

## Lesson 71

# God Uses Gideon

God used Gideon to defeat the Midianites and deliver the Israelites.

# Studying God's Word

Don't forget! Review the Optional Supplements and determine where you can use them.

## Introduction

Before class begins, prepare the board to illustrate the size of the Midianite army versus the Israelites. Draw a line down the middle and fill one side with as many letter Xs as possible. Leave room at the top to write "Midianites" later. On the other side, draw Xs to represent the Israelites, roughly one-fourth the number you have for the Midianites. You may want to use a different color for each army.

Before class, prepare the board to show the size of the Midianite and Israelite armies.

Refer to the Exodus to Malachi Timeline. The Israelites were living in the promised land. But after Joshua died, they turned away from the Lord and ignored his commandments. Their sin began a cycle that went like this: 1) The Israelites would turn away from God and worship false gods. 2) God would punish them by sending enemies to oppress them and make their lives difficult. 3) The people would cry out to God, and God would show his mercy by sending a judge to rescue them from their enemies. 4) Then the Israelites would have peace, usually as long as the judge lived. 5) But they would disobey and start worshipping idols all over again. This cycle went on for about 300 years!

God was merciful. He listened to the Israelites' cries for help and delivered them from their enemies even when they kept on sinning. The judges God raised up to help the people usually led them into battle against the enemy. But these leaders had doubts and fears just like us!

### Slide #3

Refer to the Lesson Theme Poster. In today's lesson, we'll see how God chose a leader who started out feeling afraid but learned to trust God.

## God Punishes the Israelites

Wait until the end of the lesson to pass out the Class Notes.

First, let's look at what started the problems for Israel.

Judges 6:1-2

### Slide #4

Refer to the Books of the Bible Poster. Who will read Judges 6:1-2? Assign readers.

Refer to the Exodus to Malachi Timeline. What parts of the cycle do we see happening in verse 1? 1) The Israelites sinned against the Lord. 2) The

Lord sent enemies against them.

The Israelites sinned, and then God brought enemies against them as punishment.

Where were the enemies from this time? Midian.

The Midianites were herdsman from the east. They were so powerful, and there were so many of them that whenever they came to Israel, the Israelites couldn't even stay in their homes!

Where does verse 2 say the Israelites lived? Dens in the mountains, caves, and strongholds.

The Israelites lived in fear. They had to run and hide in caves! Every time they planted crops, the Midianites would come against them and take everything—all the food in their fields and all their animals. The Israelites were left with nothing!

How many years did the Midianites terrorize the Israelites? Look at the end of verse 1. Seven.

Seven years was a long time to go hungry and to live in fear of their enemies. Finally, the Israelites cried to the Lord for help. God sent a prophet to tell them why they were being oppressed by the Midianites. It was because they had forgotten the miracles God had done for them, bringing them from Egypt and giving them the promised land. They had turned from God and worshipped false gods. The Israelites had forgotten God, but they were sorry for their sin.

## God Calls Gideon

So God chose a man to deliver the Israelites. What kind of man do you think God chose? How many of you think he was a "superhero" kind of guy? Show of hands.

How many of you think he was pretty scared? Show of hands.

Actually, the Bible tells us that God chose a man named Gideon to lead his people into battle against this huge, scary enemy. Judges 6 introduces us to Gideon as he was beating out wheat. Beating out wheat was another term for threshing wheat to get all the grains off the stem. The grains were then ground into flour to make bread.

### Slide #5

Refer to the Lesson Theme Poster. But guess where Gideon was threshing his wheat? It wasn't in the usual place—he was in a winepress! A winepress was where people turned grapes into wine. It probably wasn't the season for grapes, which made this a great hiding place because the enemy wouldn't think to come there to steal anything. Gideon was hiding the small bit of wheat he had from the Midianites. But someone found him there. Let's find out who it was.

Judges 6:12–16

Slide #6Slide #7

Who will read Judges 6:12–16? Assign readers.

Who found Gideon in verse 12? The angel of the Lord.

The angel of the Lord is God appearing in human form to Gideon, so we could call him Jesus.

And what did the angel of the Lord say to Gideon in verse 12? The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor.

