

GOD CALLED GIDEON

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: JUDGES 6



God called Gideon in order to display His power and save His people.

The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

Israel did evil in the eyes of the Lord – After crossing into Canaan, the tribes of Israel were to completely destroy the Canaanite people but they failed (see Judges 1:1-33). Because the Israelites did not complete the conquest of Canaan, the native peoples' idolatry led Israel astray just as God had said it would (see Deuteronomy 7:1-5). At the beginning of Judges 6 we read that the people of Israel were still disobeying God. As the chapter continues, we can see how God used the Midianites to oppress the Israelites until they called out to Him for help.

When the Israelites did cry out for help, God, in His kindness, sent a prophet to explain to Israel why they were being oppressed by the Midianites. God demonstrated His amazing mercy towards Israel by speaking to them through the prophet even though they were disobedient.. God loved His people and was not thwarted by their sin. In time, God would send the ultimate deliverer for all mankind, His Son Jesus, but in this instance He used a man named Gideon to save the Israelites in the midst of their rebellion. [Is this accurate—what you wanted to say? I tried to piece together how Gideon fit with this devotion and I thought this might be along the lines of what you wanted to say...]

God called Gideon – At the beginning of this passage, we first read of Gideon hiding in fear of the Midianites, threshing wheat in a winepress. Gideon was not calling on God nor was he expecting a visit from God. God wanted to save His people so He appeared to Gideon in the form of an angel of the Lord. God chose Gideon, of the weakest clan in the tribe of Manasseh and the weakest man in his father's house. In other words, if one were to look for a deliverer, Gideon would not be an obvious choice., However, God desired to bring glory to Himself,not to any man, so he chose Gideon to deliver His people.

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Gideon obeyed God– Gideon asked God for a sign to help build his faith and God agreed. Gideon prepared a meal for the angel of the Lord and it was consumed by fire when the angel touched the offering. This sign convinced Gideon that it was the Lord who was speaking to him and he believed. God then called Gideon to tear down the altar of Baal and the Asherah that was beside it. He told Gideon to build an altar to the Lord and prepare a sacrifice to offer there, . He also told Gideon to offer a second bull as a burnt offering, using the wood from the Asherah as fuel. Gideon obeyed but he performed these tasks at night because he was afraid. When daybreak came, the people investigated and discovered that it was Gideon who tore down the altars. (Gideon employed servants because a seven-year bull would be far too heavy for one man to lift up on an altar. These servants likely gave his identity away.)

God used 300 to defeat Midian's thousands – God thins the number of men with Gideon to 300. God wanted to ensure the credit for the victory would be His alone. God told Gideon that He would give Midian into his hands (see verse 7:9). God put the fear of Gideon into the minds of the Midianites. With trumpets, empty jars, and torches Gideon's 300 defeated the men of Midian who in their fear and confusion started killing each other. God gave the victory to Gideon.

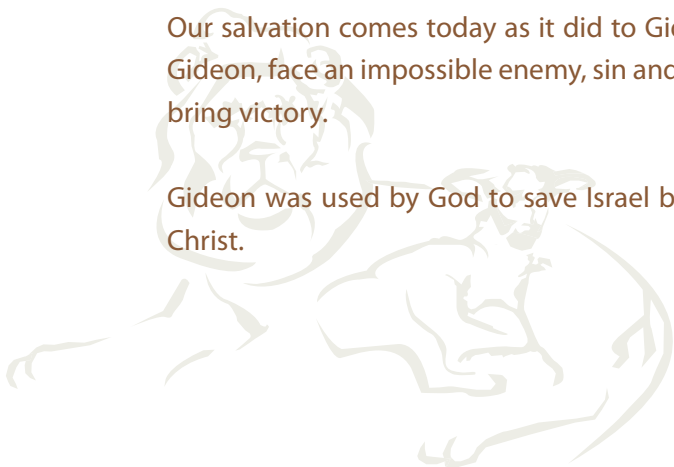
Where Is Jesus?

Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.

Gideon's faith to go into battle with so few men did not come quickly. In fact, God was patient with Gideon and built his faith with many miraculous signs. The most important of the signs was the visit by the pre-incarnate Christ (the angel of the Lord in Judges 6:11-24). In Judges 6:16, the Lord answered Gideon's concerns about being the weakest of his family, "I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites together."

Our salvation comes today as it did to Gideon then. We can only be saved if the Lord saves. We, like Gideon, face an impossible enemy, sin and its consequence, death. Only the blood of the Redeemer can bring victory.

