

=BOOKS OF THE BIBLE=

Lesson 7

Judges

Objects to have:

A large posterboard or the chalkboard. Have written on it ahead of time these figures:

100 200 300
400 500 600 700 800 900
1,000 2,000 3,000 4,000 5,000 6,000
7,000 8,000 9,000 10,000 11,000 12,000
13,000 14,000 15,000 16,000 17,000 18,000 19,000 20,000
21,000 22,000 23,000 24,000 25,000 26,000 27,000 28,000 29,000 30,000 31,000
32,000

Your signs for Genesis through Joshua

Your sign reading: JUDGES

Judges in Israel

Some pictures or figurines to represent idols

Your Bible.

Introducing the lesson:

(Review the names of the Bible books Genesis through Joshua, reminding the children of the theme for each book. Give the children the name of the next book, Judges. Do not talk about the theme yet.)

Remember that Moses was the leader of the Israelites. Then Moses said goodbye, and he left the people. Moses then died. Joshua became the new leader. Joshua led the people into the Promised Land. Many battles had to be fought. We remember the battle of the city of Jericho. God caused the walls of the city to fall flat; the Israelites did not have to fight to get inside the city—God let them go in. Then the Israelites had to kill everybody who lived there; the people of Jericho were wicked people who would not trust God. After the battle of Jericho there were other battles in the Promised Land. The Israelites were commanded with each battle to take all the land and to get rid of all the people who lived there. God commanded the Israelites to do this. Joshua and the Israelites did not completely obey God; they let some of the wicked people live in some of the places in the Promised Land.

Joshua became a very old man. He did not choose a new leader to take his place. When Joshua died, there was no leader to tell the Israelites what God was telling them to do.

(Tell the children that you would like to pretend for awhile.) I'll pretend that I am God. I will choose a leader for the people. (Choose a child.) The leader was called a judge. (Have the leader stand with you at the front of the room.) The judge would tell the people what God was teaching them to do. Then the judge would die. (Have the child sit down.) The people then forgot God, and they worshipped idols. (Show your pictures and/or figurines that represent idols.) The people would pray to things like these. Idols cannot see or hear or do anything! God had to punish His people. He did this by letting the enemies that were left around them treat them badly. Then God chose a new leader. (Choose a new leader; call him a judge, and continue doing this three or four times to give the children the picture of the fact that the people were doing what was right in their own eyes; they were not worshipping God, but were turning to idols. Then when God would punish them by allowing their enemies to mistreat them, they would cry to God for help. God would hear their prayer, appoint another judge, lead the people to victory over the enemy, and then the people would forget God again.)

Fourteen different people were judges over the Israelites. That's why this book is called the book of Judges. (Show the children the book of Judges in your Bible.) The theme for the book of Judges is JUDGES OF ISRAEL. It tells us of 14 different judges; 13 were men and one was a lady. (Put down your Bible.)

Telling the story:

There were some people who lived near the Israelites. These people were called Midianites. There were so many of these Midianites that if you were looking at them from 'way up high, they looked like fields of grasshoppers. They had so many camels no one could count them all. It was just like trying to count the grains of sand on the seashore, there were so many Midianites and so many camels.

These people called Midianites needed food. They decided to steal food from the Israelites. They were stronger than the Israelites, and God allowed them to be stronger because the Israelites were worshipping idols again. The Midianites came all around the Israelites, and the Midianites put up their tents. They came into the fields of the Israelites, and the Midianites stole all the food that was growing there. The Israelites could do nothing to stop them; God did not give them victory over the Midianites because He needed to punish the Israelites.

The Israelites started to pray, "Dear Lord, we know that You are our living God. Please forgive us for worshipping idols. Look at all the trouble that we are having again. Please help us."

One of the Israelite farmers chose a secret place to grow his grain, a place where the Midianites could not see him. His family needed bread and cereal, and his animals needed food. He planted some grain. The grain grew and then was big and ripe enough to be cut and used. He was threshing his grain. He was hiding from the enemy while he was threshing the grain so his animals and family would have food enough to eat. This man's name was Gideon. What was his name? Gideon. Could the enemy soldiers see him? No, he was hiding from them. What was he getting ready? He was getting food ready for his animals and his family to eat.

There was a big tree near Gideon. Suddenly Gideon noticed that a man was sitting under the tree. Gideon was afraid; he thought that someone had found his secret hiding place. Gideon looked at the man. The man spoke to him, "I am an angel, Gideon. God sent me to talk to you."

