



OLD TESTAMENT: GIDEON

lesson 20

BIG IDEA

The Israelites are influenced by neighboring countries and get caught up in idol worship. God punishes them by allowing their enemies to win battles. Israel calls out to God in repentance and God rescues them through the leadership of Judges and warnings from Prophets. Gideon is chosen to lead the Israelites out of one of these cycles of sin.

MEMORY VERSE

Psalm 8

KEY VERSES

Judges 6-8

• PREPARATION & MATERIALS •

BIBLE SKIT

- Cast: TL wearing baseball cap. Bear wearing bear ears
- *EM provides baseball cap and bear ears.*

GAME - TAG!

- no materials needed

WORKSHEETS

- Photocopies of Coloring Sheet (1 per child)

CRAFT - GIDEONS TORCH

- Paper plates (the thin, inexpensive kind), one per child
- Red, orange and yellow crepe paper streamers cut into 5 inch lengths (optional use tissue paper cut into 5 x 2 inch lengths), 8-10 pieces per child
- Markers or crayons
- Extra staplers and staples



Psalm 8

Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!



(extend hands to sides)

You have set your glory in the heavens.



(extend hands high)

Through the praise of children and infants you have



("stop" hand)

established a stronghold against your enemies,

To silence the foe and the avenger.



(index finger over lips)

(wiggle fingers both hands)

When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers,



The moon and the stars which you have set in place,



(point to moon and stars)

What is mankind that you are mindful of them,



(shrug shoulders)

Human beings that you care for them?

You have made them a little lower than the angels



(flat hand at waist)

And crowned them with glory and honor.



(make crown with hands)

You have made them rulers over the works of your

hands;



(open hands)

You put everything under their feet:



(stomp feet)

All flocks and herds, and the animals of the wild,



(hands like claws)

The birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea, all that swim

the paths of the seas.



(hands together wiggle like fish)

Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!



(arms up as if cheering)



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BIBLE OBJECT LESSON

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CASTING

TL wearing baseball cap
Bear wearing bear ears

THE SKIT

TL and Bear enter stage

TL Bear. Hello. How are you today?

Bear I'm having a great day. Started the day with a little treasure hunting and then went swimming in the river. It's the perfect kind of bear day. I was wondering about our story time though. What are we going to do now?

TL What do you mean?

Bear Well, now that the Israelites have made it to the Promised Land and conquered all those cities, I guess the stories are over. Right?

TL Why no, not at all. There are many more stories.

Bear But what else could there possibly be? I mean we started with God creating the world and then how sin entered the world. And then how God made that promise to Abraham that he would make him into a great nation. And then how Jacob wrestled with God and was given the name Israel. And then how his sons ended up in Egypt and the family grew to over 2 million people. And then how God rescued them from the mean Egyptians with all those plagues. And then how they wandered in the wilderness and finally how they conquered Jericho and the other cities. See? They are a big nation of people and they are in the promised land. What else is there to tell?

TL Wow, Bear. I'm impressed. You've really been listening! And honestly, I would love to tell you that the stories end there and the Israelites lived happily ever after, but I can't. Actually, I have good news and bad news.

Bear Oh. Can we start with the good news?

TL Yes. The good news is very, very good. You see, not only was God preparing his special people, the Israelites, to live in a special land. He was also planning to bring real salvation, the kind that lasts forever, to the entire world. He knew that the biggest battle for people would not be against enemy cities, but would be the battle against sin. So he had a plan to completely conquer sin once and for all.

Bear Oooooooh. That is a good plan. So, what's the bad news?

TL The bad news is that the nation of Israel settled in the Promised Land and forgot all about God who had saved them from their enemies. They looked at how the other nations around them were worshiping idols and false gods, and they copied them. When they got caught up in the sin of idol worship, God would punish them by allowing their enemies to take their land and their people. After a while the Israelites would become so miserable that they would remember God and pray to him for help. God was very faithful and he would help them conquer their enemies and live peacefully for a while. Then they would start to worship idols again, and God would punish them again, and they would remember him



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again and pray for help, and he would rescue them again, and they would live in peace again, until they worshiped idols again. You see, it was a big cycle.

Bear That's a bummer. I thought they still might be living in the Promised Land today enjoying all the milk and honey and stuff. So, are the rest of the stories about how Israel keeps messing up and getting punished? Because, well, it doesn't sound like a very good story to me.

TL Bear, you will be surprised at the amazing people that God uses to remind the Israelites about the one true God. They are people we can learn a lot from in their obedience, faithfulness and courage. There is actually a special name for these people, they were called the Judges. They were men or women who God chose to lead the Israelites, settle disputes and deliver them from their enemies.

Bear Like super heros?

TL (Chuckle) I suppose a bit like super heroes. They didn't have special powers like x-ray vision or the ability to fly. However, they had something even more powerful, they had the Holy Spirit, God's invisible spirit giving them wisdom and sometimes supernatural strength!

Bear Awesome!

TL Indeed. Let's play a quick game and then I will tell you about a man named Gideon. (Direct attention to the kids). Everyone stand up. You are my army and we have a very important top-secret job to accomplish against a very big and powerful enemy. But, on second thought, I don't really need all of you. Just half, so everyone on the right side sit down. Hmm, that's still too many, everyone who is taller than 4 feet sit down. (Choose a child that's about 4 feet to represent the maximum size). Hmm, that's still too many. Everyone whose favorite color is blue, sit down. Everyone who is older than 9 sit down. (Continue in this manner until there are only a few kids left). Perfect! This will be my army!