Gideon was used by God to save Israel by conquering the Midianites. Gideon's life points forward to Christ.



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ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.

Bible Passage: Jeremiah 33:16

Connecting the passage to Christ:

It is Christ who will save Judah and take the name, "the Lord is our righteousness". In 1 Corinthians 1:30 Paul tells us that Jesus has become "our righteousness." That is why our boast is in the Lord and not in anything that we have done!

Questions for reflection:

- What is Jesus called in 1 Corinthians 1:30 that matches this prophetic passage? (Jesus is called our righteousness.)
- How does God becoming our righteousness save the people of God? (We could never be righteous on our own. The only way we could be called righteous is if we have a righteousness that is alien [not our own or from outside of us]. Jesus extends that righteousness to us by paying the penalty for our sins on the cross.)

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

BE A DOER OF THE WORD

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.



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ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?

IT IS NOT THE MAN BUT GOD WHO DELIVERS

Supplies

large sledge hammer and
a normal size hammer

Ask one well built large adult man and a young toddler to join you for class. Ask a helper to keep the toddler occupied until you call for them and have the man settle inconspicuously in your class.

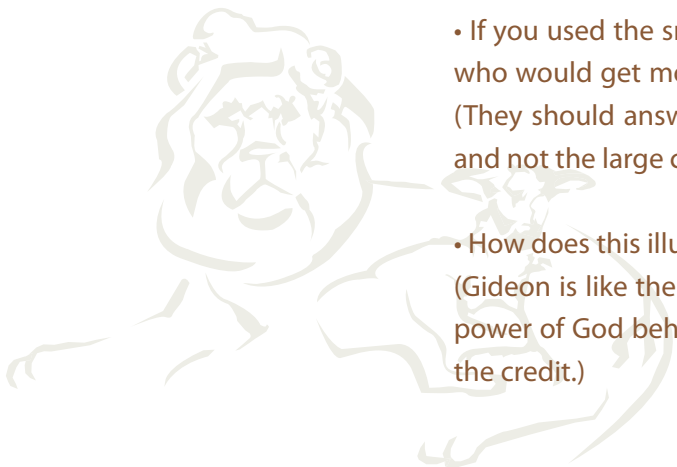
The object of this lesson is to communicate that it is not the tool but the power behind the tool that counts. We are the tools God uses to accomplish His work. It is God's grace and power at work in us that accomplishes the task.

Place both hammers up on the table. Ask the class, "Which hammer would you rather have to remove a rock in your garden at home?" Of course they will say the sledge hammer. Draw them out as to why they would pick the sledge hammer over the smaller hammer.

Now ask your two volunteers to come forward. Have the large man pick up the smaller hammer and have the toddler hold the handle of the sledge hammer, which you can stand on its head in front of him. Tell the class that this time the hammer comes with the person shown to use it. Now ask them which they would rather have.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- If you used the small hammer with Mr. _____ to break up a rock in your garden, who would get more credit for breaking up the rock, the hammer or Mr. _____? (They should answer the man would get more credit as it would be his strength and not the large capability of the tool which did the work.)
- How does this illustration help us to understand why God would choose Gideon? (Gideon is like the little hammer that can not do much on his own. But, with the power of God behind him Gideon could do anything. In the end, God would get the credit.)



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OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND

Supplies

- bag of candy coated chocolates
- bag of non-chocolate candies
- large plastic bowl
- a trash can with dirt in it (simply sweep the floor and place the refuse in the classroom trash can before your class)

Make sure you are aware of food allergies of those in your class.

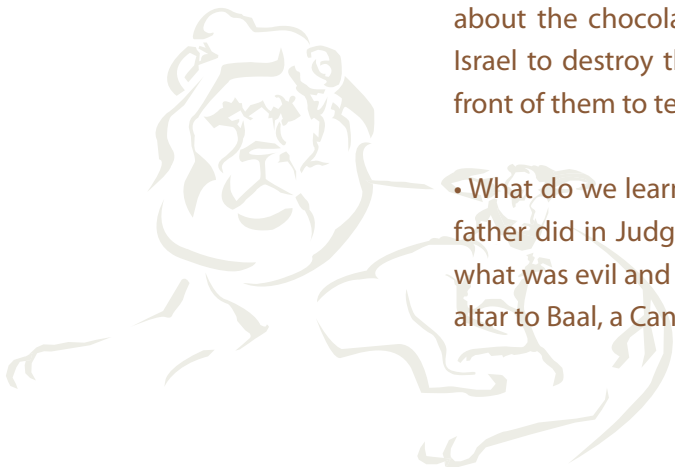
The object of this lesson is to help the children see why God would have told the Israelites to destroy the Canaanites and all their idols.

