

June 14 Elementary

Bible Passage: Gideon / Judges 6–8

Story Point: God showed Gideon that victory comes from Him.

Memory Verse: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9

Big Picture Question: What is repentance? Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to Jesus.

Christ Connection: *The Israelites cried out to God because they knew they could not save themselves. Even Gideon was not enough to save them; God used Gideon to help His people, but God fought the battle for them. The people needed someone who was mighty to save. Jesus Christ came to save us from sin because we cannot save ourselves. Only God, through Christ, can save us.*

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* **BIBLE STUDY TIPS FOR PARENTS:**

Judges 6 starts out in a familiar way: “The Israelites did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.” The period of Judges was not a good time for the Israelites. Their cycle of sin, bondage, deliverance, and peace clearly showed the law alone could not save them from sin.

The Israelites were oppressed by the Midianites, and they cried out to God for help. God chose a man to save them, and his name was Gideon. Gideon was an unlikely leader, and he knew this. Gideon said, “Please, Lord, how can I deliver Israel? Look, my family is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father’s family” (Judg. 6:15).

God doesn't need the biggest and the best to accomplish His plan. In fact, He often uses the weakest and least of people to fulfill His plans because that is what gives Him the most glory. God had a plan to empower Gideon in his weakness: “But I will be with you,” He said. (Judg. 6:16)

Gideon and an army of men assembled. God told Gideon he had too many men. God didn't want the men to think they had the power to defeat the Midianites themselves. When the army was reduced to just 300 men, they prepared for battle. (See Judg. 7:1-7.)

The men ran toward the Midianites' camp, blowing their trumpets and shouting. God turned the swords of the Midianites against each other. They ran away, but Gideon and his army chased after them and killed them.

God was with the Israelites when they went to battle. The Israelites did not win the battle themselves; God fought for them. As you teach kids this week, point out that God used Gideon in the victory. Gideon alone was not enough to save the Israelites. Only God could win the battle. In the same way, we are unable to save ourselves from sin. Jesus came to save us from our sin because He is enough. Only God, through Christ, can save us.

***STORY:**

SAY • Can any of you tell me who led God's people out of Egypt? (*Moses*) And who led God's people after Moses died? (*Joshua*) Right. Joshua led God's people into the promised land. Sadly, when Joshua died, the people ignored God and forgot about Him. They turned away from God, and we have seen over the last couple of weeks how the Israelites' cycle of sin caused them to be ruled by their enemies until God sent a judge to deliver them. Today's Bible story is about a judge named Gideon.

Use the Bible storytelling tips below to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video, or both!

Gideon: Judges 6–8

The Israelites once again did not obey God, so God allowed them to be ruled by their enemies, the Midianites. The Midianites were cruel to Israel. **They** took Israel's food and animals. The Israelites **remembered how good life was when they loved and obeyed God. They cried out to God, "Save us!"**

The angel of the Lord came and sat under an oak tree. He **appeared to a man named Gideon and said, "The Lord is with you, mighty warrior!"**

Gideon was afraid. His family was the weakest family in his tribe, and he was the youngest son in the family. But **the Lord had chosen Gideon to deliver the Israelites from the power of their enemy**. The Lord assured Gideon, "I will be with you."

When the time came to go to battle, Gideon blew a ram's horn. **An army of men gathered behind Gideon, ready to fight**. Gideon wanted a sign from God. He prayed, "I will put fleece on the ground. If the fleece is wet with dew, but the ground is dry, I will believe that You will deliver Israel as You say."

That is exactly what happened; the fleece was so wet that Gideon squeezed enough water out of it to fill a bowl. But Gideon asked for another sign. This time, the fleece was dry and the ground was wet.

God told Gideon that he had too many people with him. Gideon sent home everyone who was afraid to fight. Ten thousand men remained. "That's still too many," God said. God made

a test for the people. All of them were to go to the river to drink the water. Anyone who knelt to drink water was sent home, but whoever lapped the water with his hand to his mouth stayed. Three hundred men remained.

