Preschool–Grade 6

Gideon

Sunday School Lesson for 3rd to 5th Grade, 45–60 minutes

Main point: God can use anyone who trusts Him. He made Gideon's army small on purpose, so Israel would know the victory came from God, not from them.
Bible passage: Judges 6:1–7:22. Read it before class.
Memory verse: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts." *Zechariah 4:6 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each child (or one for every two children), a whiteboard or large paper, a marker, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the board.

1. Opening game: Shrinking Team (5–10 minutes)

Everyone stands. Say: "You are my team. Sit down if you are wearing something blue." Count who is left and write the number on the board. Keep going: "Sit down if you have a pet." "Sit down if you had cereal for breakfast." Count each time until only two or three are standing. Ask: *If this tiny team won a race against the whole school, would people think they did it on their own?* Say: "God made Gideon's army smaller and smaller on purpose. Let's find out why."

2. Bible story: God Shrinks Gideon's Army (15 minutes)

Kids open their Bibles to Judges 6. When you reach a **Look up** line, a child finds the verse and reads it out loud. Tell the rest in your own words.

Israel in trouble. Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and for seven years the Midianites ruled over them (Judges 6:1). Every time Israel planted crops, the Midianites, the Amalekites and the people of the east came with their cattle and tents, "as grasshoppers for multitude," which means as many as a swarm of grasshoppers, with camels "without number" (6:3–5). They destroyed the crops and left Israel no food. Israel hid in caves and dens in the mountains (6:2). Then Israel cried unto the LORD (6:6).

A man in hiding. Gideon was **threshing** wheat (beating the grain to separate it) by the **winepress**, a pit for squeezing grapes, to hide it from the Midianites (6:11). **Look up Judges 6:12.** The angel of the LORD called him a "mighty man of valour." **Valour** means courage. Gideon asked why all this had happened to Israel (6:13). The LORD said, "Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel" (6:14). **Look up Judges 6:15.** Gideon said his family was poor and he was the least in his father's house. **Look up Judges 6:16.** God's answer: "Surely I will be with thee."

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A sign and an altar. Gideon asked for a sign and brought an offering of meat and unleavened cakes, which are flat bread made without yeast. The angel touched it with the end of his staff, and fire rose up out of the rock and burned it up (6:17–21). Gideon built an altar to the LORD and named it **Jehovah-shalom**, which means "the LORD is peace" (6:23–24). That night God told him to throw down his father's altar to **Baal**, a false god, and cut down the **grove**, a wooden idol beside it. Gideon was afraid of the men of the city, so he did it by night with ten of his servants, but he obeyed (6:25–27).

The fleece. The enemy armies camped in the valley of Jezreel (6:33). The Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet and sent messengers to gather the men of Israel (6:34–35). Gideon asked God for a sign with a **fleece**, a piece of sheep's wool. **Look up Judges 6:38.** In the morning the fleece was so wet with **dew** that he wrung out a bowl full of water, while the ground was dry. The next night it was the opposite: the fleece was dry and the ground was wet with dew (6:39–40).

Too many! Look up Judges 7:2. God said the army was too many, "lest Israel **vaunt** themselves," which means brag, saying, "Mine own hand hath saved me." **Look up Judges 7:3.** Everyone who was afraid could go home: 22,000 left and 10,000 stayed. So Gideon started with 32,000 men! God said, "The people are yet too many" (7:4), and tested them at the water. Most men bowed down on their knees to drink. Only 300 lapped, putting their hand to their mouth (7:5–6). **Look up Judges 7:7.** "By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you."

A dream in the night. God told Gideon to go down to the enemy camp, and if he was afraid, to take his servant Phurah (7:9–11). The enemies lay in the valley like grasshoppers, with camels as many as the sand by the sea (7:12). Gideon heard a man tell a dream about a cake of barley bread that tumbled into the camp and knocked a tent flat. His friend said, "This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon": God had given them into Gideon's hand (7:13–14). Gideon worshiped, then went back and said, "Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian" (7:15). **Host** means army.

