

Trusting in the Lord

Scripture: Judges 6-7, Proverbs 3:5-6

Memory Verse: Psalm 20:7 “Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; But we will remember the name of the LORD our God.”

Lesson Focus: There’s no question, at times, life can be difficult. Jesus, Himself, essentially guaranteed that in the world we will indeed face various trials and tribulations. So then as Christians, how should we respond to that adversity? When things don’t go the way we want them to or are faced with various dilemmas in our daily life, what should we do? Who should we trust?

One of the consistent themes we find throughout Scripture that actually goes against our natural inclination to try and deliver ourselves, to manipulate the situation and others for our own benefit, is to instead place our faith and our trust completely in God. Everything else is a false christ, an illegitimate savior, and a sinking foundation.

We are told, then, to place our faith on the Rock, a firm foundation, one that cannot and will not wither away. In this lesson, we will look at why trusting in God and His plan is always better, even if we don’t understand it.

Activities and Crafts: Gideon Blowing the Horn Coloring Picture, Word Search of different terms from lesson

Craft for 1st and 2nd Grade: Gideon’s Torches

Starter Activity: Gideon Skit and Story (This may end up taking up the majority of the time, depending on how involved the kids are, but we will begin by acting out the story of Gideon in order to illustrate reliance upon God.)

Q: What’s a bigger number? 10 or 1? How about 300 or 135,000?

Q: So if these numbers were to represent the size of armies, who would you say has a stronger, more powerful army?

A: From our perspective (human reasoning) an army of 135,000 people fighting against an army of just 300 would be completely unfair.

A long, long time ago, a battle just like this actually took place and we are going to look at that story today. **Teachers:** See the script on the last page of the lesson and consider getting a few kids ready to help with the skit referencing it as you go through Gideon’s calling as summarized below. See also **Gideon’s** and the **Angel’s** lines below emboldened in **blue** and **orange** respectively. There is also one last line for Gideon and the army in **purple**. Don’t hesitate to grab supplies from resource room. Make it fun!

Gideon's Story (paraphrased from Judges 6):

When we first meet Gideon, it seems like he is in this place of fear. He's an Israelite, so he was among God's chosen people but he was doing something that typically should be done out in the open, in a large space. He was threshing wheat in a winepress, so that he could hide the produce from the Midianites.

Now the Midianites were a group of people from a foreign land, who did not know God and they did not worship Him. But God was still using them to rule over Israel as a judgment. Israel had sinned against God. They were unfaithful and had been worshiping fake gods. So the Midianites were oppressing God's people and making them afraid. (**Teachers:** As you narrate the story, consider having Gideon act as though he is afraid, or have him run and hide somewhere)

But one day this mysterious Angel comes to Gideon (**Teachers:** We will need another volunteer to be the Angel of the Lord). And the Angel says, **"The Lord is with you oh mighty man"**

But Gideon's response isn't exactly what you might expect coming from such a "mighty man." He's actually not really feeling it. He doubts the Lord's favor. He doubts His presence. He answers and says something like, **"If the Lord is really with us, then why is all this bad stuff happening?"**

And maybe some of you can relate to this. Maybe you've felt like Gideon before, where you look around at everything happening in your life, and things are difficult, things don't seem to be fair, and you start to question whether or not God is with you.

But that's not really the case is it? God will never leave you nor forsake you, and He hasn't left Israel in this story either. God is actually planning to deliver Israel using Gideon! So the angel responds, **"Go and save Israel."**

But Gideon, he's not so sure. He's like, **"I don't know man. I'm just a normal dude. I come from a small normal family. I don't think I can save Israel."**

So Gideon doesn't think he's capable of doing this. From his perspective, this is far too big of a challenge and he's not prepared for it. He hasn't trained enough. He's not strong enough. He doesn't have the family history. And the Midianites are way too big and strong.

But the Angel of the Lord, He does something marvelous a little later in the story, something wonderful. He reveals Himself to Gideon as God, and tells Gideon, **"Do not be afraid. I will be with you."**

God encourages Gideon to trust only in Him. He says I am going to be with you. You can do this not because of anything you can do in your own strength but because of Me. I will be with you. So eventually Gideon prepares for battle. He calls out all of his friends, people from all of Israel to get ready and fight.

