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The Bronze Serpent

Scripture: Numbers 21:4-9

Theme: Look to Jesus and be saved

4th-6th Grade (Ages 9-11)

Free curriculum for small and rural churches

Lesson Overview

Lesson Overview: Gideon , God Uses the Weak Things Opening Hook (Engage): Start with a fun question like, "What's the weirdest thing you've ever done for your team or friends? Maybe folded laundry to earn points or stayed up late to study?" Share how Gideon felt when God asked him to lead Israel, he looked like he couldn't even protect his own home! Scripture Preview (Connect): Read Judges 6:1, 12 in kid-friendly language (e.g., "God said to Gideon, 'Don't worry, I'll fight for you!']"). Lesson Body (Explore): 1. God's Power in the Small (Judges 6, 7): Gideon was afraid because he saw only his own weakness, he had a family to feed, a barn to protect, and no big plan. But God didn't ask for a hero; He asked for obedience. When Gideon hesitated, God tested him by shrinking his army, from 32,000 men down to just 300! Why? Because God works best through those who trust Him first. (Deuteronomy 10:19 reminds us: "The Lord... chooses the weak things of the world to shame the strong", like Gideon!) 2. Trust Over Talent: The 300 men were a mix of scared teenagers and adults who still had doubts. But they listened when Gideon told them to drop their weapons, fill pitchers with water, and shout "Light the torch!" (Judges 7:17). Even when they looked like losers, their courage became a weapon. Deeper question: "When you're afraid, what's one thing you can do to trust God, even if it feels silly?" 3. God Uses What He's Given: Gideon's family hid in the barn while he fought, showing love and obedience. When he returned, they celebrated (Judges 8:28)! God doesn't just use us, He rewards us for how we live, even when our efforts feel small. (Think of how a tiny seed grows into a tree!) Application (Apply): Personal Time: - "Gideon's story reminds me that God doesn't need a perfect plan, He needs my heart." Write down one way you've trusted God in the past, even when it felt hard. - "Challenge for this week:" Do one thing that scares you (e.g., share your art, pray for a friend, ask God a question). God will fight the battle with you! Group Activity (Engage): - "Team Challenge!" Split into groups. Give each a "weak" task (e.g., build a bridge with straws, solve a tricky math problem). Praise the team that worked together, just like God worked through Gideon's team! Closing (Reflect): End with a heart check: "God doesn't need big hearts, He needs willing hearts. Who do you need to pray for today?" Leave the room with a reminder: "Even when you feel small, God sees your faith and uses it to do big things!" (Praise God for the "weirdest" things He's used in your life!) Teacher Tips: - Use props: A "big army" picture vs. a tiny

group of people. - For shy kids, invite them to hold a "torch" (candle) as a symbol of faith. - Share a personal story of how God worked through something small in your life!

Bible Story

Gideon's Brave Heart: God Uses the Weakest

One night, a man named Gideon sat under a tree with his family, wondering if they would have enough food for breakfast. The Midianites, a group of enemy warriors, had been stealing their crops and animals for years. The Israelites were exhausted, and Gideon felt hopeless. "Maybe God will forget about us," he thought, wiping his sweat with his sleeve. But then, a whisper, a gentle voice from God said, "Do not be afraid; I have seen you, and I will help you." Though Gideon was just a farmer, he knew he couldn't fight alone.

Gideon's family and friends didn't believe he could win. They laughed at his idea, saying, "You're too small!" But God didn't need mighty warriors, He needed someone who would trust Him. Gideon tried to shrink his army, testing God again and again. When he was left with only 10 men, he said, "If you want to fight, fight with me!" The men cheered. Though Gideon was still afraid, he knew God was with him. "God doesn't need big hearts," Gideon realized, "He needs brave ones who trust Him."

The battle came the next day. Gideon's army hid in a cave while the Midianites camped outside. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared and told Gideon to attack. "Go out, I will be with you!" Gideon took a deep breath and led his small group against the enemy. With shouts and swords, they won! The Midianites fled, and the Israelites celebrated. But Gideon wasn't proud, he only remembered God's faithfulness.

Later, Gideon wanted more proof that God was with him. He asked for a sign: a burning bush would not burn, but a piece of wood would. Sure enough, the bush stayed alive while the wood burned. Gideon's heart softened. "God doesn't just speak, He acts!" he thought. He also realized something important: God uses weakness to prove His power. When we doubt, God reminds us He is stronger than our fears.

This story reminds us that God doesn't ask the loudest or bravest people to follow Him, He calls the ones who are willing to trust Him, no matter how small. Have you ever felt too weak for a big task? God sees you, and He invites you to fight His battles with Him. What's one thing you trust God to do for you today?

