthians 12:10:** Highlighting personal weakness is one way of drawing attention to God's strength. Another way is to highlight God's strength.

**POST-LESSON
ACTIVITY**

- ▶ **Gideon's Torches | Supplies:** brown construction paper; yellow, orange, and red tissue paper; and tape.

Roll the construction paper into cone shapes, and tape the paper at the seam. Stuff the colored tissue paper into the opening to create the torch's flame.

**TAKE
HOME**

- ▶ God uses ordinary people, like Gideon and us, every day to do extraordinary things.

God sees our full potential. God created each of us for a purpose. He has given each of us skills and talents, and He knows how we should use them. When we use our God-given abilities and are backed by God's power, we will find success in any endeavor to which we are called.



QUESTION & ANSWER

SLIDE 1



Q1a: How long had Israel endured hardships under the Midianites?

A1: Israel was oppressed for seven years.

Q1b: If your smartphone or computer suddenly died, how would you recover all your photos?

TN: This is why it's important to backup all important information on all of our devices. Computers and electronic devices frequently break, and without a recent backup, we will have lost information. There are many circumstances in life for which having a backup plan is a very good idea, but God is not one of them. God absolutely cannot fail. Many of the Israelites lived in areas surrounded by foreigners who worshiped foreign gods. Often, the Israelites prayed to all of them, figuring one of them will hear their prayers. It was a poorly advised backup plan that disrespected God and was in violation of God's law.

SLIDE 2



Q2a: What did God tell Gideon to do?

A2: God told Gideon to go deliver Israel from the Midianites.

Q2b: Would you wash a dog in the middle of the living room?

TN: No, it would make a huge mess that we'd have to clean up. Also, it's much easier to wash a dog in a bathtub or outside where there is running water and soapy water won't cause any damage. When the angel of the Lord appears to Gideon, he is beating out wheat in a winepress, which is essentially a large hole in the ground used to squish grapes and capture the juice for winemaking. Beating out or threshing wheat is usually done in a large, open space where the wind can blow away the unwanted part of the wheat. Threshing wheat in a winepress would be a long and tedious job, but the concealment Gideon found in the winepress would keep him and his wheat safe from the Midianites. He chose this location not out of convenience, but fear.



QUESTION & ANSWER

SLIDE 3



Q3a: How did God assure Gideon that he could deliver Israel from the Midianites.

A3: God told Gideon that He would be with him and give him strength.

Q3b: At a professional football game, the head coach comes into the stands and tells you to play quarterback. What do you do?

TN: Panic is probably the first thing that comes to mind for most of us. Even if we know all the rules and are familiar with how to call plays, this is an experience few would be ready to face. We came to be spectators, not players! We aren't professional football players, how can we play against a whole team of them? This is exactly how Gideon felt. He wasn't a warrior or a leader, how on earth would he lead an entire army in battle against the Midianites?! God answered this question: He would be with Gideon and He would give him the strength.

SLIDE 4



Q4a: What did Gideon bring to the angel of the Lord?

A4: Gideon brought meat, broth, and unleavened cakes.

Q4b: Does God give us signs?

TN: We probably won't witness anything as spectacular as an angel setting fire to an offering with heavenly flame, but yes, God gives us signs. When we pray and ask for wisdom or for confirmation, often we will see something that sets our hearts at peace. It is important that we are able to distinguish whether it is a sign or if we are reading into something that isn't really there. This can be tricky. Signs are sort of the icing on the cake. Looking to Scripture, appealing to God for wisdom, and listening for the Holy Spirit's guidance is a sure bet.



QUESTION & ANSWER

SLIDE 5



Q5a: What was the first task God gave to Gideon?

A5: God told Gideon to break down the altar of Baal and to cut down the Asherah next to it.

Q5b: Do you think it is harder to stand up for what is right to a close friend or a bully?

TN: Let students answer. Sometimes it is harder to call out someone close to us for doing something wrong than it is with someone we don't like or a bully. When Gideon tore down the altar of Baal and cut down the Asherah that his father built, he was making a statement to his family and everyone else who worshiped these false gods. Gideon was so nervous about doing this, he did it at night when no one would see him. This was the first task God called Gideon to do for Him, and while it didn't take as much courage or convincing as going to war with the Midianites, it did require a measure of courage.

SLIDE 6



Q6a: What sign did Gideon ask God to provide?

A6: Gideon asked that a fleece laid out overnight would be wet with dew, but not the ground around it.

Q6b: If God asked you to do something terrifying, what kind of convincing and reassuring would you need?

TN: Whether it's public speaking, sitting in a small enclosed area, or scuba diving, we all have something we can't imagine ever wanting to do. That is exactly the situation Gideon found himself in when God called him to deliver the Israelites from the Midianites. Gideon asked God if He was sure He was asking the right guy, and even after God told him that He would be with him and give him strength, Gideon asked for a sign—and then two more signs, just to be absolutely sure. It finally clicks that if God has the power to accomplish all of the signs that he asked for, He surely is capable of holding up His end of the bargain: being with him, providing him with strength, and giving the enemy into his hand.



