

A Sword of the Lord and of Gideon

Overview



Materials You'll Need

- empty paper towel tubes
- markers and stickers
- red, yellow or orange tissue paper
- yarn
- scissors



Scriptures

Judges 6-7

Bible Truth Objective(s)

God gives us courage when we trust in Him

Behavioral Objective(s)

To identify ways we can be brave; to do one brave thing this week to serve God

Memory Verse

"Surely I will be with you." (Jdg 6:16)



Bible Knowledge

The Midianites

The Midianites were a desert people descended from Abraham's second wife, Keturah (Gen 25:1, 2). Because of the Israelites' disobedience, God allowed them to oppress His people. During the time of Gideon, the Midianites would rob the Israelites of their crops and livestock. Forced to hide in dens and caves, the Israelites experienced a truly impoverished existence.

Gideon

Gideon was the fifth judge who ruled Israel during a span of several centuries. He was also called Jerubbaal and was the son of Joash of the tribe of Manasseh.

When the Angel of the Lord came and sat under the terebinth tree, Gideon was threshing wheat in the winepress. Threshing the wheat was the process of separating the grains of wheat from the useless outer shell, called chaff. Threshing was normally done in a large area, often on a hill, where the wind could blow away the lighter chaff

when the farmer tossed the beaten wheat into the air. But Gideon was forced to thresh his wheat in a winepress, a pit that was probably hidden from view, so that the Midianites would not suspect a farmer's crops there.

After God called Gideon to be Israel's deliverer, He immediately asked him to tear down the altar of Baal, an act that would test Gideon's faith and commitment. Although Gideon did as God asked, he did so in the night, reflecting his fear. His lack of faith and trust in God is further revealed when he asked God to do what seemed to be impossible with the fleece. Yet, God met his conditions to demonstrate that God's will is always done.

Although Gideon judged Israel for forty years (6:11-8:35) and was considered a hero of faith (Heb 11:32), his life ended with some unfortunate events. He punished Succoth and Penuel for not aiding in the war against the Midianite kings (Jdg 8:1-17). His aggression here is a sharp contrast to his fearfulness when he was first called by God. Although he declined the call to be king over Israel, he did ask for gold from the people and made an ephod which "became a snare to Gideon and to his house" (Jdg 8:24-27). After his death, the people of Israel once again forgot about God (Jdg 8:33).



Understanding Your Students

Many of your students want to please God by doing what is right, but sometimes they may be confused between right and wrong. To help your students distinguish right from wrong, explain that we can know what is right by knowing God.

God is perfect and always right, so everything that is good matches what God is like. Whenever we do loving and kind things, we know that these actions are good, because God is full of love and kindness. When we do things that hurt ourselves or others, we will know that these things are wrong by comparing them to what Jesus Christ would or wouldn't do.

Let your students know that the best way for them to learn right from wrong is by reading God's words, the Bible. Tell them that this is the rule book for how Christians should live their lives. It's important that your students really understand the Ten Commandments and know what they actually mean. Also, when sharing stories about the Bible, discuss the wrong actions as well as the right actions of the characters in the Bible. Take the time to explore alternatives that certain characters who made wrong decisions could have taken instead. By involving your students in decision-making situations early on, they can begin to learn how to tell right from wrong. Presenting them with real-life dilemmas can help them know what to do in different situations.



Vocabulary

Baal

a false idol some people worshiped, usually made into a statue

Sacrifice

to give up something that is important to you

False

not real, not true

Sign

something special that happens to show a person what he should do



Before You Teach

With only three hundred men ready to fight, it was understandable why Gideon was afraid to fight. The Bible records that "the Midianites and the Amalekites, all the people of the East, were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts, and their camels were without number, as the sand by the seashore in multitude" (Jdg 7:12). This verse indicates the strength of their enemies and how small a force the Israelite army was in comparison. But it is through this that God demonstrates His great power and love. God had already given Gideon several signs

before. But because He knew Gideon was still afraid, God arranged for him to overhear the conversation between two enemy soldiers so that he would be strengthened. After Gideon heard the words of the men, he "worshiped." God showed great patience and love for Gideon as his faith wavered. Then with just trumpets, jars and torches, the three hundred men of the Israelite army were able to defeat the enemy. Even though their numbers were small, God provided all that was needed to win the battle.

It is indeed hard to understand the things of God with our human perspective. In fact, God doesn't really ask us to understand or explain it all. He only asks that we trust Him in all that we do.



