

Lesson 47: Gideon's Victory

Judges 6:36 - 7:25 (pg. 94-95, Gospel Story Bible)

Teaching Points:

God reduces Gideon's numbers — Gideon brings thirty-two thousand men to fight against the Midianites. God knows that winning the victory with such a large army would tempt Israel to think they had won the battle without God's help, so God instructs Gideon to send some of the men home. When Gideon has done everything God tells him, only three hundred men are left, less than one percent of the men that he started with.

God builds Gideon's faith — Imagine yourself in Gideon's place. God calls him to take three hundred men and attack an army so large that it "lay along the valley like locusts in abundance, and their camels were without number, as the sand that is on the seashore in abundance" (Judges 7:12). Anyone would be afraid when asked to do this.

God knows that Gideon cannot lead his men well unless he has confidence in God, so God sends Gideon and his servant close to the Midianite camp. There, they hear about the dream and its interpretation. This builds Gideon's faith, and he immediately rallies the three hundred men to action.

God throws the Midianites into confusion — This is an amazing story of how God uses three hundred men to send a vast army fleeing in terror. At any other time, an army like this would have stood its ground, but as we read in Judges 7:22, "the Lord set every man's sword against his comrade and against all the army."

If the Lord had not thrown the Midianites into confusion, the attack might have startled them but not terrified them. Instead of fleeing, they would have attacked and killed the Israelites. As it was, the Midianites attacked each other. God won a victory for himself and for his people!

Where is the Gospel?

How does today's Bible story fit into God's greater plan of redemption?

Read Judges 8:27.

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 vestlike 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.

Bible Truth:

The hand of
the Lord
saves Israel.

A Little Bit More (grades 3-5) - Ephod

The ephod was a priestly outer garment that looked much like our vests today. The ephod of the high priest was colorful and richly ornamented (Exodus 28:6–12). The golden ephod made by Gideon would have resembled solid gold armor weighing 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.

Object Lessons:

1. God Wanted the Glory (Grades K-2) (Also, see grades 3-5 for ideas)

Supplies:

- Wooden blocks or Legos
- a large ball (*several balls or bean bags)
- Perhaps a prize (stickers) for the whole class

Set up about a dozen blocks in a long line on one side of your classroom. Ask for volunteers who would like to try knocking down the blocks for a prize. Give a ball/beanbag to several volunteers and have them stand on a certain spot, and try to knock down all the blocks with one throw. (Set up the blocks so that it is practically impossible to knock them down in one turn.)

After multiple children have attempted the task, ask them how likely they think it is for one of them to knock down all the blocks. They should start to realize that it is impossible. Connect their situation with Gideon taking only a handful of men to win a battle over tens of thousands.

Then explain that it was only with God's help that the victory was possible. Then give the ball to one student and have them roll/toss it to the teacher.

Keep the ball moving by pushing it yourself and knock down every last block. Then give all the children a prize.

While they are enjoying their prize (stickers), ask them who knocked down the blocks? They could answer, "We did," or "the teacher did." Both are correct. But then ask them who really gets the glory or the credit? Talk about how with Gideon, God wanted the glory for the victory. God is always the one who receives the glory or honor for everything we do. Without his help even our hearts would stop beating, and we would not be able to live.

2. You Can Trust in God (Grades 3-5)

Supplies:

- twenty wadded up paper balls (or table tennis balls if you wish)
- two large plastic cups
- a clear plastic bag

*As students arrive, choose one of the first kids to take twenty 1/2 sheets of paper, and wad them up. Per Covid, have only one child do this. Put the wads aside for now. That student will be the volunteer for the object lesson.

Do this object lesson after you have read the story with the children.

Set up the plastic cups at least twenty feet away from a desk where you have a clear plastic bag containing the wadded up paper balls. Ask the volunteer if they think they can get one of twenty balls into the cup. Then say out loud, "I think twenty is too many tries for you. If you get a ball in, you will think you did it on your own." Then take ten balls away.

Continue by saying, "I think ten balls are too many for you. If you get a ball in, you will think you did it on your own." Take away all but one ball.

Then say, "I think the cup is way too far away. If you get your ball in the cup, you will think you did it on your own." Then pick up the cup, bring it to the volunteer, and say, "Put the ball into the cup." As soon as he or she does this, jump up and down and celebrate what they have done.

Finally, lead a discussion about how your exercise is similar to what God did in lessening Gideon's forces and in the end winning the battle by throwing the enemy into confusion.