Teachers: Consider using the rest of the class to represent Gideon's army and inform them they have now been called out to battle with Gideon to help him fight against Midian. Consider having them line up in battle formation or do a drill to make it fun.

So now Gideon has an army. And he's feeling a little better about things. He has a bunch of help. But when he gets to the battlefield, he starts getting a little nervous. This is a big task and he wants to make sure God is in fact still with him. So he asks for a couple signs. The first sign he asks for, is he lays a piece of wool, or a piece of cloth out. If the cloth becomes wet, but the ground around the wool was dry, he would know that God is with him. **Teachers:** If you really want to get elaborate, bring in some cloths and have the angel swap out the wet for the dry while Gideon is sleeping.

Sure enough. God answered and the next day the cloth was wet but the ground around it was dry. The next morning, he desired for the opposite. Same answer. God was with him. Finally, Gideon was ready to do battle. Or so he thought.

Teachers: Have everyone in the class raise their hand and keep it raised for a moment.

Q: Now, be honest. If you are scared of the dark, please put your hand down. (**Teachers:** Several of the kids should bring their hands down. Afterwards read the following passage)

Judges 7:2-3: "And the Lord said to Gideon, "The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.' Now therefore, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, 'Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead.'"

Alright, so everyone who took their hands down a moment ago, has gone home. They are no longer in the army. Only those who still have their hands up are with Gideon.

But God said, even that number is too big. You will still credit yourselves. You will still think you won the battle. So now...

Teachers: Have a look at the remaining kids with their hands up and find something common between just a few of them such as their hair color, shirt color, etc. Keep them and send the rest home. The point is to dwindle the size of the army down again to just a couple of kids.

So now here's the situation. Gideon, who was already uneasy about the battle, is left standing with only 300 men to fight an army of 135,000 soldiers.

Q: How many of you when you were young, or a baby, had some sort of blanket or stuffed animal that was always with you? That you just had to have and made you feel comfortable and safe?

Well Gideon, he just had his security blanket stripped away from him by the Lord. He was relying on his army to help him win the battle, but now, God had taken that away. And Gideon was, once again, left a bit uneasy.

So God comes to him and tells him that if he is still afraid, to sneak down to where the Midianites were camped. And when he gets close, he could hear a couple Midianite soldiers discussing a dream. And in the dream, the Midianites were defeated. **Teachers:** Consider having a few kids lying on the ground snoring and have Gideon sneak up on them.

Now, finally after hearing this, Gideon is where he needs to be. He is finally in this place where he is trusting in the Lord to deliver Israel, rather than himself or a large army. The Bible says he immediately worshiped God once he heard the dream. **Teachers:** Consider having Gideon on his knees praying or something to indicate worshipping God!

So he runs back to his very small army no longer trusting in his own abilities or in his own resources, but His confidence is in the Lord. And there he devises this plan. Everyone gets a trumpet and an empty jar with a torch in it.

Teachers: Assist the kids (Gideon and a few of the kids representing Israel's army) in organizing them and providing them with a candle and trumpet that we will provide in the class.

Boys and Girls: Notice there is only 300 men, armed with torches, empty jars and a trumpet. And they are up against 135,000 soldiers, who have swords and spears. They have shields and armor. So on the surface this isn't even close. Human intellect tells us this is about as lopsided as it gets. But Gideon has the Lord on his side!

Now once they surrounded the camp, Gideon blew his trumpet... And the others remaining in the army blew their trumpet and broke their jars and screamed, **"A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!"**

And as they did this, the Midianites panicked. They start running around, screaming, and crying out. Great confusion came upon them, in which the Lord had caused. So they turned on each other and even killed each other.

So as the Midianites fled, God gave them into Gideon's hand and saved His people.

Proverbs 3:5-6:

This story of Gideon and his defeat over the Midianites really exemplifies our text today. We are going to be looking at just a couple verses.

Prov. 3:5a "Trust in the Lord with all your heart" - The definition of trust is a firm belief in the reliability, truth, or strength of... And there is nothing or no one, who is more reliable, there is

nothing true that's apart from, nor nothing in comparison to the strength of the God of the Bible. He is worthy of not only all of our love and affection but also of our trust.

