

# Gideon and the Midianites



Scripture Reference: [Judges 7](#)

**Suggested Emphasis:** When God asks us to do something he will always help us do it.

**Memory Verse:** So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?” [Hebrews 13:6, NIV](#)



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## Story Overview:

Gideon gathered 32,000 Israelites to fight the huge Midianite army of 135,000 men. The Lord commanded Gideon to reduce his army to only 300 men. Gideon and his small army surrounded the Midianite camp at night and, at a signal, smashed jars, blew trumpets, and yelled. Torches were in all of the jars so the Midianites became totally confused by the noise and light display. In their confusion they began to fight

and kill each other. As they fled, Gideon ordered all Israelites to attack. Gideon did things God's way and his small army won a seemingly impossible battle.

## Background Study:

[Refer to more information about the time of the judges.](#) Gideon had been reluctant to accept leadership of the Israelite army ([Judges 6:36-40](#)). But when assured of God's direction, he took up the task. Gideon knew that he did not have the ability to defeat the Midianites. He had faith that the Lord would help him do it.

32,000 men joined Gideon's army. They were a small army compared with the Midianite army. The Midianite army was 135,000 or more ([Judges 8:10](#)). Even though the odds were stacked in the Midianites favour, the Lord told Gideon that the Israelite army was too big. If the Israelites won with 32,000 men, they might think they won because of their great abilities or strategy. The Lord wanted to make sure they knew that the victory was only because of His strength. To demonstrate His power, God significantly decreased Gideon's fighting force. He told Gideon to allow any man to go home if he was afraid. Twenty-two thousand men went home.




There were only 10,000 men left to fight the 135,000 Midianites. Again, the Lord said that there were too many and instructed Gideon in how to decrease the size of the group. All of the men followed Gideon down to the water to drink. Almost all of the men got down on their knees to drink from the water. But 300 of them remained standing but bent down to scoop up the water and lap it from their hands. These 300 men who lapped the water like a dog remained in Gideon's army. If 300 soldiers could defeat an army of 135,000 then God would have to be on their side.

Gideon divided his men into three groups and surrounded the enemy. The men were equipped with trumpets and lighted torches hidden in clay pitchers. At about ten o'clock at night (the beginning of the middle watch; see [Judges 7:19](#)), Gideon and his army attacked. At Gideon's signal all the men broke the pitchers, waved the torches, and blew the trumpets. Between trumpet blasts they shouted their battle cry.

Most of the enemy soldiers were sleeping in preparation for battle the next day. When they heard the trumpets blowing and the pitchers shattering all around them,

revealing the three hundred torches, the Midianites must have thought they were surrounded by hordes of Israelites. God used the resulting confusion to cause the Midianites to defeat themselves!

For more about Gideon see [Gideon and the Fleece.](#)

-  [What happened before this story?](#)
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-  [List of all Bible stories and themes on this website.](#)

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## Way to Introduce the Story:

Bring a flat pan or large bowl of water to class today. Tell the children to pretend that the water is a river. All of the children are soldiers and they are getting ready to fight a battle. They are all supposed to drink from the river before they fight in the battle. The commander, Gideon, will choose his army by the way they drink the water. Let the children drink but do not say how the soldiers will be chosen. Take note to see who kneels down and uses their hand to dip water and drink. When all of the children are finished, point out who (if any) knelt down and drank from their hand. "In today's story Gideon had to choose just a few men to fight in a battle. Most of the soldiers drank like \_\_\_\_ (name the children). The soldiers he chose were the ones who drank like \_\_\_\_\_ (name the children). Let's listen to see what happened."

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## The Story:

The Midianites had hurt the Israelites for many years. They stole their crops and animals. The Israelites were so frightened that they hid in caves in the hills away from their homes. God chose a man named Gideon to help the Israelites fight the Midianites. Gideon was not a soldier - Gideon was a farmer. How could a farmer lead an army? He knew that he could not defeat the Midianites all by himself. Even

though Gideon did not seem strong, the Lord chose him to lead Israel. Gideon knew that he must obey God. If God wanted to Gideon to fight, then the Lord would help him defeat the Midianites.

Gideon gathered 30,000 men together. That was a big army. The problem was that the Midianites had an even bigger army with 132,000 men. Maybe if they fought really hard and used lots of tricks, the Israelites could beat the Midianites! But God had another idea. He did not think that Gideon's army was too small. He told Gideon that his army was too big! He told Gideon to let all of the men who were afraid to go home. Gideon told the men what the Lord had said. Twenty thousand men went home. Now there were only 10,000 men left in the army. Ten thousand men to fight 132,000 men.

