

GIDEON'S VICTORY

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: JUDGES 7



The hand of the Lord saved Israel.

The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

God reduced Gideon's numbers – God wanted the victory over the Midianites to glorify Himself, not Gideon or the strength of the Israelite army. Gideon was prepared to battle Midian with 32,000 men but if they overcame Midian with such a large number of men, it would speak of man's victory, —not God's. Israel would have then been tempted to boast and give themselves credit for the victory (see Judges 7:2). In order to reduce the number of men who would fight, God told Gideon to allow the fearful to return home and a whopping 22,000 men went. This may have seemed unwise but God actually served Gideon by letting them go! God further reduced the remaining 10,000 to 300 and told Gideon that He would save Israel and defeat Midian with the remaining 300 men.

God built Gideon's faith – Imagine yourself in Gideon's place—about to face over 130,000 men in battle with only 300 of your own! You would most certainly be afraid and it was likely that Gideon was afraid. In God's kindness, He instructed Gideon to take a servant and spy on the Midianite camp. Gideon did so and there he overheard a conversation between two Midianite soldiers. One soldier had a dream while the other interpreted the dream to predict an Israelite victory. This built Gideon's faith and he immediately rallied the 300 men to action.

God threw the Midianites into confusion – When Gideon marched with his soldiers, he instructed them to bring jars, torches, and trumpets along. At the signal, all the men broke their jars and shouted, "For the Lord and for Gideon!" The noise startled the Midianites; however, it was the Lord who threw Israel's enemy into confusion. The Midianites started attacking each other and then fled. We should remember that the whole battle could have gone much differently. If the Lord had not thrown the Midianites into confusion the men would have been startled but, in the absence of any real attack, they would have likely mocked the Israelite drama and attacked them instead. As it was, the Midianites attacked each other and only 15,000 escaped. God won a victory for Himself and for His people!

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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 which was the visit from 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 impossible enemies in sin and death. Only the blood of the Redeemer can bring us the victory.

The story of Gideon is a story of God saving His people. Gideon followed the Lord in faith during the battle, but it wasn't long after the battle ended that Gideon fell into sin. He made a golden ephod (a vest-like outer garment). All of Israel came to see it and sinned in its presence. The house of God was in Shiloh and it was there that the priest wore a golden ephod. Gideon created his own alternate place of worship. One day a deliverer would come who would not sin – Jesus the Lord.



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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 33:17

Connecting the passage to Christ:

Jesus is the final king who sits upon the throne forever. Once Jesus assumed the throne in the line of David, no other king was needed. In Matthew 27:11 Pilate directly asked Jesus if He was King of the Jews and Jesus replied, "Yes." Paul calls Jesus the eternal king in 1 Timothy 1:17.

Questions for reflection:

- How does this verse point forward to Jesus? (Jesus is the eternal King who sits on the throne forever and thus fulfills this promise.)
- Read Luke 1:32-33. How does this passage connect Jesus to the passage in Jeremiah? (The angel Gabriel prophesied to Mary that Jesus would be given the throne of David where He would reign forever. Jeremiah speaks of this same day -- when there will always be a man on the throne of David.)

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?

VICTORY IN NUMBERS

Supplies

- a bag of uncooked rice
- a drop cloth
- a plastic cup

The object of this lesson is to help the children realize strength in numbers and just how amazing it is that God achieved victory with such small numbers.

Prior to class, experiment with this activity to try and set the proper distance to the cup. Start with six feet and reduce the distance based on the age and ability of the children.

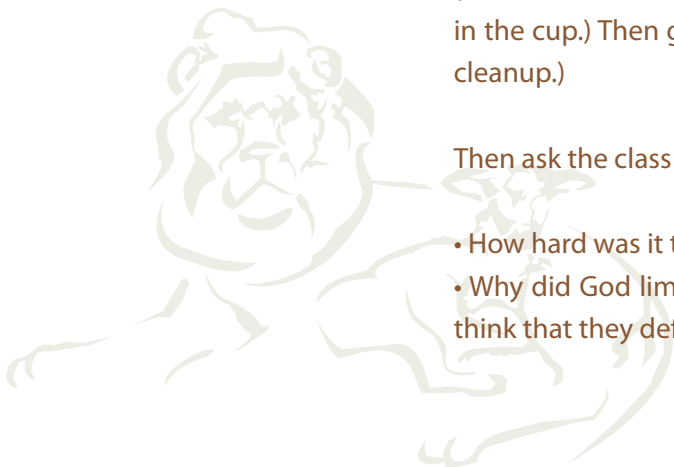
Give each child three pieces of rice and have them throw the rice into the cup. The distance of the cup should be far enough, or the cup small enough, to make tossing a piece into the cup very difficult. Ask how many of the children think they can get a piece of rice in the cup with just one throw.

