

Bible background

Judges 6

Aim of lesson

To show that God always cares for us, even if sometimes he expects us to do difficult things for him.

Preparation required

Prepare an activity based on the destruction of the altar and image of Baal. Collect boxes, building bricks or other suitable material to make an altar to Baal, with some plasticine model trees and a model bullock.

Suggested outline of lesson

1. Remind the children that God had brought his people out of Egypt, had fed them in the wilderness and had given them commandments about how they should live. They had promised to obey, but had since forgotten God. As a result he was punishing them by sending the Midianites, their enemies. Make clear that the reason for this was a positive one: God wanted his people to be sorry that they had forgotten him, and to remember how good he had been to them in the past.
2. Get the children to imagine what it must have been like for the Israelites, with the Midianites everywhere, ready to steal any food that grew and kill anyone that resisted them. Help them to imagine what it must have been like for Gideon to try to thresh wheat, hiding in (RV, RSV and NIV) a winepress so that he would not be seen. He was risking his life to feed his family, and it was his faith and courage which caused God to call him.
3. Describe the visit of the angel, and explain that because angels often appear as ordinary men Gideon did not realise who he was. The angel gave Gideon a mission to save Israel from the Midianites. Get the children to imagine how Gideon felt; not long ago it had been regarded a brave thing to thresh wheat hiding in a winepress! But God knew that with his help Gideon could do anything; he will help us too. Tell the children about how Gideon fetched a feast for his visitor - imagine his thoughts as he used up so much of their remaining food, and then the angel's sign to him, which will have given him confidence. The food was burned, but nothing is ever wasted if it is given to God.
4. Tell the children how Gideon was told by the angel to break down the altar to Baal, build one to God, and offer a young bull on it. Act out the scene with the models. The effect on the village was immediate, but with his father's help Gideon was saved. He had begun to learn how much he could do with God's help.
5. Tell the children how Gideon summoned the people of northern Israel to fight the Midianites and Amalekites, and how he used the signs of the fleece finally to convince himself and those who were with him that God would help them. Note that the second sign with the fleece is even harder than the first because the ground dries quickly, but a fleece only slowly.

Alternative activities

1. Make collage pictures of a scene from the story.
2. Why was Gideon's experience miraculous? Try some experiments with real fleece/cotton wool. Put some fleece on a tray and mist the tray and fleece with water using a spray bottle or small watering can. Get the children to guess beforehand which areas will be wet, fleece, ground or both. Get them to check if they were right. Talk again about what happened to Gideon's fleece. Why was it unusual?

Relevance to the children's lives

Sometimes God wants us to do difficult things, like helping somebody who is being teased at school, or refusing to join in something that is wrong. He will help us, and is very pleased when we succeed.

When our lives are hard and it seems as if everything is going wrong we should remember Gideon and make sure that we put God first. We may not feel strong, but Gideon thought he was the weakest in his family, and God chose him to be strong.

Prayer

Ask God to help us never to be afraid of doing what is right, but to be brave and obedient like Gideon.

Verse

'The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.' Psalm 34:7.