QUESTION & ANSWER

SLIDE 7



Q7a: How many warriors were originally in Gideon's army?

A7: There were 33,000 warriors at first.

Q7b: How would you feel if your sibling took all the credit for the hard work you both did cleaning the house?

TN: We'd probably be pretty upset. No one likes to not get credit for a job well-done. So when an army of 33,000 warriors shows up to help in Gideon's efforts to rid Israel of the Midianites, God saw that the victory could easily be attributed to the strength and valor of the men on the field, when in fact, God won the battle.

SLIDE 8



Q8a: How did God tell Gideon to further reduce the number of warriors?

A8: The men who bent down to drink out of the stream like dogs were to go home.

Q8b: Why do you think God wanted it to be so clear that He was responsible for the victory of the Midianites?

TN: It can be easy to read Bible stories like this and wonder if God might not be a bit of glory hog. But truthfully, all the glory, in every single situation, belongs to God, and He is often not recognized for His work. In this situation, it was important that Gideon not receive the credit for this victory because the people of Israel needed to see that God still loved them and still fought for them. They had been living in horrible conditions for seven years as punishment for their disobedience and sin. The battle that defeated their oppressors needed to be a victory obviously from God.



QUESTION & ANSWER

SLIDE 9



Q9a: What did Gideon hear when he went down to the Midianite camp?

A9: Gideon heard soldiers discussing a dream that pointed to Gideon's victory.

Q9b: How many grains of sand do you think are on a beach?

TN: Let students guess. It's an impossible thing to know how many grains of sand are on the beach! The Bible says that the number of camels in the Midianite camp "were without number, as the sand that is on the seashore in abundance." It's safe to say that the majority of those camels had riders, and if we couldn't count the number of camels, we probably couldn't count the number of warriors who rode them. Gideon had 300 warriors to their seemingly uncountable army. That's an intimidating battle to start! God knew Gideon was afraid, so He told him to go down and spy on the enemy. There, Gideon received additional reassurance from the Lord that, despite their numbers, the Midianites would be defeated that night by Gideon's 300 men.

SLIDE 10



Q10a: What did Gideon give to each soldier?

A10: Gideon gave each warrior a trumpet, one torch, and one jar to hide the torch.

Q10b: What would you do if someone came into your room while you were sleeping and blew a trumpet?

TN: Well, we'd definitely wake up and wonder what was going on! It would be confusing to say the least, and that was what Gideon and his 300 warriors were hoping would happen at the start of their battle.



QUESTION & ANSWER

SLIDE 11



Q11a: What did the Midianites do when Gideon and his army launched their attack?

A11: They grabbed their weapons and started running and fighting anyone they encountered.

Q11b: If you spun around in a circle for a minute, how long would it take you to regain your balance?

TN: We'd probably stop being dizzy a few seconds after we stopped spinning around. At the beginning of the battle, Gideon and his men had an advantage over the Midianite camp because they were confused and maybe a little bit groggy. After a while, that confusion would have worn off, and they would have started to realize that there really weren't that many attackers with torches and trumpets. This is when the real advantage Gideon had came into play. God caused the Midianites to be confused far longer than would have been natural in such a situation. God gave Gideon and his 300 warriors the victory over an enormous foe that night!



**MEMORY
VERSE**

▷ **2 Corinthians 12:10:** When I am weak, then I am strong.

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BIG IDEA

▷ If God calls us to something, He will equip us to be successful.

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**CLOSING
PRAYER**

▷ Dear Lord, even though we are weak, we know You are strong. Thank You for being our strength. Help us to find courage to answer Your call like Gideon did. We ask these things in Jesus' name, Amen.



LESSON TRANSCRIPT

SLIDE 1



Israel continued to disobey God. They had fallen into idol worship and neglected God's commandment to worship Him and Him alone. For this, God's punishment was heavy on Israel, and He gave them over into the hands of the Midianites. For seven years, Israel suffered terrible hardships under the oppression of the Midianites, who, along with the Amalekites and people from the East, plundered Israel's livestock and produce, leaving none for Israel's own use. The people complained to God, and He sent them a prophet to explain that this hardship was upon them because of their sin and disobedience.

SLIDE 2



During that time, there was a young man named Gideon. One day, while he was beating out wheat in a winepress to hide it from the Midianites, an angel of the Lord appeared to him and said, "The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor." Gideon was not feeling very brave or very happy. "If the Lord is with us, then why do we suffer so much, and why are we being oppressed by the Midianites?" Gideon asked. The Lord then looked at Gideon and said, "Go and deliver Israel from the hands of the Midianites!"