He is a Rock. A firm foundation. The Bible says He never changes, that He is the same yesterday, today and will be tomorrow, which means we can be sure that what He has spoken, He will bring to pass.

There are so many examples throughout Scripture that we could point to and illustrate what trusting in God looks like. We could look at Abram, leaving his home and going to a foreign land. Or maybe later in Abraham's life when he was told to bring his beloved son, Isaac, to Mount Mariah. We just saw this in the life of Gideon. You can see this with Daniel and his three friends. But put simply, trusting in God with all of your heart, just means believing what God has said.

Prov. 3:5b "And lean not on your own understanding;"

Q: Does this mean that we should just throw our brains away?

A: No of course not! This same book, the book of Proverbs, is filled with a really high view of understanding (**Prov 2:2,11, 3:13**, etc.). Being smart is a wonderful gift from God.

Q: So then what does it mean to not lean on your own understanding?

The key is the phrase "your own." Don't lean on "your own" understanding. Our understanding is fallen. It's incomplete. It's unable to see truth and reality clearly, it can be deceived.

Think about the garden. Adam and Eve were forbidden to eat of one tree.

Q: Do you remember what that tree was called?

A: The tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Think about that for a second. Knowing good and evil. God wasn't trying to be mean when He gave that rule. He was trying to protect us. We were never meant to handle the knowledge of good and evil. Only God can do that. Only God knows everything. Only God can handle such knowledge.

So when you and I lean on our own understanding, knowledge apart from God, what we are really doing is kind of crazy. It's saying to God, that we, in our fallen state, in our limited knowledge and understanding, are smarter than you God, who knows everything and can do anything. How silly is that?

So trusting in God is the smartest and best thing you can do.

God wants you to use your brains, He wants you guys to learn and become wise. But there is no such thing as true wisdom that's apart from the knowledge of God. The Bible tells us, the

beginning, the starting point, of all wisdom, is the fear of the Lord. Knowing God is the foundation for all wisdom and understanding.

Prov. 3:6 “In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” - So in other words, don't forget God. Don't forget all that He has done and accomplished in your life. Don't forget about the blessings He has given you.

It can be easy to forget about God when things are going well. It's easy to glorify yourself and give yourself the credit for the little successes you have in life. That's why God told Gideon there were too many soldiers there to help him fight the Midianites. They wouldn't acknowledge Him and honor Him for their victory so He had to dwindle down his army to basically nothing.

We tend to become proud in our successes. We credit our hard work to ourselves or maybe to “good luck”. We see our abilities and talents as the reason we are where we are and we no longer give thanks to the Father of lights and the giver of all good gifts. We forgot about God's providence, and His loving care for us.

We also see examples in Scripture, when people didn't acknowledge God in difficult times. You can see that clearly in Exodus, when God was bringing His people out of slavery and bondage. They physically saw all the power of God. They witnessed the plagues first hand. They were following the pillar of fire by night and cloud by day. God splits the sea in two but once they get to the other side, the people begin to complain. They forgot about God. They forgot about the promises of God to deliver them and bring them into the promised land.

Acknowledging God, then, rightly prioritizes our life. We are able to see things more clearly when we have a proper perspective of Him as King of the universe and as our Creator. We become free to simply trust in Him and obey His commandments, knowing that only God can know all things and do all things.

Key Point: There are so many things in our world that can take our attention away from God and steal our trust from being in Him. We believe these things will make us happy or save us but the reality is, all those things eventually fade away. Only God can satisfy. Only God can deliver. And we are told in Scripture to trust in Him and His ways above everything else and when we do will find true meaning and purpose.

Gideon Script

We will need one volunteer to play **Gideon**. One volunteer to play the **Angel of the Lord**. And a few additional volunteers who will act as the remaining Israelite soldiers. Don't hesitate to grab materials from the resource room in case you want to dress up the kids a little bit!

Angel: "The Lord is with you oh mighty man"

Gideon: "If the Lord is really with us, then why is all this bad stuff happening?"

Angel: "Go and save Israel."

Gideon: "I don't know man. I'm just a normal dude. I come from a small normal family. I don't think I can save Israel."

Angel: "Do not be afraid. I will be with you."

Gideon and his friends: "A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!"