

# Gideon and the Midianites



**Scripture Reference:** [Judges 7](#)

**Suggested Theme:** God helps people do what He asks them to do.

**Memory Verse:** "So we can feel sure and say, 'I will not be afraid because the Lord is my helper. People can't do anything to me.'" [Hebrews 13:6, ICB](#)

## 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:

[Click here for The Book of Judges: The Big Picture.](#)

Gideon had been reluctant to accept the 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 ensure 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 on how to decrease the size of the group. All of the men followed Gideon down to the water to drink. Almost all of them (9,700 to be exact) got down on their knees to drink from the water. But 300 of them remained standing. They scooped the water up with their hands and then lapped the water from their hands. These 300 men who "lapped the water like dogs" remained in Gideon's army.

If 300 soldiers could defeat an army of 135,000, God would have to be on their side. God allowed Gideon to listen to the conversations at the enemy camp and learn that the Midianites were afraid. One of the soldiers had dreamed a fantastical dream about a giant loaf of bread rolling down a hill and smashing a tent. Another soldier interpreted this as Gideon's strong army defeating them.

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 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 hordes of Israelites surrounded them. God used the resulting confusion to cause the Midianites to defeat themselves!

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

### **Way to Introduce the Story:**

Bring a flat pan or a large bowl of water to the gathering 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 based on how they drink the water. Let the children drink, but do not say how the soldiers will be chosen.

Take note of who remains standing while they drink and who kneels down on their knees. When the children are finished, point out who (if any) remained standing but scooped water up with their hands.

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."

Note: Also, see the [Gideon and the Fleece Story](#) on this site. Some of the resources relate to both stories.

### **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 Gideon to fight, the Lord would help him defeat the Midianites.

Gideon gathered 32,000 men together. That was a big army. The problem was that the Midianites had an even bigger army with 135,000 men. Maybe if they fought 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 the men who were afraid leave and go home. Gideon told the men what the Lord had said. Twenty-two thousand men went home. Now, there were only 10,000 men left in the army. Ten thousand men to fight 135,000 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 the Midianites 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 to drink water. Gideon was to watch the men take a drink from the water. If a man knelt to the water to drink, then he was told to go home. If a man remained standing but scooped water into his hand and then lapped

the water from his hand, he could stay in Gideon's army.

Only 300 men remained standing and lapped the water from their hands. That meant that Gideon's army now had only 300 men—three hundred to fight against 135,000 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 the 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 around the outside of the Midianite camp and wait until they heard him blow his trumpet. When Gideon blew his trumpet, he and the other 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 confused them, 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 135,000. Only God could make that happen!

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### **Ways to Tell the Story:**

This story can be told using various 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 or other group participation.

Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell 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.

[Click here for visual aids and more storytelling methods.](#)

View this slideshow and download it from the original source: <http://freebibleimages.org/illustrations/gideon-midianites/>

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### **Review and Reflection Questions:**

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story. Reflection questions encourage them to internalise the meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child's spiritual development and help them connect to God. [Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.](#)

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### **Review:**

- First, Gideon's army had 32,000 men in it. Why did 22,000 men go home? (The Lord said that the army was too big, so Gideon told all of the people who were afraid to go home)

- How did Gideon choose the final 300 that would fight the Midianites? (By the way they drank water. If they got down on their knees and drank the water, they went home. If they remained standing and scooped water up in their hand to lap it, then they stayed in the army.)
- What did one of the Midianites dream about? (He dreamed that a round loaf of barley bread rolled into the Midianite camp, hit the tent and made it collapse)
- What did the Midianite's friend say the dream meant? (God would let Gideon defeat the Midianites)
- What did Gideon do when he overheard the Midianites discussing the dream and its meaning? (He worshipped God and knew God would let the Israelites defeat the Midianites)
- 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)
- 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)
- How were Gideon and his 300 men able to defeat 135,000 Midianites? (Because God was on the Israelites' side and let them win the battle)
- What did you learn about people from this story?

### Reflection:

- What question do you have for God about this story?
- What do you think the Israelites' empty jars looked like?
- Imagine you are a Midianite, asleep at night, and you suddenly wake up and hear the Israelites. What do you hear? (ex: trumpet sound, yelling, jars breaking, etc.) What do you see? (ex: torches, enemy soldiers, etc.)
- Why do you think God gave the Midianite the dream about the loaf of bread and helped his friend know what the dream meant?
- Gideon and his men had to be very brave and trust in God to go to battle with 135,000 men against 300! How do you think they felt when the battle began?
- How would you have felt if you were one of the 300 Israelites fighting?
- God was the one who helped the Israelites win the battle. What has God helped you with in your life (or this week)? What's something you *know* God helped you with because you couldn't do it on your own?
- What is something you want to ask God to help you with? (You could pray together or individually to ask for God's help with these things)

### Prayer:

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a life-long friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. [A variety of prayer methods are found here.](#)

### Song Suggestions:

- [God is Listening When We Pray \(Song\) English/Cebuano](#)
- [Rejoice in the Lord Always Song](#)

- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more song options.

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## Activities and Crafts:

- [How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation.](#)
- [Visit the activities and songs pages for additional activities and crafts.](#)

### Activities:

- Divide the group 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. Then, hide the pieces around the room, let the children find them, and arrange them in order.
- Act out the story.
- The time of the judges can be depicted as a repeating cycle. Try this simple idea to illustrate the idea of a cycle that goes round and round. The [Judges Review Wheel](#) explains the cycle of the Judges.



Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable “God’s Story” printable reflection page. [Free printables for this 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.

Print and use these free bookmarks, trading cards or timelines. [Free printables for this story.](#)

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## **Other Online Resources:**

- [Colouring page with text \(Ministry Spark\)](#)
- [Other: Visual Aid: Colour drawings Covers both Gideon and the Fleece and Gideon Fights the Midianites \(Bible for Children\)](#)
- [Craft: Gideon's jar from \(Christianity Cove\)](#)
- [Other: Lesson Plan for preschool \(Ministry to children\)](#)
- [Other: Lesson Plan for Children's Church \(Ministry to children\)](#)
- [Other: Lesson Plan and crafts for Bible Hour \(Bible story hour\)](#)

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## **Date**

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