

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

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 a circle in the middle and fill it with 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.

Refer to the Exodus to Malachi Timeline. The Israelites were living in the promised land. But after Joshua died, they abandoned the Lord and ignored his commandments. Their sin began a cycle that went like this: 1) The Israelites sinned against God by disobeying him and worshipping idols. 2) God became angry and punished them by bringing enemies against them. 3) The Israelites cried out to God to forgive them. 4) God raised up judges to deliver them. 5) The Israelites enjoyed peace and rest. But it wouldn't take long until the Israelites fell back into idolatry and started the cycle again. This cycle continued for about 300 years!

God was merciful to hear the Israelites' cries for help and to deliver them from their enemies even when they continued to sin. The judges God raised up to help the people were often called upon to lead the people into battle. 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 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

Who will read Judges 6:1-2? Assign a reader.

What steps in the cycle do we see in verse 1? Step 1: the Israelites sinned against the Lord. Step 2: the Lord sent enemies against them.

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

Where were these enemies from? Midian.

The Midianites were herdsman from the east. They were so numerous and became so powerful 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 could no longer live in peace. Every time they planted crops, the Midianites would come against them and take everything they could—all the food in their fields and all their animals. The Israelites were left with nothing!

How many years had the Midianites terrorized the Israelites? Seven.

Seven years was a long time to go hungry and to be 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 the false gods of the Amorites.

God Calls Gideon

The Israelites were sorry for their sin. But who would God choose to deliver them? Let's find out!

Judges 6:11–16

Slide #5

Slide #6

Slide #7

Who will read Judges 6:11–16? Assign readers.

Let's look at these verses a little closer. Who came to Gideon in verse 11?

The angel of the Lord.

The angel of the Lord is God appearing in human form to Gideon, so we could call him Jesus. What was Gideon doing at that moment? Judges 6:11. Beating out wheat.

Beating out wheat was another term for threshing wheat, or getting all the grains off the stem. The grains were then ground into flour to make bread. Notice where Gideon was threshing his wheat—in a winepress! Gideon was hiding the small amount of wheat he had from the Midianites. A winepress was where people turned grapes into wine, and it probably wasn't the season for grapes—that's why the enemy wouldn't think to come there to steal anything.

So, Gideon was hiding in a winepress, trying to save himself and his food. 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, according to Judges 6:13? Why has this happened to us? Where are the wonderful deeds of God?

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.

Yet 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.

Yes! And who was sending Gideon? The Lord.

How did Gideon react? What did he think of this idea? Judges 6:15. Allow discussion. He wondered how he could save Israel. 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 assure Gideon of 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 someone 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 close to despair because of the Midianites. The Midianite attacks had shaken Gideon’s trust in God. But the Lord promised to go with Gideon and give him victory. The victory would belong to the Lord, not to Gideon.

But first, God gave Gideon a test of obedience. He told Gideon to tear down his father’s altar to Baal and replace it with an altar to the Lord. Gideon knew the men in his city would be angry if he did this because they worshipped Baal. But he gathered his servants at night and did what God told him to do. The next morning, the men were angry and wanted to kill Gideon, but God protected him. Gideon obeyed God in his hometown, but he would face a bigger test against the Midianites!

Slide #9

On the half of the board filled with Xs, write “Midianites” at the top. The Midianites invaded 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 grasshoppers in abundance, and their camels were like sand on the seashore. 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, 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 men!

On the other half of the board, write "Israelites" at the top. This was a good response for so many Israelites to come, but they were still outnumbered about four to one by the Midianites.

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

Allow answers.

Gideon began to doubt his calling. He asked God for a sign to show that he was with him. Gideon placed a fleece of wool on the ground outside and asked God to make the fleece wet with dew but keep the ground around it dry. Although Gideon's faith was weak, God was compassionate to give him the sign he asked for. The next morning, Gideon's fleece was soaked with dew—enough water to fill a bowl, 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 fleece to be dry and the ground wet with dew. The next morning, God sent dew on the ground but kept Gideon's fleece dry. Gideon knew God was with him, and he set out for battle with his 32,000 men.

Judges 7:2–7

Slide #10

Slide #11

Slide #12

Slide #13

Gideon and his army were ready to obey God. But the Lord had a different plan in mind. Who will read Judges 7:2–7? Assign readers.

God stopped Gideon with more instructions—God was about to make his army much smaller!

Look at Judges 7:2. Why did God want to make Gideon's army so small? Allow discussion. So God would get the glory for the victory, not Gideon or his army.

God told Gideon that his army was too large. If Gideon were to win the battle with 32,000 men, the people would boast that they had won the battle by themselves. God did not want them to think they were the heroes.

God wanted the credit for the victory. So, who did God tell to return home? Judges 7:3. Whoever was fearful and trembling.

Have eraser nearby.

And how many men were afraid and left? Judges 7:3. 22,000.