God spoke to Gideon again and guess what He said about Gideon's army? It was still too big! God wanted Gideon all of Israel and all of Midian to know that when God is on your side, it doesn't matter how big the enemy is. The side that God wants to win will always win. The Lord told Gideon to take the 10,000 men down to the water to drink. Gideon was to watch the men take a drink from the water. If a man knelt to the water and put his mouth to the water and lapped it like a dog, then he was told to go home. If a man knelt but scooped water into his hand and then up to his mouth to drink, he could stay in Gideon's army.

Only 300 men scooped water up to their mouths. That meant that Gideon's army now had only 300 men! Three hundred to fight against 132,000 Midianites! Gideon and his men knew that only God could help them win this battle.

That night, Gideon and his men went down to spy on the Midianite camp. Gideon heard some of Midianite soldiers talking. The Midianite soldiers were frightened. They had been having dreams about the Israelite soldiers defeating them. One dreamed that a giant round loaf of bread tumbled down the hill and crushed the Midianite camp.

Gideon divided his men into three groups of 100. He gave each man a clay jar with a torch inside. He told them to circle all around the outside of the Midianite camp and wait until they heard him blow his trumpet. When Gideon blew his trumpet, he and all of the rest of the soldiers started blowing their trumpets. Then they crushed their

clay jars so that it looked like a circle of fire around the camp. They all yelled, "A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!"

All of this must have been terrifying for the Midianites. The Lord made them get all confused and so they took out their swords and started fighting. But they were not fighting Gideon's army. They were fighting each other! They got so confused that they all started running away.

Gideon's army of 300 beat the Midianite army of 132,000. Only God could make that happen!

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## Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection, student interaction and/or emotion.

[Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

[Click here to download these illustrations and slideshow.](#) Be selective. Each teacher is unique so only use the illustrations that best relate to the way YOU are telling the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

## Review Questions:

1. First, Gideon's army had 30,000 men in it. Why did 20,000 men go home? The Lord said that the army was too big so Gideon told all of those who were afraid to go home.
2. How did Gideon choose the final 300 that would fight the Midianites? By the way they drank water. If they lapped like dogs they went home. If they scooped water up in their hand, then they stayed in the army.
3. What did the 300 Israelite soldiers carry with them when they fought the battle? Clay jars with burning torches inside. They also each carried a

trumpet to blow.

4. When the Midianites heard the trumpets and saw the fires, what did they do? They started fighting and killing each other and then they ran away.

## Song Suggestions:

- [God is Listening When We Pray \(Song\) English/Cubano](#)
- [Rejoice in the Lord Always Song](#)
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more options.

## Learning Activities and Crafts:

[\(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation\)](#)

### *Activities:*

- Divide the class in half and let them demonstrate the two ways to drink water from a river (use a bowl or pan)
- Write the words of the memory verse on separate pieces of paper. Hide the pieces around the room and let the children find them and put them in order.
- Act out the story.

### *Crafts:*

- Decorate or make pottery candle holders.
- Use a large piece of newsprint (or any paper) and let the children paint a scene from the story.
- [Make a shoebox diorama.](#)

Check the [Teaching Ideas](#) page on this website for ideas that are adaptable to any lesson.



[Click here for "Gideon and the Midianites" printables to print \(A4 paper\)](#)

[Click here for "Gideon and the Midianites" to print \(Letter size-USA\)](#)

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## Other Online Resources:

- [Colouring page and puzzle worksheets \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Visual Aid: Colour drawings that can be viewed online or printed out as .pdf files. Covers both Gideon and the Fleece and Gideon Fights the Midianites \(Bible for Children\)](#)
- [Craft: "Take one jar" craft \(Mssscrafts\)](#)
- [Craft: Gideon's jar from http://www.christianitycove.com/](http://www.christianitycove.com/)
- [Worksheets: There are a number of Old Testament worksheets on the following link. Just scroll down to "Judges Worksheets-Gideon". The link is http://www.squidoo.com/](#)
- [Wordsearch puzzle from https://sites.google.com/](https://sites.google.com/)
- [A good selection of both online and printable puzzles, activities and story words covering the Judges: Gideon and Samson from http://gardenofpraise.com/](http://gardenofpraise.com/)
- [Lesson Plan and craft ideas \(some parts available to members only\) from http://daniellesplace.com/](http://daniellesplace.com/)
- [Lesson Plan for pre-school from http://ministry-to-children.com/](http://ministry-to-children.com/)
- [Lesson Plan for Children's Church from http://ministry-to-children.com/](http://ministry-to-children.com/)
- [Lesson Plan and crafts for Bible Hour from http://biblestoryhour.blogspot.com/](http://biblestoryhour.blogspot.com/)

**Note:** Also see the [Gideon and the Fleece Story](#) on this site. Some of the resources

relate to both stories.

[https://www.pinterest.com/marynnz/gideon/  
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