



5

God Uses Gideon

Key Themes

- God uses people to accomplish His perfect plans.

Key Passages

- Judges 6:11–16, 7:3, 7:5–6, 7:20

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe God's sovereignty in choosing Gideon as a leader.
- Recognize God's role in defeating the Midianites—a nation that wanted to destroy Israel.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

page 5

Students will practice the memory verse using the Memory Verse Cards.



Activity 1: Floor Chart

page 5

Students will help complete a large floor chart as you study the lesson.



Studying God's Word

page 6

God used Gideon to lead a small army to defeat the Midianites. The Midianites were a nearby nation that attacked Israel. Gideon was not mighty, but the Lord worked mightily through him to accomplish His purpose.



Activity 2: Gideon's Four Corners

page 10

Students will review the lesson by playing a game that matches the questions given to the names of the people discussed in this account of Gideon.

Lesson Preparation

WHAT YOU WILL DO

WHAT YOU WILL NEED



COME ON IN

- If you haven't done this, print and cut out the Memory Verse Cards from the Resource DVD-ROM for every 2–3 students. Print on cardstock if possible.
- If you want to do this as an individual activity, make one set per student.

- Memory Verse Poster
- Memory Verse Cards in envelopes or small plastic bags



FLOOR CHART

- Print one each of four Floor Chart Headers from the Resource DVD-ROM. Tape to the floor as shown on the Floor Chart Answer Key.
- Print one Floor Chart Answer Key from the Resource DVD-ROM for your use.
- Print and cut out the 13 Floor Chart Statement Strips from the Resource DVD-ROM. Pass one strip to each student.

- Floor Chart Headers
- Floor Chart Statement Strips
- Floor Chart Answer Key
- Masking tape



STUDYING GOD'S WORD

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.

- Student Take Home Sheets



GIDEON'S FOUR CORNERS

- Print one each of Gideon's Four Corners Questions and Four Corner Signs from the Resource DVD-ROM for your use during the activity.

- Gideon's Four Corners Signs
- Gideon's Four Corners Questions
- Tape



Memory Verse

Joshua 1:9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

► **Pace your lesson!** Use the clocks to mark the time you want to finish each section. This will help you stay on track and finish on time. You may need to shorten or drop sections as necessary.





Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

As you begin to prepare for your lesson this week, please prepare your heart and mind by reading Judges 6–8.

The recurring cycle of Israel's history during the time of the Judges continued for the 300-year period. This cycle included the Israelites' disobedience and idolatry, God's judgment on them through neighboring nations, their cry to God that He would deliver them, God's mercy and compassion in raising up judges to deliver them, and finally Israel's fall back into disobedience. In Judges 6 we find that because the Israelites were once again doing evil in the sight of the Lord, God allowed them to be oppressed by the Midianites. They were now crying out to Him for help (Judges 6:6). The Lord was to provide an unlikely hero for them through Gideon.

The Angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon—who was threshing wheat in secret so that the raiding Midianites would not take it (not a very valiant act)—and called Gideon a “mighty man of valor.” He told Gideon that he would lead Israel to defeat its current oppressors, the Midianites. Gideon revealed his fear and lack of trust in the Lord as he responded that he was weak and of the weakest clan of Israel (Judges 6:15). But the Lord responded with confidence, explaining that He Himself would be with him. In Judges 6:14, the Lord told Gideon to “Go in this might of yours,” but God also clearly told him the source of that might: “Have I not sent you?” And in verse 34, as Gideon gathered men for battle, it was because “the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon.” Scripture is clear that it was the Lord moving in these events, using Gideon; it was not Gideon's own strength or ability that won the victory. We see, as the account unfolds, that God wanted His power alone to be demonstrated.

In Judges 7, a substantial number of men had rallied to Gideon (though they would still have been outnumbered by the Midianites). In Judges 7:2–8, God gave Gideon orders to reduce the number of men who would participate in the battle. First, any who were fearful were commanded to leave. Next, God directed Gideon to accept only those who drank by lapping the water from their hands. Thus, the fighting force was reduced to a mere three hundred to face the Midianite army of 135,000. God wanted the victory of this battle to point to Him alone as deliverer. He did not want the Israelites to think for a minute that this

victory was theirs. “And the Lord said to Gideon, ‘The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, “My own hand has saved me”’” (Judges 7:2).

