



LESSON 11

God uses Gideon to deliver Israel

JUDGES 6:1-8:34



God delivers through imperfect people.



“The LORD said to Gideon, ‘The people with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand, lest Israel boast over me, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me’ (Judg 7:2).

Supporting Truths

1. God is powerful to deliver.
2. God delivers through human weakness to display His power.
3. God delivers because of His mercy.
4. God patiently uses imperfect people to deliver.
5. Even though God delivers, He still justly punishes.

Objectives

1. Describe God’s power to deliver Israel from the Midianite army.
2. Compare the size of Gideon’s army and the Midianite army.
3. List several reasons why Israel did not deserve to be delivered.
4. Describe Gideon’s doubts and God’s patience towards Him.
5. Explain Israel’s continuing rebellion and God’s response.

STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

God uses Gideon to deliver Israel • Judges 6:1–8:34



Lesson Summary

Because of their sin, Israel suffered 7 years of oppression by the Midianites. Even though they did not repent, God had compassion on them. He called Gideon to be their deliverer. Although Gideon had many flaws, he did believe God, and God worked through him to destroy the Midianites. Even then, Israel did not turn to God. They enjoyed rest while Gideon lived, but this rest would be the final period of peace enjoyed by Israel in the book of Judges.

Spotlight on the Gospel

As God had compassion on Israel when they sinned, so God has compassion on sinners today. But God has sent a much better deliverer than Gideon. He sent His perfect Son, who by His perfect death defeated sin and death. Now anyone who believes in Jesus can be set free from sin and find rest in God.

LAST WEEK



God is rejected by Israel
Judges 1:1–3:6

THIS WEEK



God uses Gideon to
deliver Israel
Judges 6:1–8:34

NEXT WEEK



God uses Samson to
deliver Israel
Judges 13:1–16:31

POSSESSION

Lesson Commentary

God delivers through imperfect people.

When Israel chose to live with the Canaanites and worship their gods, Israel rejected the power and blessing that God would have provided. Instead, Israel suffered greatly as different nations oppressed them. Still, Israel did not repent. They deserved to be destroyed, but God was compassionate. He heard their cries and raised up judges (military leaders) to deliver them from their enemies. It was a cycle of sin, suffering, crying out, and deliverance. In the cycle that includes Gideon's story, God showed His patience, power, and mercy by using this imperfect leader to deliver an unworthy people from a powerful enemy.

God's justice against sinful people (6:1–10)

Because Israel again did evil (Judg 6:1; cf. 3:7, 12; 4:1), God used the Midianites to discipline them. It is hard to imagine how awful it would be to live like the Israelites did for those seven years (6:2–6), but the devastation caused by the Midianites was exactly what God had said would happen if Israel did not love Him obediently (Deut 28:15, 25, 29–33). They reaped what they sowed, because God is **just** (Gal 6:7). He gives to each person what they deserve (Rom 2:6).

Israel cried out for help (Judg 6:7), but they did not repent. So God first sent a prophet to remind them why they were suffering. They owed God obedience because of His deliverance and their unique relationship with Him, but Israel did not obey (6:8–10).

Normally, when a prophet rebuked Israel for disobedience, he would then prophecy coming destruction (Jer 11:9–11; 25:1–11). But that doesn't happen here. Instead, the LORD Himself comes to call a judge to deliver Israel. This is compassion (Judg 2:18; Exod 33:19; 34:6).

God's patience with a fearful leader (6:11–40)

The one who came to call a deliverer was the angel of the LORD (Judg 6:11). Since the angel is also the LORD (6:14), this is the pre-incarnate Christ, the

Son of God appearing before he was born as a human.

He found Gideon threshing wheat in a wine vat. This was not a good location to thresh wheat. Since a wine vat is a depression in the ground, the wind is not able to blow away the chaff from the wheat. Even though he was fearfully hiding his grain from the Midianites, God called Gideon a mighty warrior (6:12). But he didn't feel like a mighty warrior, nor did he feel like the LORD was with him (6:13). He failed to consider that God was powerful to deliver, but that sins separate His people from Him (6:15; Isa 59:1–2). But God was patient with Him.

God promised to be with Gideon, just as He had promised to Moses (Exod 3:12), to Joshua (Josh 1:5), and to all believers (Matt 28:20; Ps 23:4). Whoever has God's presence has everything he needs, but Gideon wasn't sure. He asked for a sign, and God gave him one (Judg 6:17–21). Once Gideon knew the Messenger was God, he built an altar (6:24). So despite Gideon's confusion, hesitancy, and fear, he did have **faith**. He believed God.

