

# The calling of Gideon

Judges 6:11-40

## MEMORY VERSE

JUDGES 6:16

“And the LORD said to him, ‘Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man.’”

## WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

A flashlight, a sheet of heavy paper, tape, a sheet of white paper and a clear glass of water.

Light gauge wire (bendable and in a spool) from a hardware store and soapy water.

Chocolate milk (either bring milk and chocolate mix to class or bring chocolate milk pre-made); small cups and straws.

## ATTENTION GRABBER!

### Water Prisms

Make a cover for a flashlight by cutting a very thin slit in a circle of heavy paper and taping the paper to the light. Place a clear glass of water on the edge of a chair, darken the room, and hold the flashlight at an angle to the surface of the water. Have a helper place a piece of white paper on the floor where the light is shining and move around as necessary to find the colors.

Talk about how God could use just a plain glass of water to make a rainbow (or you could just use a real prism! It’s really just a piece of glass). Explain that just like God has taken care of every detail in creation, He also has a purpose and a plan for our lives. **God wants to do great things through our lives.**

## LESSON TIME!

In today's lesson, we will learn of God's plan to give His people victory over the Midianites. The Midianites were Bedouin tribes who made a practice of conquering and stealing from other peoples. The Israelites were afraid of them and would hide in caves and try to work without being discovered. God chose to use an unlikely man by the name of Gideon to lead His people to victory.

### JUDGES 6:11,12

Now the Angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth tree which was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress, in order to hide it from the Midianites.

And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him, and said to him, "The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!"

Gideon was threshing wheat in the winepress (not on the threshing floor as was the normal practice) in order to hide from the Midianites. He was surprised by a visitor, not a Midianite, but "an Angel of the Lord." It is believed that this may have been a "Theophony" or an appearance of the Lord Jesus Himself.

The angel greets Gideon with the words, "The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor." Do you think that a "mighty man of valor" would be hiding his work out of fear? No, probably not; yet God, in His great grace and love, sees much more in His children than we do.

God promised to be with Gideon. We, too have this promise-- Hebrews 13:5b: "I will never leave you or forsake you." What assurance to know the creator of the universe, all powerful and able to deliver, is *with* us. **God wants to do great things through our lives.**

#### JUDGES 6:13,14

Gideon said to Him, "O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?' But now the LORD has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites."

Then the LORD turned to him and said, "Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?"

Does Gideon reply with joyous faith? No, he answered doubtfully, "If the Lord be with us, why then has all this befallen us? and where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about..." Perhaps, Gideon felt like the Lord had forgotten His people; yet, God "will never leave us or forsake us." In those times that seem like we are all alone and we "feel" forgotten, we must we must remember His promise--He is always *with* us, and He knows all about our situation.

Note, "...the *LORD* turned to him..." He is not referred to as the "Angel of the Lord," but as "the *Lord*"; At the end of verse 14, He says, "Have not I sent you?"

With God's promise, "The Lord is with you," the Lord encourages Gideon to "go in this might of yours..." In the Lord, we are *mighty*. In Psalm 60:12 we read, "Through God we shall do valiantly: for it is He who shall tread down our enemies."

## JUDGES 6:15-22

So he said to Him, "O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house."

And the LORD said to him, "Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man."

Then he said to Him, "If now I have found favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You who talk with me.

"Do not depart from here, I pray, until I come to You and bring out my offering and set it before You." And He said, "I will wait until you come back."

So Gideon went in and prepared a young goat, and unleavened bread from an ephah of flour. The meat he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot; and he brought them out to Him under the terebinth tree and presented them.

The Angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened bread and lay them on this rock, and pour out the broth." And he did so.

Then the Angel of the LORD put out the end of the staff that was in His hand, and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire rose out of the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. And the Angel of the LORD departed out of his sight.

Now Gideon perceived that He was the Angel of the LORD. So Gideon said, "Alas, O Lord GOD! For I have seen the Angel of the LORD face to face."

