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The Bronze Serpent

Scripture: Numbers 21:4-9

Theme: Look to Jesus and be saved

Jr High (Ages 12-14)

Free curriculum for small and rural churches

Lesson Overview

Lesson Overview: "Gideon , God Uses the Weak Things" "What if God chose the smallest, the weakest, or the ones people didn't think could win?" That's exactly what happened with Gideon, the Israelites were scared of their enemy, but God had other plans. In Judges 6, God didn't need a grand army (which would have been terrifying for Gideon) but a man willing to trust Him, even when it looked hopeless. Gideon's doubts and fears showed God that heart mattered more than strength (Judges 6:7), and His miracle in Judges 7 proves that God uses us when we surrender. Life Application: Life isn't always about being the loudest or strongest, sometimes God wants us to be bold with His help, trusting Him with our fears and calling, just like Gideon. When we follow His lead, even when it's messy, He turns our "weaker" moments into victories! Why This Works for Junior High: - Relatable Hook: Questions like "What if I'm not strong enough?" feel real for teens facing fear, doubt, or failure. - Encouraging Message: Focuses on heart over performance, God doesn't call the qualified, but the willing. - Actionable: Ends with a question like "Where in your life do you need to surrender like Gideon?" to spark discussion or prayer.

Bible Story

Gideon's Struggle: God Uses the Weak (Judges 6:1-7:25)

The Israelites were tired. Again. After years of living in the land God promised them, they kept turning away from Him. Instead of trusting Him, they relied on their own strength and asked the Midianites to rule over them, like slaves. God, who had delivered them from Egypt, was sick of seeing His people repeat the same mistakes. So He sent a message to an unlikely hero: Gideon.

Gideon was one of the strongest men in the field, but he was also the scariest because he was the weakest. The Midianite army was huge, and Gideon's little band of men looked like they couldn't even win a game of tag. When God asked Gideon to lead them, he whispered, "What if they think I'm crazy?" Instead of trusting God's plan, he kept

asking for proof, until God said, "I'll show you." And that's when things got strange. Gideon's plan looked weak, but God used it to prove He was with him.

Gideon didn't just trust his own strength, he trusted God's. When the army was down to 300 men, Gideon panicked. "What if they laugh at me?" But God didn't need big numbers; He needed faith. That night, when the Midianites thought everything was over, Gideon and his friends struck like lightning. They charged with torches and pitchers, and in a single night, they scattered the enemy so fast the Midianites thought it was a dream. Gideon had never been brave, but God gave him the courage to do what was right.

This story isn't just about defeating enemies, it's about learning to trust God even when our plans feel weak. Life isn't always fair, and sometimes the "least likely" people God calls on end up doing the most. Like Gideon, we might feel small or afraid, but God sees what we can't. He doesn't need us to be perfect, just willing to follow Him, no matter what.

Why This Story Matters Today: God doesn't call the brave; He calls the willing. When we feel like we're not strong enough, weak enough, or "good enough" to do what's right, we can remember Gideon. His story reminds us that God's power isn't measured by our strength but by our faith, no matter how shaky it feels. Will you trust Him today?

Key Verse

Numbers 21:8-9

"You've got too many soldiers, this isn't going to work!" Gadiel (the commander) said to Gideon in Judges 7:2 when Gideon was worried about a huge army from Midian attacking Israel. But here's the thing: God always uses what we think isn't enough, like Gideon's small, scared group, to do big things. Life Application: Think about a time you felt too small or nervous to try something important (like leading a team, speaking up, or trusting God). Gideon's struggle shows God loves to work through you, even when you're not the "perfect" one. What's one thing you've been afraid to do for God? Now take a deep breath, He's with you!

Activities

Activity 1:

Students role-play as Gideon's army, testing how God can use their "weaknesses" to defeat fear and doubt.

1. Divide & Confront (3 min): Split into 5 groups (3-5 students each). Each group gets a "mission briefcase" with Gideon's challenge (Judges 6:11-12) to "leave all their possessions" for God's provision. Ask: "Why did Gideon feel weak?" (Fear of failure, lack of confidence).
2. Draw Your "Weapon" (5 min): Each student draws their "weakest link" (e.g., shaky knees, nervous hands) and writes a prayer to God asking Him to turn it into strength (e.g., "Lord, make my fear your armor").
3. Battle Test (7 min): Groups "attack" a "midnight tent" (a stuffed animal or paper tent). Afterward, discuss: "How did Gideon's fear shape his army's outcome?" (Judges 7:3-7). Connect to real life: "When we trust God with our fears, He uses us boldly!"
4. Life Application:
5. Gideon's story teaches that God doesn't require perfection, He empowers the faithful, even when we feel small. Encourage students to pray for courage to trust God with their "weaknesses" today.

Activity 2:

Teams solve clues to "defeat the enemy" (Midian) using only God's strength, not their own.

1. Mission Briefing (3 min): Read Judges 6:36-40 aloud. Ask: "What did Gideon do that was brave?" (Divided army, tested God's promise).
2. Clue Hunt (5 min): Teams solve 2-3 clues (e.g., "Find a verse where God says 'I'll be with you'" Judges 6:23). Use Bibles or pre-cut index cards with verses.

