

# Gideon

Judges 6:1—8:35

Main Street



## bible verse

COMMITTING TO MEMORY

### Deuteronomy 31:6

Do not be afraid...for the Lord your God is with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.



## story lesson

BIBLE STORY

Once again the cycle of sin emerges. "...the Israelites did evil in the sight of the Lord, and for seven years he gave them into the hands of the Midianites" (Judges 6:1).

Because the Midianites were a very oppressive force, they forced the Israelites to live in mountain caves and strongholds. Whenever the Israelites planted crops to grow and eat, the Midianite raiders would come in and ruin their crops and devastate the land. And so true to the sin cycle form, when the Israelites did evil and after the oppressing force came in, the people would then cry out to the Lord for a deliverer (like Moses). So he sent them a prophet and he said:

"I brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. I snatched you from the power of Egypt and from the hand of all your oppressors. I drove them from before you and gave you their land. I said to you, 'I am the Lord your God; do not worship the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you live.' But you have not listened to me" (Judges 6:8-10).

Thankfully, the Lord is slow to anger and abounding in love and forgiveness.

An angel of the Lord appears to a man named Gideon while he is hiding out threshing wheat. The angel tells him that the Lord is with him, mighty warrior. Gideon questioningly asks how the Lord can be with them if they are being violently oppressed by the Midianites. The angel sidesteps the obvious answer to the irrelevant question. "Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?" (Judg 6:14). Gideon answers that he is weak, how could he do that? The angel says again that the Lord is with him. Gideon asks for a sign from the angel and asks the angel wait. The Lord said that he would wait. Gideon brought back meat and unleavened bread and was told by the Lord to put them on a rock and pour some broth over it. Gideon did so and then the angel of the Lord touched the meat and bread with the tip of his staff and fire flared from the rock, consuming the meat and the bread! And the angel of the Lord disappeared. Gideon had been visited by the Sovereign Lord of Israel!

The Lord then told Gideon to tear down his father's altar to Baal and the Asherah pole that was beside it. He did so, but because he was afraid he did it at night. The next day the people were mad because someone had torn down the altar. They investigated and found out that Gideon had done the deed. They demanded that he be put to death, but Gideon's father (the owner of the altar to Baal), said to them:

"Are you going to plead Baal's cause? Are you trying to save him? Whoever fights for him shall be put to death by morning! If Baal really is a god, he can defend himself when somebody breaks down his altar" (Judges 6:31).

So they called Gideon 'Jeru-baal' which means 'let Baal contend with him.' (Judges 6:32).

Gideon sounded the trumpet to call the people of Israel to fight the Midianites, Amalekites, and other eastern people who were oppressing them. Gideon asked God to complete a couple of tests to show that He would save the Israelites by his hand. A fleece was placed on the ground. If there was dew on the fleece only in the morning, Gideon would know. In the morning, the fleece was full of dew while the ground was dry. Gideon asked God for one more test—if the fleece would be dry and the ground around full of dew. In the morning, the fleece was bone dry while the ground around the fleece was full of dew.

Then Gideon took 32,000 men and got ready to fight. The Lord, however, told Gideon that he had too many men.

"In order that Israel may not boast against me that her own strength has saved her, announce now to the people, 'Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.' So twenty-two thousand men left, while ten thousand remained" (Judges 7:2-3).

And the Lord said that he still had too many men. So he asked Gideon to sift through the rest as they went to the water for a drink. Three hundred of the men lapped water with their hands while all the rest got down on their knees to drink. Then the Lord said, "With the three hundred men that lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands. Let all the other men go, each to his own place" (Judges 7:7).

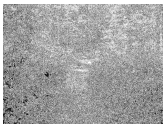
The camp of Midian lay below in a valley (Judges 7:8). The Lord sent Gideon to overhear what the people in Midianite camp were saying. Gideon overheard a man who had a dream and the dream was interpreted by a fellow Midianite: "This can be nothing other than the sword of Gideon son of Joash, the Israelite. God has given the Midianites and the whole camp into his hands" (Judges 7:14). When Gideon hears this he is pumped and worships God.

He splits up the three hundred into three companies of one hundred each. Each company has trumpets and empty jars with torches inside in their hands. Then they surrounded the Midianite camp. Then Gideon and all the men blew their trumpets and smashed the jars. "While each man held his position around the camp, all the Midianites ran, crying out as they fled" (Judges 7:21). Then

the men in the camp began to turn on each other with their swords. And Gideon pursued the army and the two kings Zebah and Zalmunna and killed them.

Thus the land of Israel enjoyed peace for forty years during Gideon's lifetime.

People are always in need of a deliverer to save them...that's why there is Jesus. He is the true deliverer that Israel needs—what people of all races and language need. It is interesting that the Lord allowed Gideon to test Him. I wonder if that was good or bad—maybe neither. I know that the New Testament tells us not to test the Lord your God, but I think that means 'tempt' not 'test.' Whatever the difference, the Lord does allow Gideon to 'test' him three times.