Bible Story

Last week, we learned about a great miracle that God performed when Israel was fighting against five kings. Does anyone remember what that great miracle was? Yes, God gave Joshua and

the Israelites more time to fight by making the sun stand still! This week, we are going to learn about more miracles God performed for Israel.

The Midianites are Cruel to Israel

Many years after Joshua, Israel was still living in Canaan, but there was also a group of people called the Midianites who lived near them. These

people were very mean to the Israelites and tried to take everything they had. If the Israelites had sheep or cows, they would take them. And whenever the Israelites made food, they would also try to take it. Just think: how would you feel if someone kept taking away everything you had? Yes, you'd feel awful! So, as you can imagine, it was a very, very sad time for the Israelites. Many of them were so scared of the Midianites that they decided to hide in caves instead of living in tents or houses!

We know that the Israelites are God's people. But why would God let something so terrible harm His people? Does anyone have some ideas? Well, it was because the Israelites had disobeyed God. Do you know how they disobeyed God? They had decided to worship an idol. An idol is a false god and a statue that people worship. Actually, the Israelites worshiped an idol named Baal, which did not make God happy at all.

But as upset as God was, He also loved the Israelites and wanted to help them. God did not like to see the Midianites treat the Israelites so badly. At the same time, He also wanted the Israelites to believe and trust in Him again like they used to when Joshua was their leader. And you know what? God had a plan to do both of those things: to free His people from the Midianites and to help the Israelites remember Him and love Him. But in order for this plan to work, He had to pick someone who would help Him. God picked a man named Gideon.

Gideon is Called By God

Gideon was an Israelite, and he lived with his family like all the other Israelites. But he did not know that God wanted his help, so God had to find a way to tell him. One day, an Angel of the Lord came to Gideon while he was trying to make some food without letting the Midianites find out. The Angel said to Gideon, "The Lord is with you."

When Gideon heard this, he was sad and asked, "But if the Lord is really with us, why are His people so sad now? Other people keep taking our things away from us. What happened to all those miracles I heard about from a long time ago?"

The Angel responded, "Go, and you will save Israel from the Midianites. I am sending you now."

But Gideon had a hard time believing what the angel said. He looked around and thought, "Me? God wants me to save Israel? But I'm not strong at

all! In fact, I am from the smallest family in my tribe. And out of my small family, I am actually the weakest! I'm not strong. There must be some mistake!"

But God doesn't make mistakes. The Angel told Gideon again that God wanted him to save Israel and that God would help him do it. Gideon still couldn't understand just how he would save the Israelites, but he decided to trust God.

Afterwards, Gideon asked the Angel to wait while he prepared an offering, which is a gift to God. Once Gideon laid out his gift (some meat and bread), on a rock, the Angel touched the offering with the end of his staff and fire came out of the rock. The meat and the bread then disappeared! That's how Gideon really began to know that God had called him for a very special job.

Gideon Tears Down Baal

That same night, God asked Gideon to do something very brave but very dangerous. Many people around Gideon worshiped the idol Baal. They had a statue of him and bowed down to him as if he were a god. Since God does not like to see people worshipping something false, God told Gideon to go and tear Baal down. That means to take away the idol. God also asked Gideon to build an altar to the real God in that same place. Does anyone know what an altar is? Yes, an altar is made up of rocks and is used to offer sacrifices.

Gideon wanted to obey God, so he took ten of his servants and during the night, he did as the Lord said. The next day, the people of the town demanded that Gideon be put to death. They wanted him to be killed because he had destroyed the false god they worshiped. But Gideon's father gave a very wise and good answer. His father said, "If Baal is a real god, he can take care of himself when someone knocks him down. If he is a god, he will come back up by himself. He doesn't need your help." After the people heard that, they left Gideon alone.

Gideon Asks for Two Signs

After this, Gideon knew God wanted him to help the Israelites. But Gideon was still afraid. He needed to be extra sure that God was with him, so he asked for a special sign.

He said to God, "If you are really going to use me to save the Israelites, let the fleece (the white and fluffy fur from sheep) I put on the ground be

covered with dew, but let the ground around it be dry." The next day, everything was just as Gideon had asked. The ground was absolutely dry, but the fleece was so wet that when Gideon twisted it, he collected a whole bowl of water.

Still, Gideon wanted another sign. He wanted to be sure he was really the person to save the Israelites. This time, he asked that the fleece be dry and the ground be wet. It was kind of the opposite of what he asked before. But nothing is too hard for God. God did just what Gideon asked. The next morning, the ground was wet but the fleece was as dry as could be! So Gideon knew that God truly did want him to save the Israelites.