Slide #8

Does anyone know what “valor” is? Allow answers.

Valor: great courage

Valor means great courage, especially in battle.

What did Gideon ask the angel of the Lord in verse 13? Why has this happened to us?

That’s right. Look at the end of Judges 6:13. What did Gideon think the Lord had done? Forsaken or forgotten them. Given them into the hand of the Midianites.

Was that true? Did the Lord forget about the Israelites? No.

No. The Lord hadn’t forgotten—he was standing right there ready to do something about this problem.

Look at Judges 6:14. What did God tell Gideon to do? Go and save Israel. And who was sending Gideon? The Lord.

Gideon didn’t think this was such a good idea. What reasons did he give for not agreeing with the Lord? Look in verse 15. He was from the weakest clan, Manasseh, and he was the least in his home.

Gideon couldn’t believe God was sending him! What did the Lord say to assure Gideon in verse 16? He would be with Gideon. Gideon would defeat the Midianites.

Refer to the Attributes of God Poster. Do you remember what sovereign means? Have a student read the definition.

God in his sovereignty chose to use Gideon. Gideon was NOT mighty or courageous when God came to him. In fact, he was feeling pretty desperate because of the Midianites. Their constant attacks had shaken Gideon’s trust in God. The Lord promised to go with Gideon and help him win, but the credit for the victory would belong to God, not to Gideon.

Slide #9

On the half of the board filled with Xs, write “Midianites” at the top and the number “135,000.” It wasn’t long before the Midianites invaded again with a huge army and camped in the land of Israel. Their army had 135,000 men! The Bible says they spread out along a valley like many locusts, or grasshoppers, and their camels were like sand on the seashore. How much sand is on the seashore? A lot! So many they couldn’t be counted. They were a frightening sight to the Israelites!

What do you think they were there for? To attack the Israelites and steal all their food and belongings.

They probably thought this time would be like all the other years when they came into the land of Israel, stole whatever they wanted, and killed anyone who stood in their way. But this time would be different—they would be in for a big surprise because God was fighting for Israel!

The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he blew the trumpet to call the Israelite men to him. Men came from Gideon's tribe of Manasseh and from Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali—32,000 in all!

On the other half of the board, write "Israelites" at the top and the number "32,000." This was a great turnout for so many Israelites to come, but they were still greatly outnumbered by the Midianites.

How do you think Gideon felt when he looked at their numbers?  
Allow answers.

Gideon began to doubt if he really was supposed to do this. He asked God for a sign to prove that he was with him. Gideon placed a fleece of wool, or sheepskin, on the ground outside and asked God to make the fleece wet with dew but keep the ground around it dry.

Who knows what dew is? Allow answers. Moisture that settles on outdoor surfaces, such as grass during the night.

Gideon's faith was still weak, but God was patient and gave him the sign he asked for. The next morning, the sheepskin was soaked with dew, but the ground around it was dry!

But Gideon was still filled with doubts, so he asked God for another sign. This time he wanted the sheepskin to be dry and the ground around it to be wet with dew. The next morning, God sent dew on the ground but kept Gideon's fleece dry. Finally, Gideon was sure God was with him, and he set out for battle with his 32,000 men.

Judges 7:2–3

Slide #10

Slide #11

Gideon and his army were ready to obey God and go out and fight. But the Lord had a different plan in mind. He stopped Gideon with more instructions—God was about to make his army much smaller! Let's find out why.

Who will read Judges 7:2–3? Assign readers.

Why did God want to make Gideon's army smaller? What would the people of Israel say if they won the battle now? Look at the last part of verse 2. They would boast that they saved themselves without God's help.

God did not want them to think they were the heroes and didn't need to trust in God. God wanted the credit for the victory.

What did God tell Gideon to proclaim to the people? Whoever is fearful and trembling, let him return home.

And how many left for home? 22,000.

Have a board eraser ready.

How big was Gideon's army now? How many remained? 10,000.

### Slide #12

Erase about two-thirds of the Xs from the Israelites' side of the board.

Replace the "32,000" on the board with "10,000." Yikes! There were only 10,000 men left to fight against 135,000.

