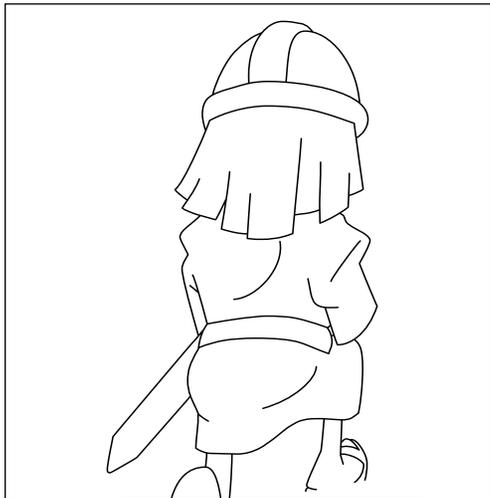
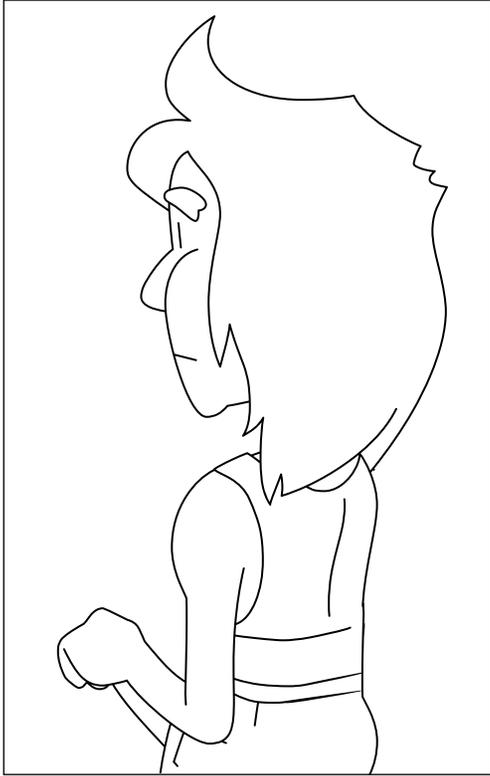


Gideon

defeats the Midianites



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Judges 7:1-7

God chose a young man named Gideon to lead the people of Israel and give them victory over their enemies, the Midianites.

Early the next morning, Gideon and his army got up and moved their camp to Fear Spring. The Midianite camp was to the north, in the valley at the foot of Moreh Hill. The Lord said, “Gideon, your army is too big. I can’t let you win with this many soldiers. The Israelites would think that they had won the battle all by themselves and that I didn’t have anything to do with it. So call your troops together and tell them that anyone who is really afraid can leave Mount Gilead and go home.” Twenty-two thousand men returned home, leaving Gideon with only ten thousand soldiers.

“Gideon,” the Lord said, “you still have too many soldiers. Take them down to the spring and I’ll test them. I’ll tell you which ones can go along with you and which ones must go back home.” When Gideon led his army down to the spring, the Lord told him, “Watch how each man gets a drink of water. Then divide them into two groups—those who lap the water like a dog and those who kneel down to drink.”

Three hundred men scooped up water in their hands and lapped it, and the rest knelt to get a drink. The Lord said, “Gideon, your army will be made up of everyone who lapped the water from their hands. Send the others home. I’m going to rescue Israel by helping you and your army of three hundred defeat the Midianites.”

Commentary

God's choice of Gideon as Israel's new leader had already been a surprise one. Gideon was the youngest in his family and his tribe was one of the smallest in Israel. It seems that, again and again in the Bible, God chooses the most unlikely people to show the world that everyone is important to him and that with him all things are possible. The principle is at work in this story, where God deliberately reduces Gideon's army from over 30,000 to just 300 to face a huge Midianite force.

According to the number of troops mentioned in Judges 8:10, the odds would have been 45 to 1 against Gideon's troops! There was no way that an Israelite victory could be attributed to human skill or to weight of numbers. The battle, described in the later part of this chapter, was initially won not with weapons but with trumpets, torches and clay jars. All the glory for this victory would go to God and therefore it would be a lesson to the Israelites, as for us today, about God's power to save.

Questions

- ▶ Do you think it was just because they were scared that two-thirds of Gideon's army left at the first opportunity?
- ▶ Why do you think God chose the 300 who scooped up the water?
- ▶ How would you have felt if you were one of the 300 facing such a huge enemy army?
- ▶ What was it that made Gideon trust God so completely? (You might like to look back at the last part of Judges 6.)
- ▶ What overwhelming problems are you facing that need a faith like Gideon's?



Visual aid

Use 46 pebbles or coins to illustrate the odds of 45 to 1 that Gideon's 300 soldiers faced. This is a good way to see what their faith in God meant in practice.



Activity idea

Gideon's battle cry when they surrounded the Midianite army at night was "For the Lord and for Gideon!" (Judges 7:20). It was accompanied by trumpet blasts, the smashing of pots and the waving of torch flames. Recreate all this together by lighting flashlights, pouring out coins from a jar, making trumpet noises, as well as shouting the battle cry.



Prayer idea

Clearly Gideon had learned that one plus God is always a majority. Pick out some recent news headlines concerning major issues that involve large numbers or overwhelming circumstances—for example, the numbers of people without clean water in the world, the numbers who are running away from war, or are short of food, or are facing serious illness. Against each of these issues put a small sticker or sticky note to represent your small but important prayers to God, and, each time you do so, remind yourselves of Gideon's victory.

Key verse

"I'm going to rescue Israel by helping you and your army of three hundred defeat the Midianites" (Judges 7:7).

New Testament story link

John 6:1–11: A young boy's small picnic turns out to be enough food to feed over 5000 people.



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