## life application

MAKING IT REAL

### Reckless Trust

The Lord told Gideon that in order for Israel not to boast about saving herself instead of the Lord, he was to cut drastically the amount of men that he had--all the way down to three hundred men. Amazing! That is reckless trust. You would have to be crazy to do a thing like that, or really trust in the Lord with everything. That is exactly what God calls us to do--recklessly trust him with everything in our lives. It may seem crazy at times, but when you obey and trust the Lord wholeheartedly (like Caleb did), then the Lord will be faithful and be with you and deliver you.

### The Lord Goes Before

The Lord goes before and fights for his people. We are his people and he fights for us.

### Don't Be Afraid

Gideon tore down the Baal altar at night so no one would know. But they still found out who it was. All of us as humans have the propensity to fear other people (both men and women). But something that Scripture says over and over again: Do not be afraid...for I the Lord am with you. Our problem is that we forget that and we do not often really believe it.



## questions

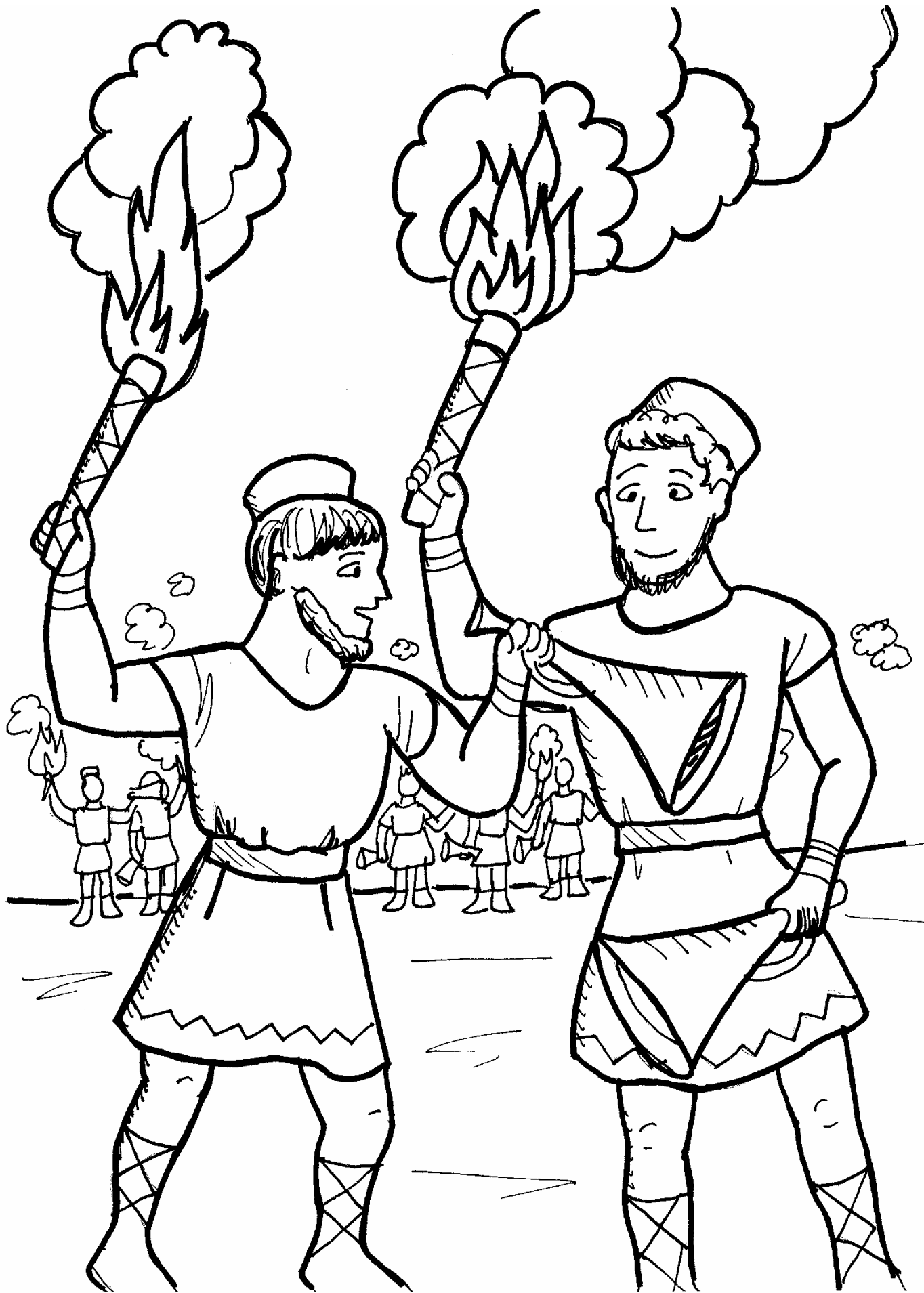
REMEMBERING

- 1. Why were the Midianites oppressing the Israelites?** Because Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord
- 2. Who did God choose as the next Judge?** Gideon
- 3. What thing did Gideon use to test the Lord?** fleece
- 4. How many men did Gideon end up fighting with?** 300
- 5. How long did Israel enjoy peace under Gideon's leadership?** 40 years
- 6. Why do keep doing bad stuff even when we know it is wrong and will get us into a lot of trouble?**



## coloring sheet

ON THE NEXT PAGE



**Judge Gideon**