Judges 7:4-7

### Slide #13

### Slide #14

### Slide #15

So, what did God tell Gideon to do now? Let's find out in Judges 7:4-7. Assign readers.

What did God say to Gideon about the army in verse 4? The people are still too many.

The army was still too big, and God was going to make it even smaller!

Where did God tell Gideon to bring the army? Down to the water.

God tested the men by how they drank their water. Those who drank the water from their hands and lapped it up like a dog were chosen to go with Gideon into battle.

### Slide #16

Begin erasing Xs on the Israelites' side until there are only 3 left. How many men put their hands to their mouths and lapped water like a dog? Look in verse 6. 300.

Replace "10,000" with "300" on the board. Only 300 men were left! And what did the Lord tell Gideon he would do with these 300 men in verse 7? God would give him victory over the Midianites.

Refer to the 3 Xs on the board. Each X equals 100 men here for the Israelites—just 300 against over a hundred thousand Midianites! They were greatly outnumbered. With such a small army, the Israelites would know the victory wasn't because of anything they did. They would definitely know the victory was the Lord's!

## **God Gives the Victory**

So, what will happen in this battle? How can 300 Israelites win against 135,000 Midianites? Gideon gathered his 300 men and told them the plan.

Judges 7:16-20

### Slide #17

### Slide #18

### Slide #19

## Slide #20

Follow along in your Bibles as I read Judges 7:16–20. Read the verses.

Gideon divided his 300 men into three groups of 100. What three things did he give them for the battle? Judges 7:16. Trumpets, empty jars, and torches.

Huh? Gideon's men probably wondered what these things were for. But the men took the trumpets and hid their torches inside the jars, so they couldn't be seen, and followed Gideon.

In the dark of night, Gideon and his men spread out around the enemy camp. When they were all in place, Gideon blew his trumpet and smashed the jar holding his torch, letting the light shine brightly into the night. That was the signal, and everyone else smashed their jars and blew their trumpets! Suddenly, the Midianites were surrounded by torches and the sound of trumpets. Then they heard a great shout!

Who remembers what Gideon told his men to shout when the trumpets blew? Look in Judges 7:18. "For the Lord and for Gideon."

The Midianites cried out, "We're surrounded! Let's get out of here!" And they started to run. But God made them panic, and they began fighting and killing each other. When they tried to get away from there, Gideon and his men chased them. Men from other Israelite tribes came out to help, and soon the Midianites were defeated!

What a battle! God wanted the glory for this victory, and he would get it! No one could say that 300 men with trumpets, jars, and torches could beat such a huge army on their own. This was a great miracle showing God's power to save his people.

## Slide #21

Refer to the Lesson Theme Poster. Remember how Gideon was afraid to follow God at first? He was hiding from the Midianites when God came to him and called him to lead. But Gideon and his men were obedient to follow God's instructions, even when they didn't seem to make any sense. And God was faithful to protect them and give them the victory just as he said he would. After this battle, Gideon became a mighty man of valor and led Israel as a judge for 40 years!

Pass out the Class Notes.

Let's see how much you remember now. Look at your Class Notes. You will circle the correct answer for each question.

## Slide #22

## Slide #23

## Slide #24

## Slide #25

Who will read #1 and give us the answer? Choose a reader. Worshipping idols. Have students complete #1.

Who will read #2? Who came up against Israel? Choose a reader.

Midianites. Have students complete #2.

And #3, where did God find Gideon when he came to speak to him? Choose a reader. Winepress. Have students complete #3.  
 Who will read #4 about Gideon's test? Choose a reader. Wool fleece. Have students complete #4.  
 How many men did the Midianites have? This is #5. Choose a reader. 135,000. Have students complete #5.  
 How many Israelites went with Gideon to the battle? Someone read #6. Choose a reader. 300. Have students complete #6.  
 And #7, why did God want to reduce the size of Gideon's army? Choose a reader. God won! Have students complete #7.  
 Who will read #8? What equipment did Gideon give his men? Choose a reader. Trumpets. Have students complete #8.  
 What happened during the battle? Someone read #9. Choose a reader. Panic and run. Have students complete #9.  
 Who will read #10? God made Gideon a judge over Israel. What kind of man had he become? Choose a reader. Valor. Have students complete #10.