His faith was tested when God commanded him to tear down his father's idols (6:25). Although Gideon was afraid, he obeyed (6:27). By His obedience Gideon exalted God over the idols. The Asherah idol became firewood (6:26), and the Baal idol could not protect itself. How strong is a god who needs people to protect it (6:31)? Although Israel still refused to turn to God, God used this test to patiently strengthen Gideon.

The idols were destroyed and 32,000 soldiers arrived, but Gideon still doubted. So God patiently gave the signs he asked for (6:33–40). Gideon's faith was weak, but he did believe. How would we respond in his situation? How do we respond when God calls us to act boldly in ways that leave us vulnerable?

THINK ABOUT IT

Christians also experience God's compassion, since they were once dead in their sins, living just like the world around them. But through Christ the Savior, God raised them to life (Eph 2:1–4).



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God's power through human weakness (7:1–23)

In fact, God was so intent on displaying His power that He reduced the size of Gideon's army from 32,000 to 300 (Judg 7:2–8). There were 450 Midianite soldiers for every 1 soldier in Gideon's small band. God did this because God's power is most obvious when His people are weak (2 Cor 12:9).



THINK ABOUT IT

Thankfully, God is patient with us too (Ps 86:15). He delights to use weak people to display His power (2 Cor 4:7).

Gideon trusted God enough to send away all but 300 soldiers, but he was still afraid (Judg 7:10). God knows human weakness (Ps 103:14), so He encouraged Gideon again, this time through the dream of a Midianite

soldier (Judg 7:13–14). When Gideon heard, he believed and saw that God's power did not depend on the number of men in his army (7:15; Ps 20:7; Zech 4:6).



Then God won the victory. He caused the Midianites to kill 120,000 of their own 135,000 soldiers (cf. Judg 8:10). The army that had kept Israel in terror and poverty for seven years was destroyed in just one night. God is **omnipotent**,

powerful over everything (Exod 15:2–3), even when the people He uses are weak.

God's mercy toward unworthy people (7:24–8:34)

Unfortunately, Israel still did not turn to God. Ephraim valued its own honor most (Judg 8:1–2; Mark

10:35–45), and Succoth and Penuel, Israelite cities east of the Jordan, valued their own security most (Judg 8:4–9; 1 Tim 6:17; 2 Tim 4:16). Then Gideon himself acted cruelly towards his own countrymen, torturing and killing the people of Succoth and Penuel (Judg 8:10–12). Truly it was only by God's **mercy**, His compassion and pity, that Israel's enemies were defeated.

Gideon did not turn completely away from God, but he did act foolishly. He reminded Israel that God was their king, but his actions resembled those of a wicked king: he gathered gold (8:24), had many wives (8:30; Deut 17:14–20), married a Canaanite (Judg 8:31; Josh 23:12), and even named one of his sons Abimelech, which means "my father is king" (Judg 8:31).

He also foolishly made an ephod. The ephod was part of the high priest's clothing, and it was used in discerning God's will (Exod 28:4–30). The result was horrible: the people used the ephod as an idol (Judg 8:27). Yet despite the leader's flaws, God was still merciful.

Once Gideon was dead, Israel forgot him, forgot God, and went straight back to Baal (8:33). Considering Gideon's mediocre leadership and Israel's unrepentant hearts, it is a wonder that God delivered Israel at all, and even more a wonder that He gave them 40 years of rest (8:28). God delivers by His mercy, but because Israel took God's mercy for granted, this is the last rest they experienced in the book of Judges.

Unlike Gideon, Jesus is a perfect deliverer. He lived a perfect, sinless life and died a perfect death (1 Pet 2:6; 1 John 3:5; John 8:46). If we make Him our leader, we will have guaranteed an eternal deliverance from sin and death—much more than Gideon achieved for Israel. By His power, we must strive to be faithful to the end (1 Cor 1:8). Thankfully, God still delights to use weak people to display His power.

THINK ABOUT IT

We must not take God's mercy for granted (Rom 2:4).



Lesson Outline

God delivers through imperfect people.



AGES 3–5 LESSON OUTLINE

1. God sent the Midianites to punish Israel (6:1–10).
2. God called Gideon to fight the Midianites (6:11–40).
3. God destroyed the Midianites in one night (7:1–23).
4. God gave Israel rest even though they were sinful (7:24–8:34).



