



LESSON PLAN

Scripture Texts:

Judges 7:1-23

Philippians 3:4b-11

Session Theme:

Grace

a. Welcome to Class

Teachers should arrive in the classroom well in advance of class. Welcome students as they enter, and inquire about their week. Pass out name tags and record attendance on a classroom chart.

b. Icebreaker: An Unexpected Gift

Bring a bag of treats or small trinkets to class, being sure there is one for each kid. Explain that anyone who wants to “win” one of these will each have to compete in an arm wrestling contest first. After a pause, tell the class that actually, that’s not going to happen at all. Instead, you are simply going to share with everyone. Let kids have one (and eat it if it’s a treat!) while you discuss what it feels like to receive an unexpected gift.

Have you ever heard the word “grace”? What do you think it means? To receive grace is to receive a gift, freely given, without having to do anything to earn it. In today’s Bible story, the Israelites experienced this. What happened? Let’s begin our lesson to find out!

c. Opening Prayer

Almighty God, thank you for all that you give us each day — for people who care for us, for our beautiful earth, for our very lives. Help us to appreciate these good gifts. We ask this in the name of Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

d. SEED Video or Song (Optional)

The teacher may introduce the lesson by playing the video clip from the SEED website. This time may also include an opening song or two, using a commercial Sunday School music CD.

Song suggestions for this lesson:

- “Amazing Grace” (hymn)
- “I’m in the Lord’s Army” (children’s song)

e. Brief Bible Background

Read together the introduction to the lessons for the day, and briefly summarize the context and setting:

- Today’s Lesson is from the Old Testament
- Scripture Section: Judges

Before there was one king, God’s people were led by many different minor leaders called Judges, such as Gideon, Deborah, and Samson. Most were military leaders who led God’s forces in battle.

f. Communicate the Bible Story

Always keep in mind that the main purpose of Sunday School is to put people in contact with Bible stories. Use a version that is appropriate to the age level.

Upper Elementary: Read the Bible Story and Rhyme

Youth/Adults: Read the Scripture text from the Bible

For Upper and Lower Elementary, use the Storyteller questions to help the students think about the events of the story.

g. Complete the Worksheet(s)

Continue with the handout sheets appropriate to the age level of the students in class:

Upper Elementary: Worksheet and Drama

Youth: Bible Study (Maps, Timelines, Questions)

Adult: Bible Study Sheet (Introduction and Discussion)

h. Craft and Activity Time

If there is time after covering the Bible story, the class may move to craft and activity time, described on the following page. (Do not let the activity time supersede the actual time spent on the Scripture lesson.)

i. Summarize and Review

Before ending class, briefly summarize the day’s lesson one last time. If you have not already done so, introduce the Theme Word for the week, providing the definition, and asking how the lesson connects to that theme.

Youth/Adult: Discuss “Reflection for the Week Ahead”

j. Closing Prayer

Close the session in prayer before dismissal:

Upper Elementary: Practice a prayer from memory (e.g., the Lord’s Prayer, Luther’s Morning Prayer, etc.)

Youth/Adult: Use the ADTRC Prayer format



Bible Study Leader's Guide

The following is a discussion and answer guide for the Youth and Adult Bible Study sheets. For all leaders, it can serve to provide some background on the Bible lesson.

Discuss: Judges 7:1-23

1. The Israelites had been forced into the hills to hide from Midianite raiders. What do you think had given Gideon the confidence to come out of hiding and lead his people into battle? Was it his own courage, or something else?

When God first sent his angel to Gideon, Gideon was hiding out inside a wine press. He was not a warrior. But God promised to be with him. God's constant reassurance and confirmation of his promises to Gideon appear to be what really changed Gideon's heart.

2. Starting out with such a large army, why did God tell Gideon to send home so many of his military men? What lesson did God want the Israelites to learn, and what assumption did he want to break?

With an army of 32,000 men, it would be easy to assume it was superior numbers that allowed the Israelites to defeat the Midianites. As God said: "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'" (v. 2). God does not want us to trust in our own power, but to trust (have faith) in him.

3. Many try to explain God's methods here by saying he was choosing the best fighters. How does this explanation contradict the main point of the story?

Some say the men who knelt and lapped the water were the best soldiers since they maintained their alertness, even while drinking. That may or may not be the case. But the point of the story is *not* "always choose the best men." The point of the story is that God deliberately weakened Gideon's army to show that it was only by God's power they won the battle.