Gideon now realizes that he was not speaking with a mere man; he replies, "O my Lord." Knowing his personal weakness, it is hard for Gideon to believe God could use him in such a way. God patiently reminds Gideon, "...I will be with you." Through the mighty God, he would "smite the Midianites as one man."

Gideon asked the Angel of the Lord to assure him, by a sign, that He was indeed God. Gideon brought the Lord a sacrificial gift of food. After Gideon put the meat in a basket, put the broth in a pot, and made the unleavened cakes, he brought them before the Lord. The Lord commanded him to lay the flesh and the cakes upon a rock close by and to pour the broth upon it, making it an offering to the Lord. When he had done this, the Lord touched the food with the end of His staff, fire came out of the rock and consumed the food, and the Lord vanished from Gideon's sight.

Gideon received the sign he wanted. Now, he *knew* that the person who had come to him was indeed the Lord; however, this realization filled him with fear. He cries out, "'O Lord God,' for I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face." How do we know that Gideon was afraid? Let's read the next verse.

### JUDGES 6:23,24

Then the LORD said to him, "Peace be with you; do not fear, you shall not die." So Gideon built an altar there to the LORD, and called it The-LORD-Is-Peace. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

The Lord tells Gideon, "Peace be with you, do not fear, you shall not die." God would not have told Gideon to fear not, if he was not afraid. God is always ready to reassure our hearts--to give those that stand in awe of His majesty assurances of His mercy. In a heart of gratitude for this comforting assurance, Gideon built an altar to the Lord and called it "Jehovah-shalom" which means "the Lord is peace."

## Through Me?!

Use light-gauge wire from the hardware store that comes on a spool to shape a paper-doll type boy or girl. Cut enough strips of wire to have ready for your activity time. Make with handles for dipping into bubble soap. If the kids are old enough let them shape their own likeness out of wire for dipping.

Dip into soapy water and blow. This should create some very interesting bubbles.

As everyone blows through the shapes and makes interesting bubbles, talk about how the Lord wants to shape our lives to do something really neat with them. All we need to do is to let Him do the shaping. **God wants to do great things through our lives.**

### JUDGES 6:25-32

Now it came to pass the same night that the LORD said to him, "Take your father's young bull, the second bull of seven years old, and tear down the altar of Baal that your father has, and cut down the wooden image that is beside it;

"and build an altar to the LORD your God on top of this rock in the proper arrangement, and take the second bull and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the image which you shall cut down."

So Gideon took ten men from among his servants and did as the LORD had said to him. But because he feared his father's household and the men of the city too much to do it by day, he did it by night.

And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, there was the altar of Baal, torn down; and the wooden image that was beside it was cut down, and the second bull was being offered on the altar which had been built.

So they said to one another, "Who has done this thing?" And when they had inquired and asked, they said, "Gideon the son of Joash has done this thing."

Then the men of the city said to Joash, "Bring out your son, that he may die, because he has torn down the altar of Baal, and because he has cut down the wooden image that was beside it."

But Joash said to all who stood against him, "Would you plead for Baal? Would you save him? Let the one who would plead for him be put to death by morning! If he is a god, let him plead for himself, because his altar has been torn down!"

Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, "Let Baal plead against him, because he has torn down his altar."

Now, before Gideon was to carry out the work entrusted to him, it was necessary that he first purify his father's house from idolatry and sanctify his own life and work to the Lord. God commanded him to destroy his father's altar to Baal and to build an altar to Jehovah in which he could sacrifice a burnt offering.



God will not tolerate idolatry. It was necessary that the altar of Baal be destroyed before the altar of Jehovah could be built. Gideon would destroy the altar of Baal; however, this “mighty man of valor” would not do it in the light of day, but in the night, hidden from his father and the townspeople.

When the people discovered that Gideon was the one who had destroyed their altar, they demanded that he be put to death. Gideon's father, Joash, had a wise answer—perhaps, he was inspired by the faith of his son. He stood by Gideon’s decision with favor and asserted that Baal should decide the matter since it was his altar and image that were torn down.