That night, Israel's army carried torches, blew their trumpets, and shattered pitchers. They **ran toward the camp of Midianites. Gideon and his army chased the Midianites, and they ran away. God gave Israel the victory.**

The Israelites said, "Gideon, you rescued us! Now we want you to be our king." Gideon said. "No, God will rule over you." But after Gideon died, the Israelites once again ignored God and forgot about Him, who had delivered them from the power of their enemies.

SAY • The Midianites were enemies of God's people, the Israelites. God had a plan to rescue His people from their enemies. One day, the Angel of the Lord appeared to a man named Gideon. Was that because Gideon was the best fighter in Israel? No! Gideon's family was the weakest family in the tribe. Not only that, Gideon was the youngest son in his family. Gideon wasn't strong enough to rescue Israel on his own, but God promised to be with Gideon.

To prove that the battle was under God's control, God told Gideon to reduce his army to just 300 men. Still, because of God, Israel won the battle against the Midianites.

God showed Gideon that victory comes from Him. If God had used a strong warrior with an army of 10,000 men, people might have thought the army had won because it was strong. By using Gideon and a small army, the only way Israel could have won the battle is if God fought for them. And He did!

***Christ Connection:**

Christ Connection: *The Israelites cried out to God because they knew they could not save themselves. Even Gideon was not enough to save them; God used Gideon to help His people, but God fought the battle for them. The people needed someone who was mighty to save. Jesus Christ came to save us from sin because we cannot save ourselves. Only God, through Christ, can save us.*

SAY • The Israelites cried out to God because they knew they could not save themselves. Even Gideon was not enough to save them; God used Gideon to help His people, but God fought the battle for them. The people needed someone who was mighty to save.

We are weak like Gideon, but God sent us His Son. Jesus came to earth as a man. He was humble and looked weak, but He was strong! Jesus came to save us from sin because we cannot save ourselves. Only God, through Christ, can save us.

***GOSPEL PLAN:**

(Included in the Activity Pages)

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.

God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.

We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God’s punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)

God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It’s something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.

Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God’s family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.

We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He’s already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

***PRAYER**

SAY • God, we confess that it is hard to go into a situation knowing we are not strong enough or talented enough to accomplish something on our own. Lord, help us remember that You are glorified when we willingly obey You. You can work in our weakness and show Your power. Help us follow You in obedience and with trust. Amen.

***KEY PASSAGE / MEMORY VERSE:**

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9

SAY • These words come from the Book of 1 John, which was written by one of Jesus’ closest friends—the apostle John. He wanted people to understand that Jesus really is God’s Son! Sin

separates us from God, but Jesus brings us back to Him. Everyone who trusts in Jesus has forgiveness and eternal life.

***DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

COMPREHENSION:

- Why was Gideon afraid to deliver the people of Israel? (*His clan was the weakest in Manasseh, and he was the least in his family; Judges 6:15*)
- How did God respond when Gideon requested a sign about his call to deliver the people? (*God allowed the fleece to be soaked with water and the ground dry, and the next day, the fleece was dry and the ground soaked with water; Judges 6:38,40*)
- What did God do to reduce the size of Gideon's army? (*First, God told Gideon to send home those afraid. Then God told Gideon to send home many men based on how they drank water; Judg. 7:3-8*)
- Why did God reduce Gideon's army down to 300 men? (*He didn't want them thinking they had defeated the Midianites themselves; Judges 7:4,7*)

YOUNGER:

Open bibles to Judges 6–8.

Ask the following questions:

- Why did God want Gideon to fight with such a small army? *Guide kids to understand that God was teaching Gideon, and all His people, that He was enough to protect them and give them victory. God did not want the people to boast about their victory but to worship Him instead.*
- What are some ways God gives us victory today? *Guide kids to discuss the fact that God can give us victory in many ways. When we need healing, when we need peace, when we need wisdom to make choices, God can provide us with those things. Help kids see that through Jesus' death and resurrection, our greatest victory, over sin and death, is secure.*
- What are some things people trust in or boast in today? *Help kids see that many boast in wealth, success, fame, or material comforts. Remind kids that those things, though they can be nice, are not able to save us. We need Jesus to save us and should boast only in Him.*

Say • **God showed Gideon that victory comes from Him.** When we trust Jesus, we have victory in Him.