4. What tactics did the Israelites use in their battle? On what was their plan based?

Rather than brute strength, the Israelites used stealth, surprise, and confusion as their tactics. Having torches inside jars was a way of having them remain lit without shedding light. This allowed the torches to be revealed suddenly. To have enemy horns all around the camp would

have made the Midianites feel like there was no way to escape. God used the Midianites' fear and false assumptions against them.

5. What happened to the Midianites when the attacking Israelites yelled, "For the Lord and for Gideon!"? How did this accomplish God's plan?

Keep in mind that the darkness of the camp would have made it every hard to see — especially with torches around them serving to "backlight" their vision, making closer things hard to see. The fact that there was no single direction of attack made the Midianites run in different directions, coming at each other in the dark. The Midianites killed each other by mistake.

6. In your own life, when have you depended on God to help you with something that may have seemed overwhelming on your own? What did you learn from the experience?

Responses will vary, but most people have times they really needed to depend on God. It is easy to feel overwhelmed, especially when we feel alone. That is why it is important to know that God is with us. It is also why it is important to live out our faith in community with other believers. We get to rely on each other for help and support.

7. In Philippians 3:4b-11, Paul explained that in faith, he no longer looked to his own accomplishments and qualities to measure his worth, but only the worth of Christ. What is the difference between self-confidence and God-confidence?

This text contains one of Paul's most heartfelt confessions about faith in his own life. Paul had always been "religious" — he always worked hard to obey God. But Paul learned the real meaning of faith when he met the risen Christ. Paul learned that faith, life, and salvation were not about his own work and merit. Rather, true meaning and purpose come from Christ alone and what Jesus has done for us. Paul's faith went from a self-centered confidence to a trust in something greater, outside of himself.

8. How does the story of Gideon illustrate the way God saves us — by his grace and not by our works?

God wants us to learn that it is not by our own power that we are saved; faith is God's own work in us. Read Ephesians 2:4-10. As it was for Gideon, it is God himself who wins the victory over sin, death and the devil in our lives!

Classroom Craft and Activity Page

Listed below are in-class activities and craft projects related to the theme for the day. Choose one of the following based on the age and capabilities of the students. (Never let the activity or craft time take precedence over the biblical story.)

Activity 1: Torch Jar craft

Materials Needed:

- Small terra cotta pots (available online or at big-box stores*)
 - Acrylic craft paints
 - Narrow paint brushes
 - Paper cups and plates
 - Paper towels
 - Newspaper
- * If you cannot find terra cotta pots and paints, you may use plain paper cups (not wax-coated) and markers instead.



Instructions:

Spread newspaper over your working surface. Fill paper cups partway with water, and set these out on the table. Give each person a terra cotta pot, a paintbrush, a paper towel, and a paper plate.

Pour some acrylic craft paint (a few different colors) on each child's plate.

Remind kids how in today's Bible story, Gideon and his small army hid their torches in jars. The jars would have been larger than these, most likely, and were made of clay. They would have been opaque (not see through) so they could hide the torch flames. We are going to decorate our jars with scenes from the story now!

Ask everyone to think about the story. What symbols might remind them of what happened? Ideas could include: A flame (torches), a moon and stars (the story occurred when it was dark), a horn (Gideon's men blew trumpets), a tent (the other army was camped out), and so on.

Encourage kids to paint symbols like that on their pots. If those would be too difficult, kids could simply paint designs and one easy symbol on their pot (like a flame to represent the torches). Set finished items on newspaper to dry.

Kids can take these home and use them in a variety of ways: As a pencil and pen holder, as a small flower planter, as a candle holder, or as a storage container for trinkets.

Activity 2: Night Sounds Activity

Materials Needed:

- Night sounds (use a phone or computer to play these from YouTube or a streaming service)
- Paper
- Pencils



Instructions:

Explain that for this activity, students will pretend that they are camping at night!

Have kids sit at their desks or table and put their heads down (or close their eyes) so they can't see anything. Shut off the light (keep some light coming in through windows or a cracked door so no one gets scared).

Encourage everyone to listen closely to the sounds from the video or audio file without looking around or doing anything. Explain afterwards that these sounds might have been what the camping armies heard, along with other night sounds.

Next, play the soundtrack again for 5 minutes. This time, ask kids to write down every specific noise they hear on their sheet of paper as they listen — crickets, cicadas, owls, walking feet, voices, birds, wind in the trees, river noises, rain, etc. Were there any sounds they didn't recognize?

