

Bible Story 14: THE JUDGES: GIDEON AND SAMSON

SCRIPTURE: GIDEON: JUDGES 6:11-16; 7:1-8,16-22; 8:3,28
SAMSON: JUDGES 13:1-5,24; 14:5-6; 15:9-15,20

MEMORY VERSE: "TRUST IN THE LORD WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND...IN ALL YOUR WAYS
ACKNOWLEDGE HIM, AND HE WILL MAKE YOUR PATHS STRAIGHT." PROVERBS 3:5A, 6 NIV

BIBLE STORY:

After the death of Joshua, the Israelites continued to fight against enemies that were in the land of Canaan, the Promised Land. God sent strong leaders who guided and led the people of Israel. These leaders were called judges. There were 13 judges, but this story is about only two: Gideon and Samson.

The Judge GIDEON

One day Gideon was secretly separating seed from the wheat plant in a winepress. He was hiding from his enemies, the Midianites. An angel of God suddenly appeared and spoke, "*You are courageous and God is with you.*" He told Gideon that he was to conquer the Midianites.

Gideon responded, "*How can I free Israel from the Midianites? My family is the poorest tribe, and I am the least important person in my family.*"

The angel replied, "*You will be able to do this because God will help you.*"

With an army of thirty-two thousand Israelite men, Gideon went to fight their enemies, the Midianites. But God told Gideon that there were too many soldiers, because people would say that it was man's power and not God that caused the victory. Therefore, God commanded Gideon to allow all the soldiers who were afraid to return home. Now there were only ten thousand men who stayed.

Once again God told Gideon that there were still too many soldiers. He instructed Gideon to take the soldiers to a river bank to drink water. The soldiers who put their face in the water to drink had to return home. The three hundred soldiers who cupped the water with their hands and brought it to their mouth to drink were able to stay. (*They had been alert, watching out for enemies.*) Now the enemy greatly outnumbered the Israelites. How would God help the Israelites conquer their enemy? The Israelites trusted in God.

Near the camp of the Midianites, Gideon divided his three hundred soldiers into three groups. Each soldier was given a trumpet and a torch inside a jar. In the middle of the night, the Israelite soldiers arrived at their enemies' camp. Following Gideon's example, they blew their trumpets, broke their jars and held up their lighted torches all together. They shouted, "*A sword for God and for Gideon!*" The Midianite soldiers were awakened and frightened. God caused them to fight against themselves as they fled. With God's help, the Israelites conquered their enemies!

For the rest of Gideon's life, the people of Israel lived in peace, free from harm from their enemies.

The Judge SAMSON

After many years, the Israelites turned away from God. Then an enemy, called the Philistines, began fighting against them. Once again the people of Israel turned back to God and called for His help.

God sent an angel to talk with an Israelite man, Manoah, and his wife. He told them that she would give birth to a very special child. Their son was to be dedicated to God and never cut his hair nor drink strong drink, wine. Samson was born and grew to be stronger than any other man. One day, with only his hands, he killed a lion. Many times he fought against the enemies, the Philistines, and won with God's help. For twenty years Samson led the Israelite people.

LIFE-LESSONS:

1. Gideon was a judge who obeyed and served God. Seek to obey and serve God.
2. Gideon and Samson fought against their enemies. With God's help, they won. Pray and tell God about each problem that you have, whether big or small. God listens to your prayers. Then trust in God to guide and help you overcome these problems. God will help you just as he helped Gideon and Samson.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What did the judges of Israel do? How many judges did Israel have? Name two judges that were in our Bible story.
2. Gideon started with 35,000 soldiers and ended up with 300 soldiers. Name the two things that happened so that there would be fewer soldiers. Why did God want Gideon to do that?
3. Do you think God wants us to be totally dependent upon him, giving him honor for our victories? Why?
4. What did Gideon’s army do at the camp of their enemy, the Midianites? How did the Midianites react? Who helped Gideon’s army win?
5. What are some problems, whether big or small, that we face today? How can God help us?
6. How strong was Samson? Give an example of how strong he was. Who made Samson that strong?
7. What are some ways that we can use our talents and abilities? Should people use their talents and abilities only for themselves? To help others? To serve God? Why? How?

SUGGESTIONS FOR THIS BIBLE STORY:

Choose activities that may be used in your specific situation. Consider the age and maturity of each person, locality where the story will be told (customs and traditions), and available resources, time and space.

PRESENTATION:

- Ask: “Who is the leader of our church?” (pastor)
 “How does the pastor lead us?”

Examples of how the pastor leads a church are:

1. Explain the Word of God, the Bible.
 2. Help people to know the will of God in their lives.
 3. Help people with problems that they are facing.
 4. Guide people to follow and obey God.
- Explain that after the death of Joshua, God sent strong leaders to guide and govern the people of Israel. These leaders were called judges. There were 13 judges, but this Bible story tells about only two judges, Gideon and Samson.
 - Tell the Bible story of Gideon and Samson.
 - Apply the Life-Lessons.

SHARING LEADERSHIP

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- In your group, let each one experience the opportunity to lead the group in such activities as preparing and telling the Bible story, planning an activity or project for the group, inviting guests to come and speak, choosing the snack or meal, etc.

BOOKS OF THE BIBLE:

- Before meeting, cut out fourteen strips of colored paper. Suggestion: Use one color for each set. Write the first seven books of the Bible twice. Separate each set and mix up the order of the books in each set.
 - After reviewing the first seven books of the Bible, divide into two groups. Blow a whistle and discover which group can put the name of these books of the Bible in correct order. Repeat.

VISITOR: LEADERS

- Option 1: Invite your pastor or other leader(s) in your church to come and speak about his/her responsibilities and ways that you may help.
 - Option 2: Invite a leader or leaders in your community to come and speak about his responsibilities and ways that you may help.

GAME: “BEND LOW”

- Let two people hold a long stick, broom or rope. The individuals line up and each one goes under the stick without touching it. No one can support themselves with their hands touching the ground. Whoever touches the stick with any part of his/her body or touches the ground with his/her hands must stand aside and watch. When all have gone under the stick, broom or rope, lower the stick a little more and once again go under without touching it. Repeat the process until there is only one person left. (Option: sing or play music as the game is being played.)

EXCURSION:

- Visit a court house or the capital of your state or country. Talk about the responsibilities leaders have in doing their job. If you were able to meet with a judge, etc., write a letter of appreciation for talking with you and gratitude for his work.

DAILY BIBLE READING - Gideon: Judges 6:11-16; 7:1-8,16-22; 8:3,28
 Samson: Judges 13:1-5,24; 14:5-6; 15:9-15,20; Proverbs 3:5-6

1 ST	2 ND	3 RD	4 TH	5 TH	6 TH	7 TH
Judges 6:11-16	Judges 7:1-8	Judges 7:16-22; 8:3, 28	Judges 13:1-5, 24	Judges 14:5-6	Judges 15:9-15, 20	Proverbs 3:5-6