OLDER:

Open Bibles to Judges 6. Explain that today's Bible story comes from Judges 6–8. Challenge kids to identify which Bible division the Book of Judges is in. (*Old Testament History*)

Say • In our Bible story today, God raised up Gideon to deliver Israel from their enemies, the Midianites. The Midianites were from Midian. [*Point to Midian (110) on the Old Testament Mediterranean Map.*] Gideon and his army of 300 men chased away the Midianites, and **God showed Gideon that victory comes from Him.**

Ask the following questions

- How did God use the Israelites' weakness to show His power? *Guide kids to recall that God instructed Gideon to reduce the size of the army from 32,000 to 300 men. Israel could not claim the victory came from their own strength; victory came from the Lord.* (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Isa. 12:2.)
- How do you think Gideon felt about God's calling on his life? *Emphasize to kids that Gideon recognized his own weakness. He did not think he could deliver Israel and asked God repeatedly to confirm his calling. Gideon had to learn that God works through our weakness to show His power.* (Option: Choose a volunteer to read 2 Tim. 2:21.)
- Are you ever afraid to follow God like Gideon was? How does Gideon's story help you handle your fear? *Lead kids to recognize that the victory did not depend on Gideon and his strength. The victory came from God; He is mighty to save. We can rely on God to bless our faithful obedience and to give us power to do what He calls us to do. When God accomplishes His plan through our weakness, He gets glory.* (Option: Choose a volunteer to read 2 Cor. 12:9.)

***ACTIVITY:**

ACTIVITY PAGE & COLORING PAGE

Invite kids to complete the "Seeing the Signs" activity page. Kids will add in the missing vowels to find the story point.

Say • Great job with that picture code. Some of those pictures represent key details from our story. What do you think a bit of fleece, a clay pot, a torch, a trumpet, and water might have to do with our story? Soon we will hear about each of those details, and learn how God used them to lead His people to victory over their enemies.

KNOCK 'EM DOWN

Stack plastic cups on the far side of the room. Allow kids to toss wiffleballs at the cups, trying to knock them over. You may form teams within your family and make it a competition.

Say • In our story today, we learned about a man named Gideon. God used Gideon to defeat the enemies of God's people. One of the first things Gideon did was knock down altars to false gods.

WRING IT OUT

Fill a bowl with water and place a large sponge in the water. Place an empty large measuring cup next to the filled bowl. Allow the kids to take turns lifting the sponge, holding it over the empty measuring cup, and squeezing it one-handed. Record how much water each kid manages to squeeze out of the sponge and then reset the station by pouring the water back into the original bowl and placing the sponge back in the filled bowl. Whoever squeezes the most water from the sponge wins.

Say • Sponges are very good at absorbing water. *Fleece*, another word for sheep's wool, can also absorb water. Today we learned about a time God gave a sign with fleece and water. Gideon prayed from a sign from God. He prayed, "I will put fleece on the ground. If the fleece is wet with dew, but the ground is dry, I will believe that You will deliver Israel as You say."

That is exactly what happened; the fleece was so wet that Gideon squeezed enough water out of it to fill a bowl. But Gideon asked for another sign. This time, the fleece was dry and the ground was wet.

God gave Gideon signs to let him know that He was with him. **God showed Gideon that victory comes from Him.** We obey God's call on our life not because we think we have what it takes, but because we trust Him to work through us for His glory and our good. God doesn't need the biggest and the best to accomplish His plan. In fact, He often uses the weakest and least of people to do His plans because that is what gives Him the most glory.

GIDEON'S TORCHES

Provide your child with an empty paper towel roll. Help the kids push red, orange, and yellow tissue paper into one end so that it flares out the top like flames (alternatively you can use construction or other colored paper). Use tape to secure the tissue paper.

Say • God showed Gideon that victory comes from Him. He asked a young son from a weak family to lead an army. Then God reduced the size of the army twice! When Gideon went into battle with torches, pots, and trumpets, it might have seemed they had no chance to win. But God threw the Midianites into confusion, and they fought against themselves. When Gideon's army defeated their enemies, everyone knew that it was really God's victory. In a similar way, when we trust Jesus, we experience victory over sin and death—not because of our obedience or good work but because of Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection on the third day.