God Wants Only 300 Men

Many people wanted to join the army when they knew God had chosen Gideon to lead them. There were 32,000 people. That's a lot, right? Usually, we want a lot of strong people in the army to help fight the battles. But this time, God didn't want a lot of people in the army.

He said to Gideon, "The army is too large. If you use so many men, the Israelites may not think I helped deliver them from the Midianites. They will think that they did it without My help. If some of the people want to leave, let them."

Gideon did just as the Lord asked. He said to the 32,000 people, "If you are scared to be here, you can leave!" Do you want to guess how many people left? 22,000 of them decided to go home, so there were only 10,000 people in the army.

However, God said, "There are still too many. Take the people who are left to the brook to drink water and I will tell you what to do."

God told Gideon to only keep those who cupped up the water in their hands at the brook and lapped the water like a dog. Anyone who put his head down to the water and drank would be sent home.

It sounds like a strange test but this test actually shows how wise God is. In an army, you have to be very careful and watchful—even when you are drinking water, in case the enemy was around. Those who cupped the water in their hands would be able to see if an enemy was coming. But those who put their heads down would not be able to see the enemy at all! God only wanted the most careful and watchful people in His army. Can you guess how many people were left to fight the

Midianites after that? Just 300! The Midianite army probably had so many that you could not even count them!

A Trumpet, a Jar, and a Torch

God knew Gideon was afraid to attack with only 300 men, so God wanted to make Gideon feel better. During the night, God sent Gideon and his servant to the edge of the Midianites' camp to hear what they were saying. As Gideon and his servant quietly crept by some of the soldiers' tents, Gideon heard a man who just had a dream. This man was talking about his dream.

The man said to his friend, "I just had the strangest dream. I dreamed that a loaf of bread made of barley knocked over and destroyed our tent."

His friend said, "This must mean that God is going to destroy us, the Midianites, through Gideon!" When Gideon heard the men say these things, he knew that God was with him.

Immediately, Gideon went back to the Israelites' camp and told his army to get ready, even though it was night time. He gave each man a trumpet and a jar with a torch under it. Then he divided the men into three groups and they surrounded the Midianite camp. At Gideon's signal, they all blew their trumpets, broke their jars, held up their torches and shouted, "A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!"

When the trumpets sounded, the Lord caused the Midianites to run around and to fight each other with their swords! With Gideon and just 300 men, God saved Israel from the Midianites.

God Can Make Anything Happen

Even though Gideon was scared when God first called him to help the Israelites, God showed him many signs to make him understand that God would take care of everything. And with just 300 men and God's power, the Israelite army was able to make the Midianites fight each other and run off. Now the Israelites wouldn't have to be worried about their food being taken away. They could live in peace, all because God helped them.



Check For Understanding

1. **Why did the angel appear to Gideon?** (The Lord wanted him to save the Israelites.)
2. **What was the first thing God wanted Gideon to do?** (God wanted Gideon to tear down the altar of Baal.)
3. **What were the two signs that Gideon asked of God?** (Gideon wanted God to make the fleece he put on the ground wet with dew, but keep the ground dry. The other sign was the opposite: that the fleece be dry and the ground wet. God did

just as Gideon asked.)

4. **How many people did God choose to fight the Midianites?** (Three hundred men.)
5. **Why did God want such a small army to go and fight?** (He wanted the Israelites to know that God was the one who helped them win.)
6. **What did Gideon give his army to fight?** (A trumpet, and a jar with a torch under it.)
7. **What did they say when they blew their trumpets?** ("A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!")



Life Application Story

A Tough Decision

Susie couldn't wait for playtime at school today. She and her friends had finally gotten enough people to join their big freeze tag game, and now every recess would be filled with laughter, screaming and lots and lots of fun! Susie knew that nothing, absolutely nothing, would get in the way of them having a good time.

When the bell rang, Susie dashed out as fast as she could. The other kids followed, and soon enough, almost everyone was busy playing freeze tag. Susie and her best friend Lizzy decided to hide behind a tree so that Jason, the boy who was "it," wouldn't find them. But just as they ran to the large tree, Susie saw a girl sitting on its roots.

Susie knew right away who it was. Her name was Alia, and for some reason, no one in her class liked her. Susie thought that Alia always looked nice, but since no one else ever talked to her, Susie didn't either. Usually, Alia just stayed in the back of the room or in the corners of the yard, so Susie never even thought about her.

But now, Susie couldn't ignore Alia because she was sitting right there in front of her. And Alia was crying! She had her head on her knees and her long blonde braided ponytails were hanging over her

shoulders. Susie felt bad for Alia and was about to ask her what was wrong when Lizzy quickly tugged her hand.