LESSON TRANSCRIPT

SLIDE 3



Gideon was in shock. How would he, a young man from the weakest clan of the tribe of Manasseh, be able to deliver Israel from the Midianites? The Lord replied by assuring Gideon that He would be with him. God was going to give him the strength to fight the Midianites, and He would give them victory. Gideon was in disbelief. If this indeed was true, he needed to make sure that God was going to pull through. He then proceeded to ask the angel of the Lord for a sign. "If you will protect me and help me, then give me a sign, and I will believe you," Gideon said. Gideon then rushed to his house to prepare a food offering to God.

SLIDE 4



When Gideon returned to the tree where the angel of the Lord was waiting, he brought with him meat, broth, and unleavened cakes. The angel told him to put the meat and cakes on a rock and pour the broth over them. The angel then touched the food with his staff. Immediately, fire sprung up and consumed the entire food offering. At that moment, the angel of the Lord vanished from Gideon's sight. God had just given Gideon a mighty sign.



LESSON TRANSCRIPT

SLIDE 5



Gideon was filled with awe and wonder. That night, God continued to work in Gideon's heart, preparing him for the big task ahead. He told Gideon to break down the altar of Baal that his father built and cut down the Asherah next to it. These false gods were what got Israel in trouble. Israel was still foolish enough to believe that a wooden statue could actually help them, instead of relying on the one true God. As God had commanded, Gideon destroyed the altar of Baal and cut down the Asherah. In their place, Gideon built an altar to God and sacrificed a young bull.

SLIDE 6



Gideon was still unsure about leading an army to face the Midianites, so he asked God for another sign. This time, he was going to lay a wool fleece outside over night. If there was dew on the fleece and none on the dry ground, he would be sure that God was with him. The next morning, Gideon found that the fleece was wet, but the ground around it and everywhere else was dry. God listened to Gideon's request and gave him a sign. But poor Gideon was still scared and needed more reassurance. Gideon then asked for a reversal of the first sign. This time, he asked God to make the ground wet, but keep the fleece dry. The next morning, Gideon found that the ground was wet and the fleece was dry. This time, Gideon knew that God was really going to use him to save Israel from the Midianites.



LESSON TRANSCRIPT

SLIDE 7



The next morning, Gideon and thousands of men assembled together, waiting on instructions from the Lord. God told Gideon that there were simply too many warriors. If they won, they would surely take credit for themselves and not give it to God. God told Gideon to let all the men who were scared to go home. After Gideon made this offer, 22,000 of the 33,000 warriors walked away. There were only 10,000 left, but God said that was still too many.

SLIDE 8



Gideon continued to trust God, and he took the remaining warriors to a stream of water as God had told him. God told Gideon that all of the men who bent down to drink from the stream like dogs should go home as well. Those who scooped up the water in their hands could stay. Out of the 10,000 remaining, only 300 men remained. On God's orders, Gideon sent thousands of capable warriors home, leaving Gideon with an army of 300 men. God really wanted to show Gideon that victory comes from the mighty power of God and not by the strength of men.



LESSON TRANSCRIPT

SLIDE 9



That night, Gideon and his little army looked down at the huge Midianite camp. Gideon trusted God, but the Midianites were so many. God told Gideon to go down to their camp and spy on them. While spying on the Midianite camp, Gideon overheard a conversation between two soldiers. One soldier told the other about a dream he had, and the other interpreted it to mean that Gideon and the Israelites would defeat the Midianites. Once again, the Lord had strengthened Gideon's heart, and he was finally ready for battle.

SLIDE 10



With his tiny army, Gideon launched the plan of attack. He divided the army into three groups and gave every warrior one trumpet, one torch, and a jar to hide the torch. In the dark of night, they would surround the Midianite army's camp. When Gideon blew his trumpet, it would be a sign for everyone else to blow theirs. Then they would break their jars and shout, "For the Lord and for Gideon!"



LESSON TRANSCRIPT

SLIDE 11



They carried out the plan exactly. When Gideon gave the signal, the 300 men blew on their trumpets and shattered their clay jars. The sound of shattering pottery echoed off the mountains, filling the valley with the noise. The Midianites were awake, confused, and scared. They looked up at the flickering torches all around them and heard the crashing sound of the breaking jars, the piercing blasts of the trumpets, and the hoarse shouts of the men. They did not know what to do. Confused, the Midianites grabbed their weapons and started running and fighting! The Lord confused the Midianites so much that they started fighting amongst themselves, thinking they were battling Israel. It was a sight to behold. The confusion spread so rapidly that the Midianites ran away. Gideon and his army of 300 men pursued them, and it was not long before they defeated the mighty Midianites. That day, God delivered the Midianites into the hands of Gideon. God's mighty power once again proved that He was the one true God, and He wanted to bless and protect His people. All Israel had to do was to put their trust in God and serve Him alone.