The account of the battle is dramatic and noble. Gideon's three hundred men stealthily approached the Midianites with covered lamps. Then suddenly, at Gideon's signal, they broke the jars that covered them and shouted, “The sword of the Lord and of Gideon,” inciting panic among the Midianites (Judges 7:20–21). In the midst of this panic, God ordained that the Midianites would turn their swords on each other—this was God's battle, and the victory was accomplished by His power, working through Gideon's obedience (Judges 7:22).

God used Gideon, a simple man, to accomplish a great victory against a fearful opponent. Gideon was obedient and proved to be strong, due to the Lord's strength in him. Gideon was the fifth and one of the greatest judges of Israel. Because of his faith in the Lord, he is mentioned with the great and faithful saints listed in Hebrews 11:32.

As stated before, the victory for this battle was the Lord's. It could only have been the Lord who would allow 300 men to defeat the Midianite army. Gideon realized this. The people were quick to forget as evidenced when they requested that Gideon rule over them (Judges 8:22). Gideon's loyalty to God shone bright as he turned down this honor and reminded the people of God's sovereignty in His rule over them (Judges 8:23).

Sadly, Gideon compromised his faith by requesting and accepting offerings of gold, plundered by Israel from their enemies, and he used the gold to make an ephod (a kind of ceremonial breastplate). This ephod, set up in Gideon's city of Ophrah, became a snare to Gideon and to his family (Judges 8:27).

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

Gideon acted faithfully and courageously in battle, but God desires to be the object of His people's worship and gratitude, and He will not share that worship: “My glory I will not give to another” (Isaiah 42:8). God used people all through history and continues to use people today to accomplish His will. But He makes it clear that even when He does so, it is He who always ultimately deserves the credit: “it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure”

(Philippians 2:13). Both the desire and the ability to obey God are the results of God working in us.

In Judges 8, we find that the men of Ephraim wanted to share the credit that belonged to God for the battle won. We then find that the men of Succoth and Peniel would not credit God (or anyone) without proof of a certain outcome. And finally, we see that Israel, rather than giving credit to God for using Gideon, gave Gideon credit instead of God. This inclination to overlook and disbelieve that it actually was God who orchestrated the victory was at the root of Israel's tendency to fall back into sin, even after a deliverance such as this. God uses His people to accomplish His perfect plans. But when the plans are accomplished, we must not forget that we are His workmanship created to do the good works He has prepared for us to do (Ephesians 2:10). To Him be the glory forever (Romans 11:36).

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Awesome God, you encourage me. I delight in your Word and am amazed at how you use simple and foolish people to accomplish your purposes. Even though Gideon was close to despair as he focused on the Midianites, you came to him and gave him hope and victory. Lord, help me to walk by faith in you and not to despair when my circumstances overwhelm me. Help me to model that kind of faith walk to my students. Cement your Word in our minds that we might not sin against you, and that we might be light and life to the dark world around us.



COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- They will put the Memory Verse Cards in order and recite the verses together and/or to each other. They may work individually or in teams.

This time at the beginning of class should be used to review the memory verse. We have provided a template on the Resource DVD-ROM you can use to make Memory Verse Cards to be put in order each week. You may have other ideas and ways to encourage your students to memorize the verse.



After all the students arrive, pray with them before beginning the lesson.



REVIEW

Using the Lesson Theme Posters provided with each lesson, quickly review the previous lesson(s) with your students. Take 5 to 10 minutes to reinforce the important truths the students have heard so far in your class.

Ask the children questions about the previous lessons as you display the Lesson Theme Posters. Reflect briefly on the passages you read, bringing the objectives and themes back into focus. This will refresh the truths in your students' minds and maintain continuity as you teach through the lessons.



