THE CHURCH IN NEW YORK CITY
CHILDREN'S MEETING LESSON

DATE: May 14, 2017
SUBJECT: GOD'S CALLING IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: God Called Gideon
SCRIPTURE: Judges 2:6-23; 6:1-40; 7:1-25; Isaiah 40:29-31; 1 Corinthians 1:26-29; Hebrews 11:32-34
AIM: To see that God wants to strengthen and empower us, His called ones, in all our weaknesses. When we come to Him, He will encourage our hearts and make us strong to defeat the enemy.
MEMORY VERSES TO CHOOSE FROM: Ephesians 6:10 (Finally, be empowered in the Lord and in the might of His strength.); Isaiah 40:31 (Yet those who wait on Jehovah will renew their strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles; They will run and will not faint; They will walk and will not become weary.); Psalms 138:3 (On the day that I called out, You answered me; You encouraged me with strength in my soul.)
SONG SUGGESTIONS: 198 (Gideon Had the Lord); 2801 (Gideon); 6720 (The Victory of Gideon's Army); 6413 (Stand Up! Stand Up for Jesus! - *Stanza 1 only*); 25 (I Believe God); 3422 (I Will Trust in God's Word); 3115 (How Do You Obey God's Word?); 29 (Not By Might); 1302 (Be Strong); 4611 (My God Is So Great); 7619 (Who is On the Lord's Side - *Verse 1 & chorus only*); 46 (I'm in the Lord's Army)
CRAFT IDEA: *Signs that God showed Gideon:* Glue pictures of meat and bread on a rock and use colored tissue paper to represent fire; glue cotton (a cotton ball pulled apart) to represent the wool on the floor.

BACKGROUND: Joshua died at 110 years old, and everyone else in his generation also eventually grew older and died. Sadly, the generation that came after them did not know Jehovah or the work that He had done for Israel. They did what was evil in the sight of Jehovah—they turned away from Him and worshipped other gods, even after all the wonderful ways Jehovah had cared for them. Jehovah was very angry, and allowed the children of Israel to be delivered into the hands of enemies who destroyed their land, livestock and produce. They were no longer able to stand before their enemies and were greatly distressed. Out of His pity for them, Jehovah raised up judges to save them from their enemies. But after the judges died, the people again followed after other gods. In His anger, Jehovah said, "Because this nation has transgressed My covenant which I commanded their fathers and they do not listen to my voice, I for My part will no longer dispossess from before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died."

CONTENT: Again, the children of Israel did not worship Jehovah, but worshipped idols instead. For seven years, they were under very great oppression from the Midianites and their allies, the Amalekites and the people of the east. These enemies destroyed Israel's grain and produce, and sheep, oxen and cattle, so that there was no food left for Israel. They became poor and were in much suffering and they cried out to Jehovah (Judges 6:1-6).

God Appearing to Gideon. God came to save His people once again. One day a young man named Gideon was threshing (beating out) wheat in the winepress in order to hide it from the Midianites, when the Angel of Jehovah appeared to him and said to him, "Jehovah is with you, valiant warrior." Gideon responded that if Jehovah was with them, then why had all these difficult events happened to Israel? Jehovah said to him, "Go in this strength of yours, and save Israel from the hand of Midian. Indeed I have sent you." Gideon answered, "Please, Lord, by what way can I save Israel? My clan here is the poorest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." Gideon did not think he could do very much to save Israel, since he was neither wealthy nor the most important person in his family. But Jehovah responded and assured Gideon, "Surely I will be with you, and you will strike the Midianites as one man."

The Sign of the Meat and Cakes Being Consumed by Fire. So Gideon asked the Lord to show him a sign to prove that it was the Lord Jehovah who spoke to him. The Angel of God told him to put the meat and cakes that Gideon had prepared on a rock and pour out the broth that he had made. What happened next was amazing: the offering was consumed by fire which rose up out of the rock, at the hand of the Angel of Jehovah! When he saw that, Gideon realized that this was the Angel of Jehovah. He believed what he heard and saw, and he built an altar to God.

Gideon Obeying God to Tear and Cut Down Idols. That night, Jehovah told Gideon to tear down the altar of Baal (an idol) that belonged to Gideon's father and cut down the Asherah (the image of a female goddess). God told Gideon to build an altar to Jehovah at that place and offer a burnt offering to Jehovah. Gideon took ten men and did as Jehovah had told him. Since Gideon was afraid of his father's house and the men of the city, he did it at night. The next day, when the men of the city saw what was done, they went to Gideon's father and told him to bring Gideon out that they may kill him. But Gideon's father convinced the men that if indeed Baal was a god, then he should be able to defend himself since his altar was broken down. So they did not kill Gideon.