Bear Uh, TL. Are you sure? You just cut your army from (number of kids total) down to just (number of kids remaining). How are you going to defeat your big powerful enemy with this tiny group?

TL Well, that's just what God did with the Israelites. (Thank kids and let them sit down) Israel had sinned against the Lord by worshiping the idol gods of the Canaanites. To punish the Israelites, God let the people of Midian rule over them. Every year when the fields of grain were ready for harvest, the Midianites attacked them. They destroyed the grain and stole the animals, leaving nothing for the Israelites. The Israelites were completely helpless against the Midianites so they hid in caves and in the hills. After seven years of attack they finally called out the Lord for help.

Gideon was living in a village called Ophrah and while he was threshing some wheat that he had hidden from the Midianites, an angel of the Lord came to him and said, "Go, rescue Israel from the Midianites. I myself am sending you."

Gideon was worried, "How can I possibly save Israel? My family group is the weakest and I am the least important. Please give me a sign so that I know it is really you talking to me." So the angel used a wooden staff causing fire to blaze out of a rock and burn up a meal of meat and bread. Then the angel disappeared and Gideon knew he had been real. That night the Lord spoke to Gideon and told him go tear down the family alter to the false god Baal and build the right kind of alter to the true God and offer a bull as a sacrifice.

Gideon obeyed, but he was so fearful of his family that he did everything at night instead of during the



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day. The next day the people of the town were furious and wanted to kill Gideon. But Gideon's father said, "Are you defending Baal? If Baal is a god, let him defend himself." So they let Gideon alone.

Soon, news came that the Midianites and the Amalekites had combined their armies and were heading toward Israel. So Gideon gathered an army and called to the Lord, "You promised you would use me to save Israel. Please give me another sign. I'll put a piece of wool on the floor. If the wool is wet in the morning and the ground is dry, then I'll know your promise will come true. And that is exactly what happened. When Gideon woke up in the morning the wool was wet and the ground was dry. He was still unsure so he said, "Let me ask you for just one more thing. This time make the wool dry and the ground wet." And that is exactly what happened. In the morning, when Gideon woke up, the wool was dry and the ground was wet.

Bear Wow. That's pretty cool stuff. I bet Gideon had no more doubts now.

TL Gideon was now ready to follow the Lord's plan. God said to him, "You have so many men that Israel may think they have won this victory by themselves. Send away anyone who is afraid." Gideon did so and 22,000 men left leaving only 10,000. Then God said, "Take them to the stream and send home all who get down on their knees to drink." Gideon did this and there were only 300 men left. God said, "I will give you victory over the enemy with only 300 men."

Bear Hey, that's just like how you started with an army of kids and reduced it down to just a few! But if I was Gideon, I would have been afraid!

TL He might have been afraid, and God understood that. He said, "Go down against the enemy camp. I am going to hand it over to you. But if you are afraid, then go down and spy with your servant. Listen to what they are saying, then you will not be afraid." So Gideon and his servant crept down to the camp at night and heard a soldier explaining his friend's dream. He said, "Your dream means that God has handed the Midianites over to Gideon. He has given him the whole camp!"

Gideon worshiped God, returned to the Israelite camp and prepared for battle. They approached the enemy camp with clay jars, trumpets and torches. They hid their torches in clay jars and surprised their enemies when they broke open the jars and suddenly revealed the bright torches. Then they shouted, "A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!" The enemies panicked and attacked one another then ran away. After a long chase and a long battle, Gideon and the Israelite army won the battle.

Bear Awesome story, thanks TL!



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CRAFTS

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• CRAFT •

OBJECTIVE: GIDEON'S TORCH

Kids will fill the sky with stars to remember God's promise to Abraham.

MATERIALS PROVIDED BY EM

- Scissors, staplers, hole punches

MATERIALS BROUGHT BY TEAM

- Paper plates (the thin, inexpensive kind), one per child
- Red, orange and yellow crepe paper streamers cut into 5 inch lengths (optional use tissue paper cut into 5 x 2 inch lengths), 8-10 pieces per child
- Markers or crayons
- Extra staplers and staples

DIRECTIONS

- Lay out 4-5 pieces of streamer paper in a mix of colors
- Bunch them together at one end and staple
- Make two bundles per child
- Color the bottom of the paper plate brown, tan or yellow (or however the kids wish to color it)
- Twist the paper plate into a cone shape, staple to hold
- Staple the streamer bundles (flames) into the wide part of the cones (torches)

EXAMPLE





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GAME

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• GAME •

OBJECTIVE: TAG!

Kids will run and chase and flee in a variety of Tag games.

MATERIALS BROUGHT BY TEAM

- none

INSTRUCTIONS

BLOB - Designate boundaries. One person is blob, any one tagged by the Blob must join hands and become part of it. Blobs can fragment into pieces of at least two people. Object: For Blob to devour everyone, for everyone else stay alive as long as possible.

ELBOW TAG - Every one, but the runner and It link elbows in pairs; runners avoid It by linking elbows releasing a new runner. It can change the same way.

SHADOW TAG - Tagging is done by stepping on people's shadows. When you are tagged, you count to three before chasing.

EVERYBODY'S IT - When your tagged, you're frozen.



Judges 7:20

The three companies blew the trumpets and smashed the jars. Grasping the torches in their left hands and holding in their right hands the trumpets they were to blow, they shouted, "A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!"