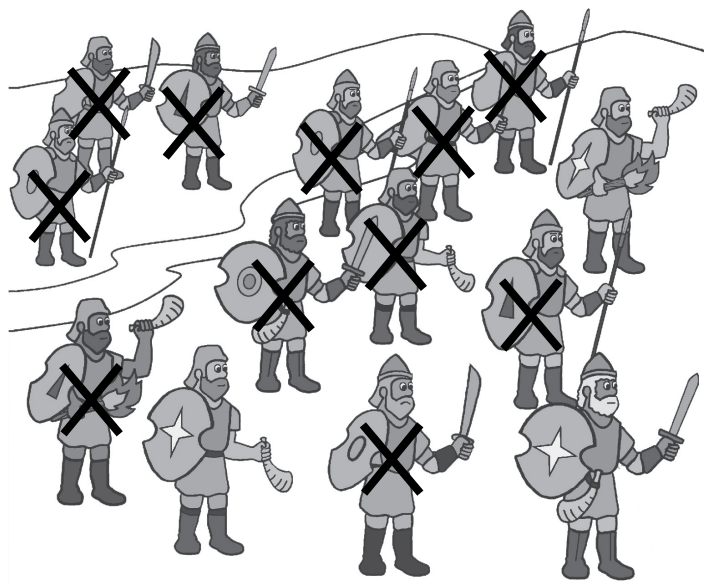
When you shut off the soundtrack, ask kids to think of other noises the armies in today's story might have heard which were not on the soundtrack (quiet talking, horns, breaking jars, etc.). Write these down on another part of the paper.

After everyone has done this, have a few volunteers read their lists out loud. Talk about how surprising it must have been for the sleeping Midianites to have heard the breaking jars and horns, and how these might have confused them in the dark. Unexpected sounds at night can be startling, and that is one of the things that helped the small Israelite army win the battle without even needing to fight.

Worksheet Answer Key

Shown below are the answers to the children's worksheet for this week's lesson:

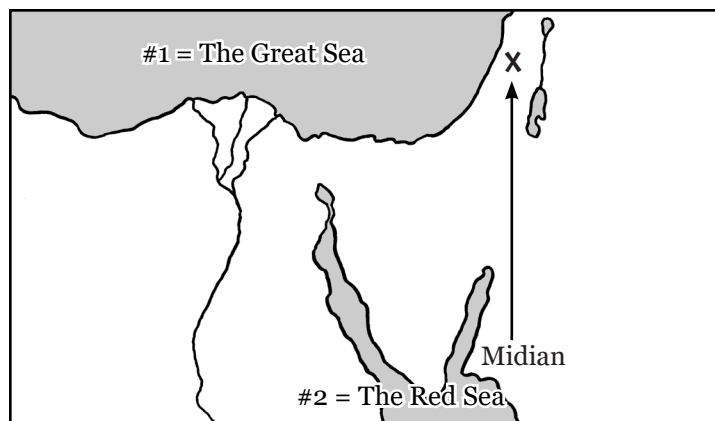
Process of Elimination



Soldier Countdown

Cross Out Soldiers with:

- | | |
|-----------------|---------|
| 1) No Mark | 10 left |
| 2) Above Stream | 8 left |
| 3) No Trumpet | 5 left |
| 4) No Star | 3 left |



Map Answer Key

- Large bodies of water: #1 is the Great Sea and #2 is the Red Sea
- The Valley of Jezreel is in the Land of Canaan.
- The Midianites traveled north into Canaan.

Vocabulary Word for the Week

Teachers may want to introduce the theme word for the week to help expand students' biblical vocabulary.

Grace

a gift, freely given

*God's love is pure grace;
it's a free gift for each of us.*

Reflection for the Week Ahead

God provided the victory in this week's story about Gideon and his army. It was clearly the Lord's doing so that there would be no mistake who was in control!

Often when something happens in our own lives that we cannot explain, we look at it through the eyes of faith and see that God was behind it. There are no coincidences!

Talk together about a time when you were facing a situation that seemed impossible, or nearly so, and suddenly it all worked out.

How did everything fall into place just in time? How did you know that God was behind it? What things happened that could not simply be coincidences?



St. Paul wrote, "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). God cares about the tiniest details of our lives, and he knows everything about us, including our hopes and dreams for the future. He knows what is in our best interests as well.

How does this verse tie into the situation you shared above? How does it help you to trust in God, no matter what is happening in your life?

The Practice of Prayer

On the lines below, write a prayer thanking God for his mercy and grace in your life. Ask him to help you recognize when he is working in your life for good.

Practice using the ADTRC Prayer Form: Address, Description, Thanks, Request, Conclusion.