Take three pieces and try to make the cup. Ask the children what would make it easier to get rice in the cup. Ask them to think of the story of Gideon. There were over 100,000 Midianites. What would make it easier to beat them, more or less men?

Once the children understand that the more men Gideon had the easier victory would be, tell them it is the same with the rice. The more you throw the easier it is to get victory, rice in the cup! Take a whole handful of rice and throw it into the cup. (Practice this ahead of time too so that you can actually get at least a piece of rice in the cup.) Then give the children a chance to do the same. (This should be a fun cleanup.)

Then ask the class the following questions:

- How hard was it to get just one piece of rice in the cup? (Very hard.)
- Why did God limit Gideon's army to so few people? (God did not want Israel to think that they defeated the Midianites with their own strength or talents.)



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300 TRUMPETS

Supplies

- kazoos or other party noise makers
- balloons
- a pushpin (enough for each child)

The idea of this activity is for the children to get an idea of how a few people making a loud noise together can create quite a lot of noise. This will show the strategy behind Gideon's plan.

Read the account of the defeat of the Midian army. At the proper time, have one boy play the role of Gideon leading in the first trumpet blast (blow his kazoo). As soon as he does, instruct everyone else to blow their kazoos. Then have the children pop their balloon with the push pin at the proper time in the story (breaking the oil pots).

Then ask the class the following questions:

- Did Gideon have a good plan? Why do you think it was good? (Gideon's plan was a good one because it gave the impression that the Midianite army was surrounded. They naturally would have thought that at least a division of men was behind every trumpet.)
- Can Gideon take credit for this victory? (No, it was the Lord who built Gideon's confidence when he overheard the dream of the Midianite soldiers. And it was the Lord who gave the dream and interpretation to the soldiers. Additionally, it was the Lord that caused the Midianites to fight each other in the confusion of the attack.)



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MIDIANITE CAMP SKIT

Supplies

actors dressed up as the two Midianite soldiers, Gideon, Purah and any props you would like to add to make the skit more interesting

This could be a fun way to bring the story alive to the children. Tell the story leading up to verse 9 and then have your actors act verses 9-18. The class can be the 300 Israelites and you can be the narrator. There are only a few lines spoken by the Midianite Soldiers and Gideon as he rallies his troops in verses 15 and 17.

Tell the rest of the story, verses 19-25 without acting. Then ask the class the following questions:

- Why did God give Gideon the option of spying on the Midianites? (God wanted to help build Gideon's faith.)
- How did God build Gideon's faith by what he overheard? (God gave both a dream and interpretation to the Midianite soldiers whom Gideon overheard. Imagine picking out two soldiers out of 130,000 and hearing this dream. That is why Gideon was so excited to come back and commence the attack.)

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 draw a picture of the Midianite soldier's dream from Judges 7:13.



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FOR OLDER GRADES

Divide the class into two groups. Instruct them to reenact Gideon's attack on the Midianites. Only this time, have the story unfold without God's help. What might have happened? Certainly, the Israelites would have caught the Midianites off guard, but would the Midianites have started killing each other or would they have realized Israel was only bluffing? Tell each group that everyone in the group must have at least one line and participate in the skit.

Give the children 10 minutes to plan their skits. Have each half of the class perform their drama and then discuss who should receive credit for the victory.

Read Judges 8:22-34 and ask them how they think Gideon finished his life.

Note: verse 27 says that Israel "whored after" or "prostituted themselves" in Ophrah, Gideon's town. Basically it became a place sin and spiritual adultery (if not actual adultery) as they looked to the Ephod for help in times of need. The bottom line is that Israel committed horrible sins at the location of the golden ephod (see "A Little Theology") and it became an alternate place of worship.

Point out to the children that one day another deliverer, Jesus Christ, would come. This Savior would deliver His people from their sins but He Himself would not sin. Instead, Jesus would bear the sins of His people so they might be forgiven.

A LITTLE BIT MORE

Ephod – The ephod was a priestly outer garment that looked much like our vests today. The ephod of the high priest was richly ornamented and colored, see Exodus 28:6-12. The Ephod made by Gideon out of gold would more closely have resembled solid gold armor for it would have weighed over forty pounds. Gideon didn't wear it but placed it on display in his city. People came from all around to see it and it became a snare to Gideon and his family.