



K-1st Lesson

Review

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 kept repeating over and over for many years: 1) The Israelites sinned by worshipping false gods; 2) God became angry and sent enemies to punish them; 3) The Israelites cried out to God to forgive them; 4) God chose a judge to rescue them from their enemies; 5) The Israelites thanked God for saving them and giving them peace.

But it didn't end there. Whenever God gave the Israelites peace and safety, they would forget what God had done for them and turn back to worshipping idols. This started the whole cycle again!

God was merciful, though. He listened to the Israelites' prayers and helped them even when they kept on sinning. The judges God chose to help the people usually led them into battle against the enemy. That can be a scary job. In today's lesson, we'll see how God chose a leader who started out feeling afraid but learned to trust God even when he was outnumbered.

God Calls Gideon

The Israelites had sinned again by worshipping false gods and idols, so God brought enemies called the Midianites to punish them.

The Midianites were so powerful and there were so many of them that whenever they came, the Israelites had to run and hide in caves! The Midianites took everything—all the food in the fields and all the animals. The Israelites were left with nothing!

This kept happening for seven years. Finally, the Israelites cried out to the Lord for help. They had forgotten God, but now they were sorry for their sin.

Refer to the Lesson Flip Chart. So God chose a judge to help the Israelites. His name was Gideon. But he wasn't any superhero. Actually, the Bible tells us that Gideon was hiding from the enemy when the angel of the Lord came to him and said that he would be the one to lead the fight against the Midianites.

Gideon didn't think this was such a good idea, but the Lord promised to go with him. God was going to show Gideon how he would fight for Israel and bring victory, even when it seemed impossible.

God Reduces Gideon's Army

Place a large amount of small objects on a table or the floor where the students can easily see them. Attach a piece of tape next to the objects for a battle line. It wasn't long before the Midianites came with a huge army and camped in the land of Israel. Their army had 135,000 men—an enormous number of soldiers! They were a scary sight to the Israelites!

The Midianites probably thought they would just come and steal whatever they wanted, like usual. But this time would be different—they would be in for a big surprise because God was fighting for Israel!

Place a lesser amount of small objects on the other side of the tape. Israelite men came from all over to join Gideon in the fight—32,000 in all! But there were still a lot more Midianites.

Refer to the objects. How do you think Gideon felt when he looked at how many soldiers he had and how many the Midianites had? Allow answers.

Gideon began to wonder if he really was supposed to lead this battle. But God helped Gideon trust that he was with him. Finally, Gideon set out for battle with his 32,000 men.

Gideon and his army were ready to go out and fight. But the Lord had a different plan in mind. He stopped Gideon and gave him some instructions—God was about to make his army even smaller!

Judges 7:2–3

Refer to the Books of the Bible Poster. Let's find out why from the book of Judges. Have the student bring up the Bible and open it to the sticky note. Read Judges 7:2–3.

Why did God want to make Gideon's army smaller? What would the people of Israel say if they won the battle now? My own hand has what? Saved me.

Yes. 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 him. God wanted the credit for the victory.

What did God tell Gideon to proclaim to the people? Whoever was fearful and trembling could do what? Go home.

Take away about two-thirds of the objects from the Israelites' side. So, a bunch of men left and went back home. Oh no! Now Gideon's army was even smaller. Yikes! There were only 10,000 men left to fight against 135,000.

Judges 7:4

So, were they ready to go to battle now? Let's find out in Judges 7:4. Read the verse.

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

What?! God said the army was still too large, and he was going to make it even smaller! God told Gideon to take his army down to the water where God would test them by how they drank their water. Those who drank from their hands and lapped the water up like a dog were chosen to go with Gideon into battle. The rest had to go home.

Remove half of the objects left on the Israelites' side. Now there were only 300 men left! But God still said he would help them win and give them victory over the Midianites. With such a small army, the Israelites would know the victory wasn't because of anything they did. They would know the victory would be all because of God!

God Gives the Victory

Refer to the objects. 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

Gideon divided his men into three groups. Listen to Judges 7:16 to find out what he gave his army to use for the battle. Read the verse.

What three things did Gideon give his men for the battle? Trumpets, empty jars, and torches.

Refer to the Flip Chart. Those seem like strange things to take to a battle! But the men took the trumpets and hid their torches inside the jars (so the light from the fire couldn't be seen) and followed Gideon.

Divide the Israelites' objects into three groups and move them out around the Midianites' objects. 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 loud sound of trumpets. Then they heard the Israelites give a great shout, "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. 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.

It's true that Gideon was hiding from the Midianites when God came and told him to lead; he was afraid at first. 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 help them win just as he said he would, even when they were outnumbered. After this battle, Gideon became a brave and mighty man and led Israel as a judge for 40 years!

God Won the Battle for Gideon