Floor Chart

MATERIALS

- Floor Chart Answer Key
- Floor Chart Headers
- Floor Chart Statement Strips
- Masking tape

INSTRUCTIONS

Have students sit in a semi-circle on the floor. Tape four headers on the floor facing the students. Be sure there is enough space for the headers and the statement strips. Cut out the statement strips. Pass out one strip per student. As the lesson progresses have students put the statement strips under the correct heading.

We will be completing a floor chart as we study the Bible today. *Put the cards across the top of the space you've designated for the chart as you list the people from this historical account. We'll meet*

Gideon—a judge of Israel; the Israelites—God's people; the Midianites—the enemy army; and of course, the Lord. As we go through the lesson, I'll want you to help me put down these statement strips under the correct name. Pay close attention as we study.

Help the students determine if they have the right strip if they are early readers. After each statement strip is down, re-read the statement together or call on individual students to read it.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

This floor chart will help us review the lesson and show us how God uses people to accomplish His purposes.



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

► Use the History of Israel Poster included with your teacher kit to show your class where the biblical accounts you study chronologically fit into this timeline.

► Because of the age and ability of 1st and 2nd graders to read and comprehend, we encourage you to read the Scriptures to the students. However, if you have strong readers, by all means have them participate by reading God's Word.

Judges 6:11-16

► As you ask these questions, re-read the verses emphasizing the answers you expect. Encourage the students to look into the Bible to find the answers themselves.

Valor: to have courage or be brave.

The people of God were in the Promised Land. After Joshua died, they turned from God in disobedience and idolatry. They entered a dark time in their history when they would not remain faithful to God.

We are going to read from the book of Judges today. We'll see that the people sinned against God, so God would punish them by bringing other nations to destroy them and steal from them. Then the people would turn back to God, only to sin against God again later! This went on for 300 years as the people sinned over and over again.

During this time, God raised up men to be judges for the Israelites even though they were disobedient and sinful. The judges protected the people from their enemies. Today we will hear about one of the judges, Gideon. God sovereignly chose Gideon and then worked through him to conquer the Midianites. The Midianites were the people from the nation that came in and took over Israel. The Israelites were afraid of this powerful nation.

? Who has the statement, "Powerful nation that took over Israel?" Which column should it go in? *The Midianites. Have student place the statement strip appropriately.*

That's right. Now listen to this as I read. Israel was already under attack by the Midianites. A man named Gideon was beating wheat, but he was doing it while hiding in a winepress because he was afraid of the Midianites, and he didn't want them to find him. *Refer to the Lesson Theme Poster. Help the students who have their Bibles find Judges 6. Read Judges 6:11-16 aloud.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? So, who came to Gideon? *Judges 6:11. The Angel of the Lord.*
- ? That's right. Who has the statement, "Came to Gideon"? Where should we put that? *Put the statement strip under The Lord.*
- ? What did the Angel of the Lord say to Gideon? *Judges 6:12. The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor.*
- ? Who knows what valor means? What did the Lord mean by that? *Allow discussion. To have courage or be brave.*
- ? Who has the statement, "You are a mighty man of valor"? Where should that go on our floor chart? Who was the mighty man of valor? *Place the statement strip under Gideon.*

- ? The Lord told Gideon to have courage and be brave. He would be with him. Who has the statement, “The Lord would be with him”? Where does that statement go? *Put the statement strip under Gideon.*
- ? Remember, Israel was under attack by the Midianites, and they were mean people. Gideon was hiding from them. Listen as I read this again. *Re-read Judges 6:13. What did Gideon ask God? Why has this happened to us? Where are the miracles of God?*
- ? That’s right. And did you hear what Gideon said at the end of that verse? He thought the Lord had forsaken or forgotten them and turned them over to their enemies. Who has the statement that says, “The Lord has forgotten us”? Who thought that the Lord had forgotten them? *Gideon. Put the statement strip under Gideon.*
- ? But wait! Even though Gideon was so scared and thought that the Lord had forgotten them, the Lord asked Gideon to do something. *Re-read Judges 6:14. What did the Lord say Gideon was going to do? Gideon would save Israel.*
- ? Yes! God was telling Gideon to go and save Israel against the army of the Midianites. Who has the statement, “You will save Israel”? Who did the Lord say that to? Who was going to save Israel? *Gideon. Put the statement strip under Gideon.*