"Come on, Susie. Let's go to that tree instead."

"But Lizzy, she's crying. Maybe she's hurt," Susie whispered back.

"No, she's not hurt. You're not hurt are you, Alia?"

Alia was still crying and pretended she didn't hear.

"See, Susie? She's not hurt or she'd say so. Come on, we need to run or else Jason's going to catch us. I don't want to be it!"

"Lizzy, she's crying!" Susie took a few steps towards Alia, but Lizzy tugged her back.

"Susie, I don't want to stay here with her. She's dirty, and that's why no one will play with her. And I don't want you to play with her either! You're MY friend and MY friends don't play with her."

Susie knew Alia heard every word because Alia began to cry so hard that her shoulders were shaking. Susie looked at her best friend who was staring at her angrily, and then she looked at Alia who was still crying with only a tree to keep her company. Susie knew what she should do. She knew what God would want her to do: to play and talk with Alia when no one else would.

But Susie also knew that she was afraid to do the right thing. Would she lose her best friend Lizzy? Would she lose all her friends? Would she never be allowed to play in the big games of freeze tag again?

"Well?" demanded Lizzy. "Aren't you coming with me?"

At that moment, Susie made her decision. She was still afraid of what would happen, but she knew she had to trust that God would take care of her.

"No, Lizzy, you go ahead. I'm going to stay here with Alia."

"Fine!" And with that, Lizzy stormed off.

Alia looked up at Susie and said, "You didn't have to do that, you know. I should be used to being alone, but sometimes it just gets too sad that I can't help but cry. Just because I fell in some mud on the first day of school, everyone thinks I'm dirty. And now, no one will play with me."

Susie sat down next to Lizzy. "It's okay. I don't think you're dirty, and I wanted to stay with you. Lizzy's nice but sometimes she doesn't understand."

"Understand?" Alia asked. "Understand what?"

"Understand that everyone deserves a friend."

"I don't even have a single one."

"Sure you do. You have at least one now. And more will come, I know. You'll see, Alia. It'll be okay."

Then Susie helped Alia get up and walked her to the playground. Some of Susie's friends stared at her but some went up to her and began to talk to Alia too. Susie's heart was pounding the whole time because she didn't know what her friends would do or say. But she did feel good because she knew she did what God wanted her to do.

Questions to Think About

1. **Susie could not wait to do what at school?** (Play freeze tag.)
2. **Who did Susie see behind a tree?** (Alia.)
3. **Why was Alia crying?** (She was sad that no one wanted to play with her.)
4. **What did Susie do and why?** (Susie stayed behind even though her best friend Lizzy didn't want her to. It was a hard decision but she knew God would want her to be a good friend to everyone.)
5. **Do you think what Susie did was hard? Why?** (Allow students to answer.)
6. **What should we do when someone new comes to our class?** (Allow students to answer.)
7. **What else can we do to show we are brave and do what God wants us to?** (Help students brainstorm ideas and pick something they can do this week; e.g. say grace in front of non-church friends, play with a new friend, etc.)



Activity 1

The Barley Bread

In today's story, the man in the Midianite camp had a dream about a loaf of barley bread and how it destroyed a tent. Look at the picture. See how many barley loaves you can find. Color them in.



Activity 2

Gideon's Mobile

God helped Gideon and the Israelites defeat the Midianites. Look at the pictures. These are things Gideon used to fight. Color the pictures and then cut them out. Punch a hole on top of each picture and hang them on a hanger to create a mobile.



Activity 3

Winning Torches

Materials:

1. empty paper towel tubes (one per student)
2. red, yellow or orange tissue paper
3. markers or stickers

Directions:

1. Provide each student with an empty paper towel tube.
2. Help the students decorate their "torches" by drawing designs or putting stickers around the paper towel tubes.
3. Stuff one opening of the tube with the colored tissue papers to create the effect of a flame.
4. Use the torch to review the story of how God helped Gideon and the Israelites win the battle.

Activity 8:1

The Barley Bread

In today's story, the man in the Midianite camp had a dream about a loaf of barley bread and how it destroyed a tent. Look at the picture.

See how many barley loaves you can find. Color them in.



Matthew Jordan



Activity 8:2

Gideon's Mobile

God helped Gideon and the Israelites defeat the Midianites. Look at the pictures. These are things Gideon used to fight. Color the pictures and then cut them out. Punch a hole on top of each picture and hang them on a hanger to create a mobile.

