

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 this section of scripture, we have an account of Gideon's victory over the Midianites. The Midianites were Bedouin tribes that would try to conquer and steal from other peoples. The Israelites were afraid of them, and would hide in caves and try to work without being discovered as we see Gideon doing. God chose to use Gideon and in this section we see how that God called him and raised him up to accomplish His plans through His life. **God wants to do great things through our lives.**

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 is busy threshing wheat by the winepress, not on the threshing floor. Normally, the Israelites would thresh their wheat on a threshing floor, but in this case Gideon uses the winepress. This was probably to hide the wheat from the Midianites who may come and steal the wheat from him. As he is threshing the wheat, he is surprised by a visitor.

This visitor isn't a Midianite, but "an Angel of the Lord." It is believed that this may have been what's called 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, but we see

here that God sees much more in our lives than we do. Here is the promise that the Lord would be with Gideon, and that Gideon would prove himself a mighty hero through the strength of the Lord. This promise was to be a guarantee to him of strength and victory in his conflict with the Midianites. Like Gideon, **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 is all this befallen us? and where are all His miracles which our fathers told us of..." Gideon may have been thinking about all the terrible things that had come upon his people as he was threshing the wheat. Yet, he does know that the Lord had put them into the hands of the Midianites.

Gideon felt like the Lord had forgotten all about them, but we must remember that God tells us in Hebrews 13:5b, "I'll never leave you or forsake you." In those times that seem like we are all alone, and that even God has forgotten about us, remember that He is always with us, and He knows all about us and our situation.

We see something very interesting here - "the Lord looked upon him." He is not referred to as the "Angel of the Lord," but as "the Lord," and at the end of verse 14 He says, "Have not I sent you?"

Gideon was to go in the strength which he now has, since the Lord is with him, the one who can still perform miracles as in the days of the fathers. When the Lord says "Go in this might" He now points to the strength which had just been given to him through His promise to Gideon.

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 these words were not from a mere man who was speaking to him, but he replies, "O my Lord." Though he has been given a wonderful promise from God, he is aware of his own personal weakness and the weakness of his family. And God in His unending patience tells Gideon that He will be with him, and that he would "smite the Midianites as one man," that is at one blow as they slay a single man. **God wants to do great things through our lives.**

Now, Gideon could no longer have any doubt after this promise that the person who had appeared to him was speaking in the name of God. Gideon asked the Angel of the Lord to assure him by a sign that He really was God. He wanted to bring the Lord a present, not just a gift of food, but a sacrificial gift. Gideon brought a gift to God, on the acceptance of which he hoped to receive the sign which would show whether the person who had appeared to him was really God.

In spite of all that had happened, Gideon still needed to be reassured that God was truly with him. Now, we might look at Gideon and think that he really doubted all God had told him. Yet, if we think about our own lives, each one of us sometimes doubts God, even after He has done something really awesome in our lives.

After Gideon put the meat in a basket, put the broth in a pot, 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, and fire came out of the rock and consumed the food, and the Lord vanished from Gideon's sight.

Now Gideon received the sign he wanted. He knew that the person who had come to him was indeed the Lord, but the miracle filled him with fear. He cries out, "O Lord God, for I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face." Many times when we are expecting an answer from the Lord, and then He answers us, instead of responding in joy, we respond in fear. How do we know that Gideon was afraid? Let's read the next verse.

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 6:23,24

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 wasn't afraid. God did not come to kill Gideon, but to use him to set the

Israelites free. God is always ready to reassure our hearts, to give those that stand in awe of His majesty assurances of His mercy. And in a heart of gratitude for this comforting assurance, Gideon built an altar to the Lord, which he called “Jehovah-shalom,” in Hebrew, or “the Lord is peace.”

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 is able to carry out the work entrusted to him of setting Israel free, it was necessary that Gideon should first of all purify his father's house from idolatry, and sanctify his own life and work to the Lord by sacrificing a burnt offering. God commanded him to destroy his father's altar to Baal, and to build an altar to Jehovah, and offer a bull of his father's upon the altar.

Whoever would serve the Lord must abolish the worship of Baal. So the altar of Baal had to be destroyed before the altar of Jehovah could be built. Gideon would destroy the altar of Baal, but our "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 it was 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 wonderful answer for them. Perhaps because of Gideon's act of faith, it inspired his father with believing courage, so that he took the part of his son, and left the whole matter to the idol that was torn down to decide.

If Baal were really God, he might be expected to avenge the crime that had been committed against his altar. And when the people saw that Baal could not hurt Gideon, Gideon received the name,

“Jerubbaal” (let Baal fight, or decide). **God wants to do great things through our lives.**

For God to use our lives we need to tear down anything in our hearts that would keep us from completely focusing on the Lord. We cannot serve idols or this world and be used by God in a powerful way. God does want to use us greatly, but we also have responsibility to be obedient to Him.

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, went over the Jordan and encamped 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, and surrounded Himself around him and the Spirit upon Him was like that of 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. How often when we take a stand for the Lord do we see how many people will support us? So often all that is necessary is for us to take a stand

for truth, and not waver from it. 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, a strange thing for a man who is listed among the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11: 32. But Gideon was not using the fleece for a sign to discover the will of God, because he already knew from God's revelation to him what it was God desired him to do. The sign was for a confirmation or assurance of God's presence for what Gideon was about to do, to go into battle against the Midianites.

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. And God granted the sign Gideon asked for. Yet, in spite of 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. And God granted him this request also.

Many times in our own lives we know what it is that God wants us to do and we know that we are walking in His will. But sometimes our faith may waver, as Gideon's did, for we are ever aware of how inadequate we are in our own selves. Gideon knew that his human strength was not sufficient for the defeat of the enemy. But as the Lord had promised him, He would be there to help. Gideon just wanted to make sure that God would come through by giving him a sign.

But how much more is God pleased when we come to the place where we simply believe and trust in Him without a sign. So, let us be willing to simply take God at His word, and walk by faith, for Hebrews 11:1 tells us “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

God desires to do great things in and through our lives. So, let's stay close to Him and listen to the Holy Spirit's leading. Then by faith begin to do what God has called us to do. **God wants to do great things through our lives.**

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 couldn’t scoop ice cream, he couldn’t 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?

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to search for God’s will for their lives and then to do it. 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 to do so.