If Baal were really God, he might be expected to avenge the crime that had been committed against his altar. When the people saw that Baal did not (could not) hurt Gideon, Gideon received the name, “Jerubbaal” (let Baal fight or decide).

Just as Gideon sought to sanctify (set apart) himself to the Lord by destroying the idol worship that existed in his family, so God desires that we tear down anything in our hearts that would keep us from completely focusing on the Lord. An idol is anything that assumes priority over our relationship with the Lord. We cannot serve the idols of this world and hope to also serve God. God wants our *whole* heart. (See Romans 12:1,2).

### JUDGES 6:33-35

Then all the Midianites and Amalekites, the people of the East, gathered together; and they crossed over and encamped in the Valley of Jezreel.

But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon; then he blew the trumpet, and the Abiezrites gathered behind him.

And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh, who also gathered behind him. He also sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali; and they came up to meet them.

The enemy gathered together again and went over the Jordan, encamping in the valley of Jezreel. Next we see, "the Spirit of Jehovah came upon Gideon." This means that the Spirit of God clothed or descended upon him, surrounding him like armor. Gideon became invincible in the might of the Holy Spirit.

Gideon then blew the trumpet to call Israel to battle against the foe. He sent messengers throughout all Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali, and they all came up to meet them. They came to support the one who challenged the false god and won.

When we take a stand for the Lord, it may surprise us to see others become willing to support us and encouraged themselves to stand for the Lord. Let us take a stand for the Lord, without wavering. **God wants to do great things through our lives.**

#### JUDGES 6:36-40

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."

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.

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.

Here we see Gideon asking for a sign from God. Gideon sought confirmation and assurance of God's presence as he determined to go into battle against the Midianites. God granted his request.

The "fleece," or sign which Gideon asked for, was that God would cause the dew to fall only on a fleece which he would spread the previous night upon some open ground and that the ground all around might not be wet from the dew. After this sign, Gideon still asked God for His grace by granting another sign for Gideon--this time, that the fleece might remain dry, and the ground all around it be wet with dew. God granted him this request also.

Gideon knew that his human strength was not sufficient for the defeat of the enemy. Gideon wanted to make sure that God, as promised, would be with him in battle. As Gideon experienced, there may be times our faith wavers or times we are unsure and need confirmation. Has God spoken or is it the enemy or my own mind with its fleshly desires? We need to be certain God has spoken. Once we are certain God has spoken, God is pleased when we move forward in faith and obedience.

.

## Straw McGraw

Tell your class the very brief story of “Straw McGraw” as you make chocolate milk (you can bring some chocolate milk “pre-made” if you would like to). Give small portions for the children (make sure to have a note on your sign in sheet to notify the parents that you will be serving chocolate milk in case of allergies or other concerns). Serve the chocolate milk with straws.

STORY: (use straw as you describe the story): “Straw McGraw” was the skinniest cowboy in Sodatown. He and everyone else thought he was good for nothing at all. He could not scoop ice cream, he could not hold but a few drops of rootbeer, and worst of all, he was always drippy. One day a boy came into Sodatown who was an awful spiller. His name was Spiller McMiller. He never could drink a whole milkshake without knocking over his glass. As he and Straw McGraw were sitting side by side feeling down about their problems, the soda manager had an idea. He would put Straw McGraw into Spiller McMiller’s milkshake. As he put Straw McGraw in Spiller’s milkshake, a great thing happened! Straw McGraw saw what he had been intended for all his life and Spiller McMiller enjoyed a lot more milkshakes!”

What if Gideon had not been willing to be used by God? What if your straw refused to be used for you to drink your chocolate milk?

God desires to do great things in and through our lives. May we respond to His leading and set ourselves apart for His service. May we destroy the idols—those things that would draw our time and attention away from God—and present ourselves wholly to God for His use. **God wants to do great things through our lives.**

## **PRAYER**

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment that their lives be set apart for God's will. Have the children thank the Lord that He desires to do great things with their lives. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity.