

SABBATH SCHOOL

Preteen Sabbath Instruction Program — Teacher's Outline

Level 4 • Unit 6 • Week 4

GIDEON—GOD BUILDS FAITH

OBJECTIVE:

To learn the story of Gideon's fleece and army and the lesson that God builds faith.

ATTENTION GETTER:

Supplies: Washcloths
Bowl of water

Ask: Do you think God would use a wet rag to prove a point?

Do: Have the children wet and wring out some of the washcloths. Have them spread out wet and dry cloths.

Ask: What is dew? How does dew work? Does everything outside get damp on a dewy night? Where does all that moisture come from?

Say: Dew is the water that condenses out of the air at night. During the day water evaporates and floats on the warmer air. But at night the air cools, and cool air can't hold as much moisture. So little droplets can form on grass and rocks and just about anywhere.

BIBLE LESSON:

Supplies: Small bag of wheat
Lambskin fleece if possible
Washcloth and bowl
Pitcher
Torch (a stick of wood with paper flames)
Trumpet and paper trumpets

Do: Tell the story of Gideon with enthusiasm and emphasis.

Say: Our story takes place in the days of the judges. Israel had come into the Promised Land, but they hadn't stayed faithful to God. Because of that, God allowed them to suffer. The Midianites had been raiding the land of Israel for seven years. They took food and destroyed crops in the field—anything the Israelites might have. The Israelites had to try to hide in caves to escape the Midianites. And finally those poor Israelites cried out to God.

As we pick up the story in the book of Judges, Gideon was threshing wheat in the winepress, in order to hide it from the Midianites.

Ask: Did you hear that? Why do you suppose he was threshing wheat in the winepress? [Hold up a sack of wheat.]

Say: It seems he was hoping the Midianites wouldn't look in the winepress when it wasn't time for the grape harvest.

Suddenly he looked up from his work and saw a stranger sitting under a nearby oak tree. He had been sure that he was alone! Who could it be? Then the stranger spoke, "The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor!"

Is this a joke? Here Gideon is hiding in the winepress, and he's being called a courageous man!

Gideon replied by unloading all his discouragement. "Please don't take this wrong," he said, "but if the Lord is helping us, why have all these awful things happened? Where are the miracles?"

Ask: Do you ever feel that way?

Say: The stranger looked directly at Gideon and said, "Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?" In other words, "I am sending you!" [Point to one of the students.]

Gideon asked, "But how can I save? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am least in my father's house."

"Surely I will be with you," the stranger said, "and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man."

Gideon then asked the stranger for a sign. "Do something so I will know." And then Gideon asked the stranger to wait while he brought an offering. When the meat and bread were prepared, the stranger touched the offering with his staff, and fire flared up and consumed the meat, and the stranger disappeared! Now Gideon realized that God, not some man, had commanded him to lead Israel to freedom from the Midianites.

Later that night the Lord instructed Gideon to cut down his father's wooden image of Baal and use it as firewood for a burnt sacrifice. Gideon did it, but by night, because he feared his father's household. And the men of the city were very angry. They wanted to kill Gideon, but Joash, Gideon's father stood up to them. He told them that if Baal was a god, Baal could plead his own case and defend himself.

Then Gideon blew his trumpet and people gathered and followed him. God made him a leader.

But Gideon was still worried. He wanted another sign. So Gideon said to God, "If You will save Israel by my hand as You have said—look, I shall put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said" (Judges 6:36-37). [Show the fleece.]

"And it was so. When he rose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece together, he wrung the dew out of the fleece, a bowlful of water" (verse 38). [Wring out a wet washcloth into a bowl.]

"Then Gideon said to God, 'Do not be angry with me, but let me speak just once more: Let me test, I pray, just once more with the fleece; let it now be dry only on the fleece, but on all the ground let there be dew.' And God did so that night. It was dry on the fleece only, but there was dew on all the ground" (verses 39-40).

Ask: Did God build Gideon's faith?

Say: Now Gideon had many people following him. In fact, the Lord told Gideon he had *too many* followers. God didn't want them to think that they were doing this all by themselves. He told Gideon to tell the fearful ones to go home.

But there were still 10,000 men with Gideon, and the Lord told him that was still too many. The Lord told Gideon to bring them down to the water to test them. Anyone who got down on his knees to drink or lapped it like a dog was to be sent home. Only those who brought the water to their mouths with their hands were to be in Gideon's army. [Bring your hand to your mouth as though carrying water.]

And now there were just 300 men.

Ask: With only 300 men, do you think they would understand that it is God who gives the victory?

Say: Gideon divided the three hundred men into three companies, a hundred men in each company, and he put a trumpet into every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and torches inside the pitchers. [Hold up a pitcher and a torch. Hand out paper trumpets.]

And Gideon said to them, "Look at me and do likewise; watch, and when I come to the edge of the camp you shall do as I do: When I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then you also blow the trumpets on every side of the whole camp, and say, 'The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!'" (Judges 7:17-18).

So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outpost of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just as they had posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets [have the children blow their trumpets] and broke the pitchers that were in their hands. Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers—they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing—and they cried, 'The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!' And every man stood in his place all around the camp; and the whole army ran and cried out and fled. When the three hundred blew the trumpets, the LORD set every man's sword against his companion throughout the whole camp; and the army fled."

Gideon scared them to death, and they fought with each other.

Ask: Who made this victory possible? Do you think they all knew and understood? Did God build their faith?

LESSON APPLICATION:

Make a fleece: Glue cotton balls to a lambskin shaped paper, or frost a fleece-shaped cookie and decorate with coconut.

MEMORY VERSE:

Proverbs 3:5-6 "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."

Music:

Sing "Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho" (from previous lessons) or a selection from the United Church of God hymnal.

family activity

THE POINT:

To learn the story of Gideon's fleece and army and the lesson that God builds faith.

ASK ME...

Who was Gideon?

What did Gideon ask for?

Did God build Gideon's faith?

How did God instruct Gideon to choose his army?

FAMILY TOGETHER TIME:

Count 300 jellybeans or 300 M&Ms into a jar. That is how many there were in Gideon's army.

Talk about the identity of the stranger, the "Angel of the LORD" that spoke with Gideon .

Fill in the blanks:

Judges 6:12-13 "And the _____ of the Lord appeared to him, and said to him, 'The LORD is with _____, you mighty man of _____!' Gideon said to Him, 'O my Lord, if the LORD is _____ us, why then has all this happened to _____? And where are all His _____, which our fathers told us about, saying, "Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?" But now the LORD has forsaken _____ and _____ us into the hands of the Midianites.'"

Judges 6:37-40 "Look, I shall put a _____ of wool on the threshing floor; if there is _____ on the fleece only, and it is _____ on all the ground, then I shall know that You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said. And it was so. When he rose early the next morning and _____ the fleece together, he wrung the _____ out of the fleece, a _____ of water. Then Gideon said to God, 'Do not be _____ with me, but let me speak just once more: Let me test, I pray, just once more with the _____; let it now be dry only on the _____ but on all the ground let there be _____. And God did so that night. It was _____ on the fleece only, but there was dew on all the _____."

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