3. Final Test (7 min): Groups "defeat" an enemy (a stuffed "Midian" figure) by reciting Judges 7:1-2. Discuss: "How did Gideon use God's strength to win?" Link to today's struggles: "God doesn't ask us to carry burdens alone!"
4. Life Application:
5. Gideon's success proved God works through weakness. Challenge students: "What's one area where you feel weak? Ask God to turn it into a strength!"
6. Why These Work:
7. Engagement: Role-play and teamwork make abstract lessons concrete.
8. Honesty: Addresses fear/doubt openly (e.g., "Gideon was scared, so are we!").
9. Life Tie: Ends with a prayer or reflection on trusting God with their fears.
10. Pro Tip: Use a timer (e.g., 10 min max) to keep energy high!

Discussion Questions

- Lesson: "Gideon, God Uses the Weak Things"
- (Judges 6:1-7:25)
- Narrative Hook:
- Imagine you're in a situation where everyone around you thinks you're too small, too unsure, or too different to do what's needed. You might feel like an outsider, like a failure before you've even started. For Gideon, God didn't call him because he was brave, powerful, or confident, he called him because he was unexpected. His family was poor, his name meant "weak," and his own people doubted him. But here's the thing: God doesn't always pick the people we think deserve it. Instead, He often chooses the ones who are ready to trust, even when they don't look it.
- This story isn't just about war or army tactics, it's about how God uses our weaknesses, struggles, and even our doubts to do something big. And guess what? That's for you too. God doesn't need superheroes; He needs people like you who are willing to show up, even when you feel unworthy.
- 4 Open-Ended Discussion Questions for Junior High Students
- The Doubters & the Downward Spiral
- Gideon's people kept telling him, "Go fight the Midianites with just 300 men!" (Judges 7:2) But Gideon's own heart was racing, he kept saying, "What if I'm not enough?" When we feel small or unsure, it's easy to shrink back, to blame ourselves, or even to let others push us away. Have you ever been in a situation where you felt like you weren't strong or capable enough to handle something, like a big test, a tough friend situation, or even just trying to stand up for what you believe? What made it hard to take that first step? How might God be calling you to trust Him in a small way this week?
- The Midianites vs. the Midianites in You
- God's plan for Gideon was to use just 300 men, people who weren't the strongest or most confident. But what if we look at our "weaknesses" and think, "That's not how God works!" Maybe you feel like you're not smart enough, not fast enough, or not good enough to do something important. Gideon's people didn't believe in him, but God did, and He saw the hidden strength in him that they couldn't see. The Midianites in this story were a real threat, but the Midianites in you might be self-doubt, fear, or even a habit of saying "no" to things that feel too big. What's one "Midianite" in your life right now that might be blocking you from trusting God's plan?
- The Whisper & the Wake-Up Call
- God often doesn't announce His plan, He whispers it. When Gideon was alone in his tent, he heard God's voice: "The Lord is with you." (Judges 6:12) That's not a big, loud answer, it's a quiet, persistent one. For us, God's whispers might look like a quiet moment of prayer, a friend's encouragement, or even a random thought that

sticks with you. Have you ever ignored God's whisper because it felt too small or too easy? Or have you ever been surprised to see Him working in a situation that didn't seem important? How can you listen for God's whispers in your everyday life?

- The Battlefield of Your Heart
- Gideon's victory wasn't just about winning a war, it was about faith. He had to choose to believe that God could do something impossible through him, even when his own heart was afraid. God doesn't ask us to be perfect; He asks us to be present. That means:
 - Saying "yes" when He calls you to something, even if you don't feel ready.
 - Letting go of the idea that you have to be strong or perfect, God's strength is in you when you're weak.
 - Trusting that He'll work through the messes and mistakes in your life.
- Gideon's story reminds us that God's power isn't about our success or our courage, it's about our willingness to show up. What's one thing God could be calling you to trust Him in this week, even if you don't feel like you're "ready"?
- Life Application Challenge:
 - After discussing, ask students to journal or talk to a friend about one way they can trust God's strength in their own "Gideon moments" this week. Maybe it's praying for courage, asking for help, or simply believing that God sees them even when they don't feel like they're enough.
 - This story isn't just about the past, it's a lesson for today. And God's not done using the weak things yet.

Prayer Focus

"God's Not Scared of Us (or Us of Him!)" (Opening the lesson with honesty and wonder, just like Gideon faced when he said, "Who am I? I'm just a mess of a man!") Teacher's Prayer (for the whole class to join in): "Lord, we don't always feel strong enough, like Gideon did, stumbling through the mud of doubt, clutching a handful of figs and a half-empty plan. But You, God, don't see our armor; You see the heart behind it. Today, we pray for courage to trust You, not our own strength. Help us remember: You don't need us to be perfect, just real. And when we feel small, let us whisper back to You like Gideon did, 'What can I do?', but with faith that You'll turn the 'not enough' into 'just enough' for Your purpose. Amen." Why it works for juniors: - Relatable doubt: They'll nod at "stumbling through the mud", real-life fears of inadequacy. - Gideon's truth: Their own "half-empty plans" feel valid, not shameful. - Actionable prayer: Ends with a call to trust over fix themselves, mirroring Judges 6:14 ("I'll be with you!"). Life application: Teaches them to pray like messengers, not heroes. Gideon didn't hide his weakness; he asked. And God used it.

>> 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.