Slide #14

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

How many men were left in Gideon's army now? Judges 7:3. 10,000.

Yes! But the army was still too large, and God was going to reduce the number of men even more!

Where did God tell Gideon to bring the army in Judges 7:4? Down to the water.

The test had something to do with how the men drank the 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 #15

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

Only 300 men were left! And what did the Lord tell Gideon about these 300 men? Judges 7:7. God would give him victory over the Midianites with these 300 men.

Refer to the three Xs on the board. Each X represents 100 men here for the Israelites—just 300 against over 100,000 Midianites! With such a small army, the Israelites would know the victory wasn't because of anything they did. The victory would definitely be the Lord's!

God Gives the Victory

What will happen in this battle? How can 300 Israelites win against 135,000 Midianites?

Judges 7:16–22

Slide #16

Slide #17

Slide #18

Slide #19

Follow along as I read Judges 7:16–22. 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.

Gideon's men probably wondered about these items. Where were the swords or spears? But they took these odd weapons and followed Gideon to the edge of the Midianites' camp at night. Then they waited for Gideon to blow his trumpet.

Who remembers what the people were instructed to shout when the trumpets blew? Look in Judges 7:18. "For the Lord and for Gideon." And in Judges 7:20, what did they do on the night of battle? They blew the trumpets, broke the jars, raised their torches and cried, "A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!"

Incredible! This would've been frightening for the Midianites. During the night, they heard trumpets and shouting. Then when they looked around their camp, they saw torches surrounding them! What happened to the

Midianite army? What did they do? Judges 7:21–22. They ran and cried out and fled. They turned their swords against each other.

God made the Midianites panic and think that the Israelites were in their camp. The Midianites started killing each other. Then they fled. Gideon and his men pursued the fleeing army, and men from the other tribes came out to help. 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 defeat such a vast army on their own. This was a great miracle showing God's deliverance.

Slide #20

Refer to the Lesson Theme Poster. Gideon was afraid to follow God at first. He was hiding from the Midianites when God came to him and called him to lead. He doubted that God was even with him. 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. Gideon became a mighty man of valor and led Israel as a judge for 40 years!

Pass out the Class Notes.

Let's review our lesson with the Class Notes. You will circle the correct answer below each question. Who will read #1 and give us the answer? Choose a reader. C. Idolatry. Have students complete #1.

Slide #21

Slide #22

Slide #23

Slide #24

Who will read #2? Choose a reader. C. Midianites. Have students complete #2.

And #3, what was Gideon doing when God came to him? Choose a reader. D. Hiding in a winepress. Have students complete #3.

Who will read #4 about Gideon's test? Choose a reader. C. Fleece. Have students complete #4.

How many men did the Midianites have? This is #5. Choose a reader. C. 135,000. Have students complete #5.

And #6? Choose a reader. A. 300. Have students complete #6.

And #7, why did God want to reduce Gideon's army? What is the answer there? Choose a reader. B. He wanted the glory for the victory. Have students complete #7.

Who will read #8? Choose a reader. A. Jars, torches, and trumpets. Have students complete #8.

And the blank at the bottom of the page? Who won the victory for Gideon and his men? Choose a reader. God. Have students fill in the blank.

Application

Slide #25

Refer to the Lesson Theme Poster and the Exodus to Malachi Timeline. Today we learned that God chose Gideon as a judge to deliver the Israelites. Gideon

was threshing wheat, hiding from the Midianites, when God came to him. Gideon was not a mighty man. Yet God chose Gideon. He wanted Gideon to lead the army, and he wanted the victory to belong to him alone.

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

The New Testament tells us about another man God used to accomplish great things. I'm talking about the Apostle Paul. He dedicated his life to preach the truth about Jesus and started many different churches. Paul was also used by God to write much of the Bible.

1 Corinthians 15:9–10

Slide #26

Listen as I read these two verses from Paul. Read 1 Corinthians 15:9–10.

What did Paul say about himself? He was the least of the apostles and unworthy.

Why did Paul think of himself as unworthy? He had persecuted the church. What does "persecuted" mean? Allow discussion.

He was persecuting Christians—people who loved Jesus. That means he was putting Christians in jail, arresting them, taking them from their families, and hurting them. He hated Christians. And this is the man God called to do his work and accomplish his purposes!

Paul knew he wasn't worthy. Yet God gave Paul something—something that helped him accomplish God's purpose. What was it that gave Paul the strength to do the Lord's work? Reread verse 10 if the students need a reminder. The grace of God.

God alone, through his grace, accomplishes his plan. Yet, he does use people. He used Gideon. He used Paul. He will use you if you are obedient to him. If you feel scared or unworthy, that's okay! God will give you the grace and the strength to follow him. He changed the frightened Gideon into a courageous leader. He changed the angry Paul into a courageous preacher! 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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