## Application

### Slide #26

Refer to the Lesson Theme Poster and the Exodus to Malachi Timeline Poster. Today we learned that God chose Gideon as a judge to save the Israelites. Gideon was hiding from the Midianites when God came to him. He was not a mighty man, yet God chose him to lead the army. God was going to show the Israelites that he would help them, and the victory would belong to God alone.

God loves using his people to accomplish his purposes. And he did just that with Gideon! Gideon followed God's instructions and defeated the Midianites with only 300 men.

God alone, through his grace, works out his plan, yet he often uses people to do it. God used Gideon. He will use you, too, if you are obedient to him. Even if you feel scared, that's okay! God will give you the help and the strength to follow him. God changed the frightened Gideon into a courageous man of valor. He can change us, too.

## Lesson Review

We encourage you to play a lesson review game.

## Bible Baseball

Students will answer questions and run the bases!

## Materials

Review Questions (included in lesson)  
 Three chairs set out for bases



Optional: gift wrap tube and a large balloon

## Instructions

Print one copy of the Review Questions for your use. Set out chairs as bases. Have the students line up by the home base area facing you (at the pitcher's mound). Each student up to "bat" will have a chance to answer a review question. If he can answer it correctly, let him run the bases. If he can't answer correctly, give the answer and ask him to go to the end of the line and try again.

You may want the students to sit on the chair at each base while they wait to run to the next base or have them run all the way around and return to the line. Repeat the questions until all the students have run around the bases.

For some added fun, you can use a gift wrap tube as a bat and toss a large balloon for students to hit after they answer each question.

## Box Toss

Students will answer review questions then toss the beanbag at the holes in the box to gain points for their team.

## Materials

Review Questions (included in lesson)  
Medium-sized cardboard box  
Scissors or knife  
Four beanbags  
Masking tape

## Instructions

Print one copy of the Review Questions for your use. Use scissors or a knife to cut two or three holes in the bottom of the box. Make sure they are large enough for a beanbag to easily pass through. Label each hole with a point number: 5, 10, and 15. Use masking tape to make a tossing line several feet away from the box.

Divide the class into teams. Have the teams line up behind the line across from the box. Give each team two beanbags. Alternate asking each team a review question. Students who answer correctly will toss the beanbags at the target holes in the box to earn points for their team. If they answer incorrectly, they may toss the beanbags for fun without the points counting. Students will go to the end of the line after tossing the beanbags. Keep score for both teams. Continue play until all questions have been answered correctly and students have all had a chance to toss the beanbags.

## Draw Dice

Teams will answer questions and complete a simple drawing to win. Who will finish their drawing first?

## Materials

Review Questions (included in lesson)  
One drawing area for each team (paper, white board, etc.)  
Pencils or white board markers  
One die

## Instructions

Print one copy of the Review Questions for your use. Divide the class into two teams. Give each team a sheet of paper and a pencil, or divide the white board in half. Draw a mouse on the board as an example.

Ask the first team a question from the lesson. If they answer correctly, have them roll the die.

To begin drawing their mouse, each team must wait until they get a six. They will then draw the mouse's body on their paper or the board. After they have drawn the body, as they give correct answers to the questions, they can continue to draw the other parts of the mouse according to the numbers they roll.



They can draw according to the numbers below:

- 6 = body
- 5 = nose
- 4 = whiskers
- 3 = eyes
- 2 = ears
- 1 = tail

Continue giving each team a turn to answer a question and roll the die. Repeat the questions as necessary. The first team to finish their mouse wins.

You may choose to draw a simple object from the lesson, such as a crown, an open Bible, a fish, etc. Be sure to assign numbers (as above) to each part of the object to be drawn before the game begins.

## Four in a Row

Students will answer questions and add a marker for their team onto the grid. Which team will be the first to get four in a row?

### Materials

- Review Questions (included in lesson)
- Masking tape
- Red and black paper circles or other markers for each team

### Instructions

Print one copy of the Review Questions for your use. Use masking tape to make a 16-section grid on the floor. The grid should be four sections wide by four sections long. Each section should be equal in size. Use eight red circles and eight black circles cut from construction paper or other markers for the two teams.