Gideon was afraid. He was afraid because he was seeing an angel face-to-face. The angel said, "Do not be afraid, Gideon. God sent me to talk to you. He wants you to be a new judge in Israel."

Gideon looked down. "Angel, I am the youngest boy in my family. My family is a very poor family. Nobody knows about us. I am not important enough to be a judge. Surely God could choose somebody who could do the job better than I can."

The angel said, "No, Gideon, God wants you." Gideon was soon convinced that he was supposed to be a new judge. He was supposed to be the man who would lead God's people against the Midianites.

Gideon got busy. Gideon was not lazy. Now that he had a job that God wanted him to do, he decided to do a good job and to work hard at it. He got some men together in a secret meeting. Gideon said to them, "Go throughout Israel. Tell the Israelite men to get ready to go to war. I am going to lead them against the Midianites."

The messengers ran in different directions away from Gideon. They blew their trumpets. When men in different cities heard the trumpets being blown, they ran to see the messengers. The messengers said, "Get dressed in your army uniforms. Get your weapons. Come on. Gideon is going to lead us in battle against the Midianites." Thirty-two thousand men got together. (Point to that figure on your paper or chalkboard.) They were all ready for battle. Many of them had trumpets; they all had their weapons and were all ready to go.

God saw how many men got together. It was a big, big army. God said, "Gideon, you have too many soldiers here to fight this battle. I want you to send some of the men home."

Send some soldiers home? They needed a great big army; that way they would be sure to win the battle.

God said, "If the big army goes against the Midianites, then they will say that they were able to win the war. I want them to say that I won the war." God said, "Gideon, ask the men how many are afraid. Everybody who is afraid of the Midianites should go home."

Well, I'm sure that Gideon thought that this was a strange way to get ready to go into battle. But, nevertheless, he obeyed God without questioning Him. He called out to the men, "How many of you are afraid?" Many, many men held up their hands. Gideon said, "All of you who have raised your hands, go home." This many men went home. (Draw a line through every one of the figures on the chalkboard, starting with 32,000 and going through 13,000.) I am sure that Gideon thought, "Over half of my army has gone home. The Lord will surely have to fight for us. This is not a big army to go fight the strong, strong Midianites."

God spoke to Gideon again. "Gideon, you still have too many soldiers. Lead them all to the river to get a drink of water. Watch how they drink."

Without questioning God, Gideon obeyed. He had all his remaining army to go to the river. Gideon said, "Drink some water, men, before we start out." Some of the men fell down on their knees and drank with their eyes looking at the water. Other men just stooped down, and holding their heads up, got water in their hands and then drank the water from their hands. (Demonstrate.) If the men suddenly had to go against the enemy, those who were still on their feet, drinking from their hands with their eyes watching for the enemy, would be the ones who would be ready to go after the enemy.

God said, "Gideon, all the men who fell down on their knees to drink water must go home. The other men are the only ones who should stay."

Look how many men Gideon had to send home. (Draw a line through 12,000 all the way through 400. Leave only the three figures: 100, 200, 300 intact.) What a small army Gideon had to fight the thousands of Midianites! Only 300 men!

It was nighttime, and time to go fight the Midianites. God told Gideon, "I do not want these 300 men to have any weapons in their hands." No weapons? No swords, no spears, no daggers? "I want each man to have a trumpet, a pitcher, and a light inside the pitcher." The men put down their swords and their spears and their daggers. They each picked up a trumpet, a pitcher and lit a lamp inside the pitcher. The light would not shine through the pitcher. God said, "Divide these 300 men into three groups: 100 men should go on one side of the camp of the Midianites, 100 on another side, and 100 on another."

Gideon quietly commanded his men. They divided up. Silently they took their places in the dark around the camp of the Midianites. Gideon blew the trumpet and broke his pitcher. His light shined out real bright. When Gideon did that, the 100 men who were with him did it; the 100 men over on another side did it; the 100 men on the other side did it. At the sound of the trumpets the Midianites woke up. They heard the crashing of all the pitchers, and they saw all the lights surrounding them. They were deathly afraid, and they did not know what was happening! In their confusion they started to fight each other and to run off in all directions. Then the other Israelite men who were at home saw the Midianites running all throughout the country. These other Israelite men fought them. It wasn't long before the Midianites were all killed and were no more trouble to the Israelites.

Children, I wonder which is better: for us to obey God or to go our own way. The Israelites had to learn over and over again that it is best to obey God. The book of Judges teaches this.

LEARN OUR BIBLE VERSE: Judges 2:18, "And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge...."