Key Verse

Numbers 21:8-9

God's Plan for Just the Right Team This Bible verse is from the book of Judges, where Israel was in trouble. The people of Israel had been fighting against the Midianites, who were making life very hard for them, like a big, scary bully who kept taking their food and making them work too hard. Even though Israel had lots of soldiers, God wanted to use just the right number to fight this battle. God didn't want the Israelites to rely on their own strength or a big army; instead, He wanted them to trust Him completely. God's Way Works Better Than Our Way You might think that having more soldiers means a bigger chance of winning, but sometimes, God works in surprising ways. When God says something like this, He's not saying no to a big group, He's saying, "I know what I'm doing, and I'm going to use the people I choose." This reminds us that God doesn't always follow the rules we make up, but He knows what's best. Just like God trimmed down the army to make sure they wouldn't get too proud or distracted, He wants us to trust Him with anything, even when we don't know what to do! What If We Trust God Like This? Imagine if your team for a big game had way too many players. Some might be too scared, some might be talking too much, and some might not even know what to do. God's plan is like that, but better, because He knows how to use His team! When we follow God's way instead of our own, we're not just winning a battle; we're learning to trust Him more every day. If we had lots of soldiers but still lost, we might feel disappointed or even angry. But with God, we can win because He is the strongest force in the universe! Personal Challenge: Can You Trust God? This verse is a reminder that God doesn't need a huge, perfect team, He needs us to be brave and listen to Him. Here's a question to think about: When have you felt too small or scared to do something important? Maybe it was a big test, a hard choice, or even just trusting your friends in a game. God doesn't want us to be

afraid; He wants us to ask, "Lord, how can I trust You?" Sometimes, we have to step out of our comfort zone just like the soldiers in Judges did. Can you try trusting God today, even in small ways? Prayer Time If you want to pray right now, you could say: "God, thank You for being the strongest and wisest leader. I don't always know what to do, but I trust You. Help me to be brave and listen to You, just like Gideon's soldiers did. Amen." Would you like to think of one small way you can trust God today, like asking Him for help in a game or a school project?

Activities

Activity 1:

Students create a simple comic strip or poster showing Gideon's encounter with the Midianites and the "weaker" warriors who won the day. They'll discuss how God chose imperfect people and what that means for them today.

1. Divide & Discuss (3 min):
2. Split into 3, 5 groups. Ask: "Why do you think Gideon thought he was too weak to fight? What might have made the Midianites think they were invincible?" (Write their ideas on the board.) Read Judges 6:1, 7 briefly.
3. Create the Comic Strip (7 min):
4. Give each group a sheet of paper to design a 3, 4-panel comic:
5. Panel 1: Gideon's fear and the Midianites' army (use drawings or cut-and-paste).
6. Panel 2: The "weak" 300 men's plan (show the water test with cups/bowls).
7. Panel 3: The battle outcome (highlight God's victory).
8. Panel 4: A deeper question (e.g., "How can we trust God when we feel weak?").
9. Interpret & Apply (5 min):
10. Groups share their comic and discuss: "What surprised you about Gideon's team? How can you trust God to use you, even if others don't see your strength?" (Example: "Like Gideon, maybe God wants to use someone like you!")

Activity 2:

Students role-play Gideon's "weak" 300-man team (Judges 7) in a mini-drama. They'll practice teamwork, listen to God's plan, and discuss how their "strength" might differ from others' perceptions.

1. Assign Roles (2 min):
2. Write on index cards: "Gideon's scout," "Midianite leader," "Weak warrior (1 of 300)." Assign 1, 2 roles per group (5, 7 students total). Example roles:
3. Gideon's scout: "You'll test the water with cups, if the weak team wins, God's with them!"
4. Midianite leader: "They're just soldiers. How will they win?"
5. Practice the "Water Test" (5 min):
6. Groups act out Gideon's plan (Judges 7:4, 6). One student is the scout, pouring water into a bowl. If the weak team wins, they cheer; if not, they groan. Repeat 2, 3 times with the same roles.
7. Debate & Discuss (5 min):
8. After acting out, ask:
9. "How did the weak team's strength surprise you? Why did God choose them?"
10. "If you were a Midianite, would you have trusted Gideon? Why or why not?"
11. Write responses on a chalkboard or paper: "When God uses 'weak' people, what's one thing that makes you think differently about yourself?"
12. Personal Application (3 min):
13. Each student picks one verse from Judges 6, 7 to memorize (e.g., "The Lord is with me, though I am the least of all Jacob", 7:9). End with prayer, asking God to help them trust Him when they feel small.
14. Why These Work:

Discussion Questions

- Here are four open-ended discussion questions for upper elementary students based on the Gideon story from Judges (Judges 6:1-7:25). These questions encourage deeper reflection on the story, encourage critical thinking, and connect it to personal application in their own lives.
- 1. Why do you think God chose Gideon, even though he seemed so afraid and unsure?
- (Prompt them to consider what might make someone feel "weak" or unqualified in their own eyes, and how God often looks at things differently.)
- Gideon was described in the story as someone who was afraid, worried about himself, and unsure if he was strong enough to do what God asked. But as you read the Bible, you might notice that God doesn't always pick people because they look perfect or brave, sometimes He picks those who are broken, honest, or even scared. Have you ever felt like you weren't strong enough to do something important, even for God? What made you think that way? Why do you think God might choose someone who feels weak instead of someone who looks confident?
- 2. Gideon had to convince his people to trust him to fight against the Midianites. What would make you trust someone who you didn't think could win?
- (Encourage them to think about leadership, faith, and how they judge others.)
- When Gideon asked his people to follow him, many of them doubted him. They said things like, "Who can fight against us?" Gideon was just a poor man from a small town, and they didn't see him as a leader. But what would make you trust someone who you didn't think could win? Have you ever trusted someone before, even when they seemed unsure or inexperienced? What did you notice about that person that made you believe in them? How can we trust God, even when we don't see Him working in big, obvious ways?
- 3. Gideon tested God in different ways, like using fleece to prove God's presence. What does it mean that God can use even small things to show Himself to us?
- (Help them connect this to prayer, faith, and trusting God in everyday moments.)
- Gideon kept asking God for a sign, like using fleece to show when God was with him. This shows us that God doesn't always send big, dramatic answers; sometimes He works in small, quiet ways. Have you ever prayed and waited for an answer, even when nothing seemed to happen? What did you learn about God from that time? If God could use Gideon's small, uncertain faith to do big things, what small things does God want you to trust Him with today? How can we be like Gideon, faithfully waiting and trusting, even when we don't see the results right away?
- 4. Gideon and his followers ended up fighting against the Midianites, but many of them hid in caves to escape. How does it change the story if we think about how they reacted?
- (Encourage them to reflect on their own responses to fear and how they fight for what's right.)
- At first, Gideon's army was small and scared, but then they hid in caves to avoid fighting. This part of the story makes us wonder: What would you do if you were afraid to step out and fight for what was right? Gideon didn't just fight, he asked God for help, and God gave him a way to win. If you ever feel like you're too small or afraid to do something for God, what would you need to do to step forward, even if it feels hard? How can we be like Gideon, trusting God even when we don't feel brave?
- These questions help students explore the story from multiple angles, encourage personal reflection, and connect the biblical lesson to their own lives. Would you like any adjustments to better fit your class's discussion style?

Prayer Focus

"Prayer Focus for Gideon's Faith" Dear God, We come to You today like Gideon, full of doubt and wondering if we're strong or worthy enough to do what You ask. Sometimes we feel small, like we can't do big things for You, but You know our hearts and our fears. Help us to trust You, even when our courage feels weak. Remind us that You use the people who look unimportant, like little sheep, like ordinary hands, or like kids who don't feel brave enough, to do amazing things for Your name. Show us how to listen to You and obey, just like Gideon did, even when we don't understand. Help us to have faith like a mustard seed, trusting that You'll make us strong in ways we never thought possible. Amen. Reflection Questions: 1. What's one thing in your life that feels too big for you to handle on your own? How can you trust God to help? 2. Gideon told God, "Oh, Lord, what if we're not good enough?" How can we respond like that to God, even when we feel unsure? 3. God told Gideon, "I'm with you!" (Judges 6:16). What does that mean to you? How can we feel God's presence in our own lives, like He's walking with us? 4. Gideon's army was small and scattered, like how you might feel today. What if God used your courage to help someone else? Personal Application: - Ask God: "Lord, help me see my weaknesses as places where You can work." - Write it down: Today, I'll pray for someone who feels small or afraid, just like Gideon did for his people. - Share with someone: Tell a friend or family member about one way you trust God, even when you don't feel brave enough. Class Prayer Together: "Lord, we're like Gideon, sometimes we think we're too little, too tired, or too unsure. But You know our hearts, and You choose to use us! Teach us to listen, to believe, and to fight Your battles with faith. Help us to trust that You're with us, just as You promised. Amen." Why This Works for Kids: - Emotional connection: Uses Gideon's doubt to make it relatable ("we feel small"). - Scriptural focus: Pulls key verses (Judges 6:16, mustard seed faith) but keeps it simple. - Action step: Ends with prayer and reflection, not just listening. - Community: Encourages kids to pray together, not just individually. Would you like a follow-up discussion question or a simple activity to go with this?

>> Missions Spotlight

The churches in rural Mozambique are often tiny, sometimes just 10-15 believers meeting under a tree. Yet these small congregations are transforming their communities. Gideon's story reminds them that God doesn't need big numbers to do big things.

-> To the Cross

Gideon went from hiding in a winepress to leading an army, but God reduced the army from 32,000 to 300 so that no one could boast. God delights in using weak things to show His strength. Jesus Himself was born in a manger, not a palace.