Divide the students into two teams. Give each team eight markers. They will take turns answering the questions. If they answer correctly, they can put a marker in a square on the grid. The first team to get four markers in a row wins the game.

## Goofy Golf

Hit the sock with the noodle? Teams must work together to answer the questions and putt to get a hole-in-one in this crazy golf game!

### Materials

- Review Questions (included in lesson)
- Swimming noodles or rolled up newspapers
- Rolled up socks
- Masking tape
- Ten sheets of paper
- Markers

### Instructions

Print one copy of the Review Questions for your use. Use the markers to number sheets of paper 1–10 (use more or less depending on class size and time). Tape down the sheets of paper around the room in a random pattern to form a golf course. You may want to add chairs as obstacles in the path.

Divide the class into teams. Give each team a rolled up sock and a swimming noodle. Ask the first student a review question from the lesson. If he answers correctly, allow him to use the noodle to drive the rolled up sock toward the first sheet of paper labeled #1. Continue with the next team. Take turns allowing team members to answer questions and continue putting the socks along the course to each hole, continuing from where the last teammate left off. The sock must touch or roll over the sheet of paper to consider it in the hole. The first team to reach the tenth hole wins.

## Pick a Point

Answer the questions correctly to earn the right to pick a point.

### Materials

- Review Questions (included in lesson)
- Small paper strips
- Cup or basket

### Instructions

Print one copy of the Review Questions for your use. Write various numbers in increments of 5 or 10 on strips of paper to use as point cards. Put the point cards into the cup or basket. Divide students into teams of 4–5 students each. Have each team take turns answering a review question. After each correct answer, let a member of the team draw a point card from the cup.

The number of points on the cards will vary, so the score will have nothing to do with how skilled one team might be. Keep track of each team's points. If time allows, repeat the questions!

## Racetrack

Who will reach the checkered flag first? Teams will race to the finish by answering review questions.

### Materials

- Review Questions (included in lesson)
- White board or chalkboard
- Markers/chalk
- Optional: paper cutouts for each team (cars, animals, circles, etc.), tape/poster putty

### Instructions

Print one copy of the Review Questions for your use. Draw a racetrack on the board. It may be as simple as a straight horizontal path or a curvy circle. Label "Start" and "Finish" (with a checkered flag) at either end of the track. Add

numbers along the track (e.g., 1–10) at equal intervals between Start and Finish. The numbers will be used as placement points for the racers as they progress along the track.

Divide the class into teams. You may draw a different symbol (e.g., stick figure, circle, X or O) to represent each team at the Start, or use paper cutouts as team markers and stick them to the board with tape/poster putty.

Ask the first team a review question. If they answer correctly, move their marker or redraw their symbol along the track at #1. If they answer incorrectly, give the next team a chance to answer and move to the first number. If they do not know, give the answer and ask that question again later. Continue to alternate asking review questions and moving teams' markers along the racetrack according to the numbers along the track. The first team to reach the Finish wins!

## Toss for It

How many points? Toss for it! Students answer the questions and toss the beanbag to earn points for their team.

### Materials

- Review Questions (included in lesson)
- A deck of numbered cards, or numbers and "wild" written on index cards
- One beanbag
- Masking tape
- Two baskets or containers for cards

### Instructions

Print one copy of the Review Questions for your use. Place several rows of numbered cards facedown with a few inches between them to form a grid pattern (make sure to put several wild cards or Jokers down, too). Use the masking tape to make a tossing line several feet from the cards.

Divide students into teams and have them line up behind the tossing line. Ask the first student a review question. If he gives the correct answer, have him toss the beanbag onto a card. Turn the card over to reveal the points he receives for his team. Face cards or word cards are 10 points each. Wild or Jokers are also 10—plus another turn. All other cards are face value.

Have the student pick up his card and put it in the team's basket to be counted at the end of the game. Next team's turn. If a student gives an incorrect answer, he should go to the end of the line. Give the answer and repeat that question later. Continue taking turns until all the questions have been answered. Add more cards to the grid if necessary.

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