AGES 6–11 LESSON OUTLINE

1. **God's justice against sinful people (6:1–10).**
 - God used the Midianites to terrorize Israel (6:1–6).
 - After 7 years, Israel cried out to God for help but did not repent (6:7).
 - God sent a prophet to rebuke Israel for their sin (6:8–10).
2. **God's patience with a fearful leader (6:11–40).**
 - God called Gideon to be a mighty warrior (6:11–12).
 - Gideon was confused, hesitant, and afraid, but in the end he believed (6:13–24).
 - Gideon was afraid, but he obediently tore down his father's idols (6:25–32).
 - Gideon doubted, but God patiently strengthened his faith (6:33–40).
3. **God's power through human weakness (7:1–23).**
 - God chose just 300 men so that God would get the glory (7:1–8).
 - God encouraged the fearful leader (7:9–15).
 - God caused the Midianites to kill each other (7:16–23).
4. **God's mercy toward unworthy people (7:24–8:34).**
 - Israel was divided against each other (7:24–8:9).
 - Gideon defeated Midian but was cruel to his fellow Israelites (8:10–21).
 - Gideon led poorly but God gave 40 years of rest (8:22–32).
 - Israel forgot Gideon and God and turned to idols (8:33–34).



TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

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Lesson Questions

Use these questions to teach or to review this week's lesson.



Ages 3–5 Lesson Questions

- 1. Who attacked Israel?**
The Midianites attacked Israel for 7 years.
- 2. Who did God call to fight against the Midianites?**
God chose Gideon to fight against the Midianites.
- 3. How many men were in Gideon's army?**
There were just 300 men in Gideon's army.
- 4. Who won, Israel or Midian?**
Israel won because God made the Midianites kill each other.



Ages 6–11 Lesson Questions

- 1. Why did God send the Midianites to attack Israel?**
He sent them to punish Israel for disobeying God.
- 2. What did God promise Gideon when Gideon doubted?**
God promised to be with him.
- 3. Did Gideon believe God?**
Gideon was hesitant and doubtful, but eventually he did believe.
- 4. When Gideon destroyed the idols, what did that show about Gideon, the Israelites, and the idols?**
It showed that Gideon believed God, that the Israelites loved Baal instead of God, and that the idols were worthless.
- 5. Why did God send away all of Gideon's men except 300?**
God wanted to make it clear that victory was by His power, not by theirs.
- 6. How did Israel win the battle?**
They won it without fighting because God made the Midianites fight each other.
- 7. Did Israel deserve to be delivered and given rest?**
No. Gideon made lots of mistakes, and Israel still loved idols more than God. But God was merciful.
- 8. Is there any perfect leader?**
Jesus is the only perfect leader. He never sinned, and He never loses.

Lesson Activities

Choose from the following ideas to introduce, illustrate, and apply this week's lesson.

AGES 3–5



HIDING IN CAVES

Cover one or two tables with blankets or sheets to make “caves.” Let the children hide under the “caves.” In today’s story the Israelites hid in caves because they were afraid of the Midianites. The Midianites stole their food and their animals.

RESCUERS

Ask the children if they have ever had the opportunity to help someone in need. Then ask them if they have ever seen a person or animal being rescued. Have they ever seen any special vehicles used in rescues (fire trucks, ambulances, police cars, helicopters, tow trucks, coast guard boats, etc.)? What about people that have been trained to rescue those in need (firemen, nurses, doctors, police men, soldiers etc.)? Ask the children if these rescuers receive any special training to teach them how to rescue others. Tell the children that Gideon was used by God to rescue the Israelites even though he did not have any special training or have any special tools or vehicles. He didn’t even think that he could do the job, but God was with him to help him.



MIDIANITE OPPRESSION

To help the children understand how the Midianites oppressed Israel, have some children pretend to be Israelites. Have them pick imaginary fruit, bake imaginary bread, and feed imaginary animals. Have other children pretend to be Midianite soldiers. Brandishing play swords, the soldiers rush into the classroom and take the fruit, bread, and animals. The Israelites should scatter and either hide or run from the room. Explain that God was punishing the Israelites by allowing the surrounding nations to oppress them.

SURPRISE!

Demonstrate what it would have been like to be surrounded by Gideon’s army. Turn off the lights at the appropriate time during the lesson. Instruct teachers and helpers to be waiting along the perimeter of the class. Each should have a flashlight. When you give the signal, have them turn on the flashlights and shout, “The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!” Allow the children to have a turn playing the part of Gideon’s army.



TORCH AND JAR

See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1.

Materials: Craft sheet, paper lunch bags, toilet-paper or paper-towel tubes, string, orange paper, tape, scissors, and markers.

Directions: Have the students color their bags and fold down about two inches of the open edge to create a pot. Tape the verse to outside of bag. Students can color (or cover with foil) the tube or torch handle and tape some orange paper flames to one end of the torch. Punch a hole in one side of the tube and another hole in the folded edge of the paper bag “jar.” Tie a two-foot piece of string from the hole in the tube to the hole in the bag.