Trumpets, pitchers and lamps. Gideon divided the 300 men into three **companies**, or groups. Every man got a trumpet and an empty **pitcher** (a jar) with a **lamp**, a burning light, inside it (7:16). Gideon said, "Look on me, and do likewise," and told them what to shout (7:17–18). They came to the camp at the beginning of the **middle watch**, in the middle of the night (7:19). **Look up Judges 7:20.** They blew the trumpets, broke the pitchers, held the lamps in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands, and cried, "The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon." Every man stood in his place around the camp (7:21). The whole enemy army ran, and the LORD turned the enemy soldiers against each other, and they fled (7:21–22). God gave the victory, just as He promised.

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3. Questions to ask (10 minutes)

Thinking questions (no single right answer; let kids talk)

1. The angel called Gideon a "mighty man of valour" while he was hiding (6:11–12). Why do you think God saw Gideon differently than Gideon saw himself?
2. Gideon was afraid, but he still tore down the altar of Baal at night (6:27). Is obeying while you're afraid still obeying? Why?
3. God was patient with Gideon's questions and signs (6:17, 6:36–40, 7:10–11). What does that tell you about God?
4. God said a big army might brag, "Mine own hand hath saved me" (7:2). Why does God want the credit for the good things He does?
5. When do you feel too small or too weak to do what God wants? What does Judges 6:16 say to you?

Recall questions

1. How many men went home, and how many stayed, after Gideon said the fearful could leave? *(22,000 went home and 10,000 stayed, Judges 7:3)*
2. How many men lapped the water? *(300, 7:6)*
3. What did the men shout? *("The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon," 7:20)*

4. Memory verse: Erase a Word (5 minutes)

Explain the old words: **might** means strength, **power** means force, **saith** means says, and **the LORD of hosts** means the LORD who rules over all the armies. Say: "God spoke these words to a leader named Zerubbabel, long after Gideon. They fit Gideon's story too: the battle was won by God, not by a big army." Read the verse on the board together. Erase two words and read it again. Keep erasing two words at a time until the board is empty and the class can say it alone. Then kids say it to a partner.

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5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "Gideon's army couldn't win on its own, and we can't save ourselves either. God loves you. The Bible says: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means all of us have done wrong, and none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, which means God came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). How do we obey the gospel? 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means to turn away from sin; our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are **buried with Jesus in baptism**, all the way under the water, in Jesus' name. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we come up to live a new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives the words (Acts 2:4). The Bible calls this being born again (John 3:5)."

Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

This week: pick one thing God wants you to do that feels too big for you. Pray first, then do it, and give God the thanks.

6. Activity: Bible Look-Up Race (10–15 minutes)

Kids work in pairs with one Bible. Read a reference and a question. The first pair to find the verse and read the answer out loud wins the point.

1. Judges 6:1: How many years did Midian rule over Israel? *(Seven years)*
2. Judges 6:11: Where was the angel of the LORD sitting? *(Under an oak in Ophrah)*
3. Judges 6:24: What did Gideon name his altar? *(Jehovah-shalom)*
4. Judges 6:27: How many servants helped Gideon tear down the altar of Baal? *(Ten men)*
5. Judges 6:38: What did Gideon wring out of the fleece? *(A bowl full of water)*
6. Judges 7:1: Beside what well did Gideon's army camp? *(The well of Harod)*
7. Judges 7:10: What was the name of Gideon's servant? *(Phurah)*
8. Judges 7:13: What tumbled into the camp in the man's dream? *(A cake of barley bread)*

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You that You can use anyone who trusts You. When we feel small or afraid, help us remember that You are with us, and help us obey You and give You the thanks. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a child asks what happened after the battle: this lesson stops at Judges 7:22 and leaves out 7:23–25. Read it yourself before class. Answer simply and gently: the enemy army ran away, and the men of Israel chased them (7:23–24). The land had peace for forty years in Gideon's days (Judges 8:28).

If a child asks whether we should ask God for signs like the fleece: God was patient with Gideon when he was afraid (6:36–40). Today God guides us by His Word and prayer, and we can trust what He has said.

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