Gideon wondered how he would save Israel. He was not great. He was afraid of the enemy. He was weak. Gideon couldn’t believe God was sending him! And yet, what did God tell Gideon? Listen to this! *Re-read Judges 6:16.*

- ? What did God tell Gideon? *He would defeat the Midianites as one man!*

Discover the Truth

- ? What a day Gideon was having! God had chosen him to save Israel. In fact, the Lord came right to Gideon and spoke to him! But poor Gideon was afraid and weak. Yet, look at the floor chart. What did we read about Gideon? *Allow students to read the statements under Gideon if they can. The Lord called him a mighty man of valor; the Lord said he would be with him; Gideon thought the Lord had forsaken or forgotten him; the Lord said he would save Israel!*

The Lord was in complete control of everything. The Lord is sovereign over everything—even Israel, Gideon, and the Midianites. He chose Gideon, who was weak and afraid, to save Israel! God is sovereign. He does all that He pleases. In His sovereignty, He had chosen to use Gideon. Gideon was NOT mighty. He was afraid of the enemy. And He thought the Lord had forgotten him. But, I think the Lord knew what He was doing. Let’s find out. I believe this victory will belong to the Lord!

- ? Who has the statement, “Sovereign over all things”? Where does it go? *Under The Lord. Place statement strip on the floor chart.*



SOVEREIGN
(Refer to Attributes chart)

READ THE WORD

Judges 7:3

We're going to move on to Judges 7. Can you find that in your Bibles? Gideon was prepared to go to war. He had gathered 32,000 soldiers. But, guess what? The Lord didn't want him to use that many men. The Lord still wanted to make the army smaller. Listen to this. The Lord said some of the men could leave. Listen carefully. *Read Judges 7:3.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

? Remember, Gideon had an army of 32,000 men. Who did God say could leave and go back? *Whoever was afraid.*

Yes. Whoever was afraid could leave. The Lord thought that Gideon's army was too large. And if Gideon won the battle with such a large army, the people would boast that they had won the battle all by themselves. The Lord did not want the people to brag about winning.

? And how many men went back? *Re-read Judges 7:3 if necessary. 22,000.*

Well, let's see. The army started with 32,000 men and 22,000 men were afraid and left. That leaves 10,000 men in Gideon's army. Who has the statement about the size of the army? Where should it go? *Add the statement strip about the army under the Israelites.*

But, guess what? God still thought the army was too big!

God told Gideon to take the men to the river. God was going to make the army even smaller. God had a very different plan. And it had to do with how the men would drink water from the river. He was going to send even more of Gideon's army home. Listen as I read. *Read Judges 7:5-6.*

? Where did they go to drink? *To the river.*

? Who has the statement, "Went to the river to drink"? Where should we put it? *Under The Israelites.*

God wanted to see how the men would drink. Some men would get down on the ground and stick their heads right in the water to drink. Other men would squat down and fill their hands with water, then lap the water like a dog. Those who drank the water from their hands and lapped it like a dog were the men chosen to go with Gideon into battle.

? So, do you remember how many men drank the water by lapping like a dog? *Re-read Judges 7:6. 300.*

God had taken Gideon's army of 32,000 and made it an army of 300! The Lord would use only 300 men to defeat the Midianites. With such a small

Judges 7:5-6

army, the Israelites would know the victory wasn't because of anything they did. The victory would be the Lord's!

- ? Who made the army only 300 men? *The Lord.*
- ? The Lord did it. Who has the statement that says, "Made the army only 300 men"? Where does it go? *Place the statement strip under The Lord.*

God picked the 300 men to fight the Midianites in a strange way—by how they drank the water. And we're going to see that God won the battle in a strange way, too. Gideon divided his men into three groups. He gave them trumpets for blowing, empty pitchers, and torches. Hmm. How was this going to work?