*Torch and Jar
See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1*



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AGES 6–8



INTRODUCE

OUTNUMBERED 450 TO 1

Prepare a game and divide the children into two groups in proportion to the number of soldiers in the Israelite and Midianite armies (32,000 to 135,000, or 1 Israelite to every 4 Midianites). Then send “Israelite soldiers” to the Midianite side until the proportion is 300 Israelites to 135,000 Midianites. Since this would be 1 child on the Israelite side for every 450 children on Midianite side, just send all the “Israelite soldiers” over to the “Midianite” side except one.

SUBTRACTING SOLDIERS, PART 1

Have the children stand. First, make a loud, sudden sound and see which children jump. Have those children sit down. Give each remaining child a glass of water and a straw (do not put the straw in the cup). Tell the children to drink the water. The children that drink without using the straws are to remain standing while the rest sit down. Explain that in today’s lesson, God wanted Gideon to trust Him to conquer the Midianites, so He allowed only 300 of the original 32,000 soldiers to go into battle. He used two tests, like the tests you just used, to decide which 300 men would make up the army.



ILLUSTRATE

OPPRESSION

Oppression is defined as the exercise of authority or power in a burdensome, cruel, or unjust manner. To illustrate oppression, place a burden on a child’s back and assign him difficult tasks to accomplish.

SUBTRACTING SOLDIERS, PART 2

Give each of the remaining children (see “Subtracting Soldiers, Part 1”) a pitcher with a flashlight inside (to hold in his left hand) and a trumpet (to hold in his right hand). Turn off the lights, and instruct the children to throw down their pitchers and make a lot of noise with the trumpets. Tell them to flash their lights and cry out, “The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!” (Judges 7:20). Explain that this noise caused the Midianites to panic, and as they retreated, they actually killed their own men by mistake. Also inform the children that each light usually indicated many soldiers, so there appeared to be many more than 300 people coming toward the Midianites. Conclude by making comparisons to the lesson on conquering Jericho. God used unusual battle plans during both conquests to ensure that Israel would put their trust in Him and give Him the glory for their successes.



APPLY

HORN TRUMPET

Materials: Paper plate, brown construction paper, yarn, scissors, tape, and glue.

Directions: Pre-cut strips of brown construction paper (1 in w x 10 in l). Have each student create a horn trumpet. Shape a paper plate into the form of a horn and tape together securely. Glue strips of brown construction paper to the outside of the paper plate, covering entirely. Fold the left over portion of the strips into the center of the plate. Tape loose edges down. Cover the inside of the plate with brown paper. Loop a 4ft piece of yarn through the openings and tie off.



AGES 9–11



THE VOICE OF THE PROPHET

You can teach the background to this lesson by having an adult volunteer enter the class dressed as a prophet. He can speak to the class as the prophet would have spoken to Israel, explaining how they had disobeyed God's instructions.

WHAT DO YOUR PRAYERS SAY?

The Israelites repeatedly sinned against God and consequently were oppressed by their enemies. When their situation became unbearable, they cried out to God for deliverance. They did not, however, display any repentance, worship, or gratitude. Some did not turn to God even in the harshest circumstances. Ask the children what they pray to God for. Do they confess their sins? Do they merely ask for things from God? Do they pray for other people and thank God for the good things He provides? Do they completely forget to pray?



HEROES

Ask the children to explain what it means to be a hero. Then ask them to give some examples of heroes. None of the people in today's story is a hero. The Israelites are weak and fearful. Even God's chosen servant, Gideon, is scared. He blames God for his troubles, complains, worships idols, and does not glorify God when God delivers Israel. But there is one amazing hero. God is the hero! He deserves all the glory and honor for delivering the Israelites

OUTNUMBERED

Fill up a bucket with 450 oz of water (about 3 ½ gallons). Then put 1 oz of water in a cup (2 tablespoons or 1/8 of a cup). Have a child lift up the bucket then the cup. Explain that this is like the Midianites compared to the Israelites.



GOD'S PATIENCE

It is remarkable that God was so patient with Gideon. When the angel of the Lord came to Gideon, Gideon blamed God for Israel's troubles. Then he grumbled and complained and was afraid. Gideon boldly demanded signs and miracles from God, even up to the final minutes before God would deliver the Midianite army. Then afterward, Gideon claimed the glory for himself as Israel's deliverer. Gideon clearly was not worthy of God's favor and mercy. And neither are we. God is merciful to us even though we don't deserve to be saved. We should praise God for His mercy and serve Him with all our hearts.