The Sign of the Fleece. Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east gathered together to war against Israel. The Spirit of Jehovah clothed Gideon with power. He blew a trumpet and sent messengers to gather the people. But Gideon was still not that sure, and needed assurance from Jehovah that He would save Israel as He had said. Gideon told the Lord that he would lay a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If the fleece of wool was wet and the floor was dry then he would believe that he was chosen to save Israel. After the Lord did what he asked, Gideon asked again for the Lord to do the opposite. In this way God proved to Gideon that he was chosen to save Israel.

Preparing for Battle. Gideon and the people then gathered for battle: 32,000 men in all. But Jehovah said to Gideon that this was too many. God did not want the people of Israel to think they would win because they had a big army, so he wanted Gideon to cut down the size by a number of ways. God told Gideon to separate the ones who were afraid and trembling and let them leave. 22,000 of the people departed and 10,000 remained. But Jehovah said this still was too many. So He told Gideon to bring the 10,000 down to the water where He would test them. Gideon was to observe how the people drank water: the ones who bowed down on their knees to drink water and lapped the water with their tongues as a dog laps would be set apart from those who used their hand to drink water. Guess how many people remained after this test? Only 300 men lapped the water into their mouths with their hand; the rest bowed down on their knees to drink water. Only the 300 men were chosen for Gideon's army; all the rest were sent back.

Defeating the Midianites. On that same night, Jehovah told Gideon to go down into the camp of the Midianites, for He had delivered it into his hand. If he was afraid to go down, he could go with Purah, his young man, and he would hear something the Midianites were saying that would strengthen and encourage him. So Gideon went down with Purah to the camp. There, just as Jehovah said, Gideon heard a Midianite tell a dream to his companion and the companion's interpretation of the dream. It was a preview of his victory over the Midianites. Gideon worshipped God. He returned to the camp of Israel and said, "Arise, for Jehovah has delivered the camp of Midian into your hand." Gideon divided the 300 men into three groups. He gave each one a trumpet, as well as pitchers, with torches inside the pitchers. Gideon commanded them and gave them specific instructions about what to do: When the moment came, the three groups blew the trumpets, shattered the pitchers and cried out "A sword for Jehovah and for Gideon!" just as Gideon had told them to do. The whole enemy camp ran off and shouted and fled. The Midianites suffered a great defeat—and Israel had a glorious victory! And the land had peace for 40 years in the days of Gideon (Judges 8:28).

SUGGESTED APPLICATIONS TO CHOOSE FROM: *Please pray and fellowship over which applications to cover for your group of children. Please do not feel obligated to cover all the suggested applications.*

- **We can be honest with the Lord about our fears.** Although Gideon was not a strong, powerful person, the Lord used him to defeat the mighty Midianites. Gideon was very honest—he was afraid and looked for assurance from the Lord by different signs. Like Gideon, when we are afraid and feel that we are not able to face our situations, we should talk to the Lord in an honest way.
- **Our confidence is in the Lord.** The Lord Jehovah did not let Gideon have too many soldiers to fight with the Midianites. He did not want Israel to boast in themselves and believe that they accomplished everything on their own. We may wonder how they could win with only 300 men! But Gideon simply trusted in Jehovah. At times, we may feel very young and small but we also can trust in the Lord whenever we feel weak or afraid. 2 Corinthians 12:9m says, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness."
- **Gideon was willing to obey the Lord even if it meant others would be against him.** Gideon obeyed Jehovah by destroying the altar of Baal and the image of Asherah. He obeyed at the risk of offending his father and the people. In those days of the corruption of God's people, it was rare to find anyone who obeyed the Lord's speaking. How pleasing this obedience must have been to the Lord! Gideon knew who he was, a man chosen by Jehovah and he knew Jehovah was with him. Today, we should be those who please the Lord—we, like Gideon, should obey the Lord's speaking even if others would oppose or disagree. We should have the assurance that God is with us.
- **Be quick to respond and follow instructions with a proper attitude.** When the 300 men were divided into the three companies, Gideon gave them specific instructions on when to blow the horns and when to shatter the pitchers and when to shout. These 300 men obeyed and followed the instructions. When our parents or teachers give us specific instructions, we should follow carefully. For example, in the morning, we need to get ready for school right by doing certain things. Do we follow our parents' instructions to get ready for school? When the teacher gives instructions, do we follow? (E.g., fire drill, homework or school assignments).

Adapted from the Church in New York City's Children's Meeting lessons: 6/5/94; 5/28/00; 6/4/06; 6/3/12