Listen as I read this. *Read Judges 7:20.*

Judges 7:20

- ? What did they do with their trumpets? *Blew them.*
- ? What did they do with the pitchers? *Broke them.*
- ? What did they do with the torches? *Held them in their left hands.*
- ? What did they scream? *"The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!"*
- ? Who has the statement that says, "Used trumpets, pitchers, and torches to win the battle"? Where should we put this statement? *Under The Israelites.*

Discover the Truth

Wow! What a very strange battle plan. First, God reduced the number of men in the army to 300! Then he told the people to take empty pitchers, torches, and trumpets instead of swords! The people and Gideon obeyed God, and God was faithful to them. The Midianites ran, cried out, and fled from the screaming Israelites. Remember, they were crying out, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" This was one victory that God would get the credit for. Only God could have known that the powerful Midianites would run scared from 300 men with trumpets, pitchers, and torches. The Lord wanted all the victory for this battle—and He would get it. There is no other explanation. The enemy ran scared, and the Israelites only had to obey God.

- ? The victory for this battle belonged to the Lord! Who has that statement? Where should we put it on the floor chart? *Under The Lord.*

The victory truly did belong to the Lord. The Lord wanted all the credit.

- ? Who has the statement, "The army was defeated"? Where does it go? Which army was defeated? *Under The Midianites.*





Gideon's Four Corners

MATERIALS

- Gideon's Four Corners Signs
- Gideon's Four Corners Questions
- Tape

INSTRUCTIONS

Tape the signs to the four corners of the classroom. Read each one as you tape them up. This game is like Four Corners in that students will be choosing their answers by moving to a corner of the room.

Read the questions from Gideon's Four Corners Questions, one at a time, allowing the students to move to where they think the correct answer is. Count down from 10 if the students are taking too long. Discuss each answer briefly as review.

Let's see if you were paying attention to what happened to Gideon. Today you'll

be playing Gideon's Four Corners. When I ask a question, I want you to move to the corner of the classroom that shows your answer. Think about the question for a moment and try not to follow other students. I want to see how much you remember. *Begin game.*

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

The victory of this battle belonged to the Lord. The Lord used Gideon, even though he was not mighty—he was weak and afraid. But Gideon obeyed God and trusted that God would lead them to victory. And the victory truly belonged to the Lord.



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

Today we heard that God chose Gideon. Gideon was not a mighty man. He wondered how he could save Israel. He was afraid and weak. He was the youngest in his home. Yet God chose him to save Israel from the powerful Midianite army. God knew what He wanted, and He wanted Gideon to lead the army. But God also wanted to be sure that everyone knew the victory belonged to God alone. God showed that He was sovereign over all the details of this battle, including choosing Gideon to lead it.

And the victory was one only God could have achieved. Remember, Gideon's army started with 32,000 men. But God reduced it to only 300 men.

? What were the strange weapons God wanted them to use? *Trumpets, empty pitchers, and torches.*

The victory was clearly the Lord's alone. There was no way this group of men armed with trumpets, empty pitchers, and torches could have won the battle. God won the battle, and He gets the glory.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

God loves using His people to accomplish His purposes. And He did just that! Gideon was the least likely to be chosen to lead the Israelites against the powerful Midianites.

Gideon was weak and afraid. Yet God chose him in His sovereignty to serve His purposes. Gideon was obedient to God, and God used him to win the battle. It was God's power that allowed Gideon to win in such a strange way. That battle was not won by Gideon's amazing skill. No. God alone won that battle.

God used Gideon, and Gideon was successful. Gideon succeeded because he obeyed God. As you grow up, get older, and get to know God better, He will want to use you, too. But He won't be able to do that if you don't know Him. If you know God—and love and obey Him—He will use you. And what a privilege to be used by Him!



➤ Pass out the Student Take Home Sheets and remind the children to practice the memory verse this week.



MEMORY VERSE

Joshua 1:9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.



GROUP PRAYER TIME

- Praise God because He is sovereign, and we can trust Him.
- Thank God because He gave us this class to meet and learn about Him.
- Ask God to help us live in obedience to God's Word and be used by God.