Tell the children that they can not eat any chocolate in your class. Ask them if any of them have any chocolate with them. Then go around the room and place three or four chocolates on each child's desk or hand it to them to hold. Draw them out as to how much more they are tempted to disobey when the chocolate is right in front of them. Then increase the temptation by making comments to entice them to the chocolate. Then ask them again if any of them want to eat the chocolate. Go on to read the story for today. When you are finished, ask them how many of them are even more tempted than before.

Finally take the trash can around and have each of them throw away the candy. Then, in front of them, place your foot inside the trash can to pack it down. (You might even blow your nose in a tissue and throw that on top of the candy in the trash can.)

Then ask the class the following questions:

- How was the temptation to eat the chocolate candy lessened when it was thrown in the trashcan? (They should say it was greatly lessened. Then pass out the non-chocolate candy and give permission to eat it.)
- How is this illustration like God's call for Israel to completely destroy the Canaanites and other peoples of Canaan and their gods? Read Deuteronomy 7:1-5 to the class. (The children should compare the temptation to disobey the teachers' instructions about the chocolate with Israel's temptation to follow other gods. God wanted Israel to destroy the peoples and gods of Canaan so they would not be right in front of them to tempt them.)
- What do we learn from our story today about what Israel did and what Gideon's father did in Judges 6:1 and Judges 6:25? (We learn that the people of Israel did what was evil and we see an example of it in the life of Gideon's father who had an altar to Baal, a Canaanite god.)



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NAME THE GODS OF OUR LIVES

Supplies

white board and marker

The object is for the children to be able to recognize the idols of their own lives.

Tell the children that an idol is anything we love more than God or worship instead of God. Worship can be religious like bowing down or praying but worship can also be demonstrated by the amount of thought we give something, the amount of attention we give something, or how upset we get when we do not get something.

Ask the children to identify the idols of their lives or possible idols in the lives of others their ages.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- What are the things you can love more than God? (Record their answers.)
- What can be more important to you than God? (Ask them to think of things they chose to spend time doing that may keep them from doing things with God (like pray, worship, and read their Bibles.)
- What things make you upset when you can't have them? (Possible answers – not able to stay up late, spend time with certain friends, or play outside longer, can be examples of a child who loves control too much. Not able to eat a bunch of candy, sleep in on weekends, or get out of chores, can be examples of a love of comfort. Not being able to wear the clothes you want, go to the parties you want, or talk with the friends you want, can be examples of love of reputation. We can live for control, comfort, and reputation instead of living for God. That is idolatry.)



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PRAYER

Pick several children to pray based on the day's scripture passages.

IN CLASS PROJECT

The first and second grade children can use the preschool coloring sheet and questions. Have the older children form groups, make an alter to Baal and an Asherah pole out of modeling clay and then have them act out the part of Gideon smashing it down.



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FOR OLDER GRADES

Read Deuteronomy 7:1-5 and compare it with Judges 1:27-33. Then read Judges 2:11-15 and answer the following questions.

- What was the warning that God gave Israel? (If they do not destroy the people of Canaan they will be tempted by the idolatry of the Canaanites.)
- What happened to Israel when they did not annihilate the Canaanites? (They ended up doing exactly what God said they would do and worshipped the Canaanites' false gods.)
- Why was it mercy that God raised up Gideon? (God should have destroyed the Israelites for their rampant idolatry. God destroyed Achan and his whole family for stealing the gold but here, even though Gideon's own father had an alter to Baal, God not only spared Gideon, He used Gideon to deliver Israel from the Midianites.)
- What can we learn from God's favor towards Israel to guide our lives? (If we do not follow God's Word but serve other gods. In the Bible, it is clear that those who know Christ are either for or against Him. If we do not worship Christ, we worship other gods. Though we are not tempted by Baal worship, we do worship money, position, power, sports figures, comfort, prosperity, and many other worldly pursuits that take the place of God in our hearts.)

A LITTLE BIT MORE

Baal – Baal was the god whom the Canaanites claimed could control the rain and fertility. Baal was the chief god of the Canaanites. God told Israel that He was taking them to a land that would not be irrigated but would require the Israelites to depend on Him for rain, see Deuteronomy 11:10-12.

It is no wonder the pagan people trusted in a false god to bring them rain and it is obvious why God did not want His people to be tempted by the false god of the Canaanites. God alone would bring the people rain. Baal was merely a stone idol that could do nothing.