

UNIT VERSE

Give me understanding,
that I may keep your law
and observe it with my
whole heart. Psalm 119:34

GIDEON OBEYED GOD**LEADER BIBLE STUDY****CONTEXT AND COMMENTARY FOR PERSONAL STUDY AND PREPARATION**

(For age-appropriate language, use the Bible story on the following pages.)

LIFE POINT

People can choose to obey God.

LEVEL OF BIBLICAL LEARNING

God commands people to obey Him. People can trust that He will help them resist temptation and give them self-control.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE

Judges 6:11–7:22

WEEKLY VERSE

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Psalm 119:34

Christians often include Gideon as one of the heroes of the Bible, but his story serves as a stark reminder that God, not heroic people, brings victory and does the saving. God chose to work through Gideon to defeat the Midianites, not despite his weaknesses, but because of them. Gideon's family was the weakest in Manasseh, and Gideon was the youngest in his father's family. Gideon had nothing to boast about, no temptation to believe that he had brought about the victory himself. God made it obvious that He won the battle, not the small, weak army Gideon led.

Gideon's story was not the first or last time God worked this way.

Throughout Scripture, we see God repeatedly use unlikely people to fulfill His plans. David was a youngest son and was still out tending sheep, not even considered a prospect among his family, when Samuel went to anoint the new king (1 Samuel 16:5-13). Moses was a fugitive with a speech impediment when God called him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt (Exodus 3-4). Rahab was a woman with questionable morals when God used her to protect the Israelite spies (Joshua 2). Mary was a young, unmarried woman of modest means when God blessed her with the miraculous pregnancy of Jesus (Luke 1:26-38).

God is the hero throughout the Bible, and He is still the hero today.

When He works through you, despite your weakness, how do you respond?

Are you tempted to commend yourself for your spiritual maturity and strength, or do you recognize that it is God at work within you, and that anything good in you comes from Him?

When things are going well, our human nature tempts us to trust in our own qualifications, abilities, and strength instead of God's. When we face challenges, on the other hand, we are often tempted to focus on our lack of qualifications, rather than God's abundant power. Many of us shrink back in fear from something He is leading us to do.

Look at Gideon's responses to God's directives. What was Gideon most afraid of? What holds you back from walking in obedience? Do you shy away from gospel conversations because you are worried you are ill-equipped?

Do you say no to a ministry opportunity because you do not feel qualified?

As you pray this week, ask God to give you the strength to trust Him instead of yourself. Ask Him to help refocus your mind to always give God the glory for the battles He wins.



TELL THE STORY

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

Rock, paper, scissors build up the army. Everyone will play rock-paper-scissors with one person. When you lose, you become that person's cheerleader. If they lose, you both become the cheerleader for the person who beat them. Keep playing until everyone is cheering for the same person! Play a few rounds. Say, "Just like how we had to choose to follow and support someone, God chose Gideon to have people follow and support him. But, Gideon also had to choose to follow and obey God."

1. GETTING TO THE POINT

- Decorate a banner with the Unit 2 title, "Making Choices", explain that experts say that you make over 35,000 choices every day. Researchers at Cornell University have discovered that you make about 226 decisions each day on food alone.
- State that although all choices made each day do not require deliberate thought, teach preteens the importance of asking the right questions before making important choices that would honor God and their families. Discuss and allow with preteens to think about important choices they make each day, such as cell phone use, choosing friends, and respecting parents and step-parents.

2. LOOK IN THE BOOK

- **Begin** today's Bible story by inviting preteens to listen for the choices Gideon made as you study the verses. Instruct preteens to locate Judges 6:11-14 and call on a volunteer to read the verses aloud.
- **Explain** that the Lord confirmed that Gideon was to be the one to deliver the Israelites from the Midianites. The angel of the Lord confirmed this to Gideon. Then the Lord instructed them to take two bulls and pull down the false altar of Baal and build an altar to God in its place. Gideon chose to follow God's instructions. Read Judges 6:27-28 to find out what time of day Gideon did this and why.
- **State** that God spoke to Gideon while he and his soldiers were camped. God told Gideon that he had too many soldiers.
- **Call attention to** chapter 7 and encourage a volunteer to read verses 2-3. State: "The Lord did not want Israel to give themselves glory when they succeeded in battle, so He directed Gideon to send home the soldiers who were scared." Ask: "How many soldiers went home because they were scared?" (22,000) "How many soldiers remained?" (10,000)
- **Mention** that the Lord told Gideon that there were still too many soldiers, so the soldiers took a test of drinking water. Read Judges 7:5-7.
- **Ask:** "How many soldiers were left after the water test?" (300) Judges 7:16-18 and explain that with only 300 men, Gideon again chose to follow God's instructions by giving each of his men a trumpet and an empty pot. They broke their pots, played their trumpets, and shouted: "Fight for the Lord and for Gideon!" The Midianites were so confused that they turned on each other with swords and fled. The Israelites won the battle.
- **Lead** preteens to sing "Follow It With All My Heart (Psalm 119:34)."



TELL THE STORY

3. REVIEW CHALLENGE

- Show the teaching picture and allow a volunteer to share what part of today's Bible story is depicted.
- Ask preteens to recall facts from the story that are shown in the picture.
- Direct half the preteens to one side of the room and the other half to the opposite side.
- Distribute the "Unit 2, Session 1 Review" question cards to one group and the "Unit 2, Session 1 Review" answer cards to the opposite side.
- Allow a moment for preteens to read their cards.
- Direct preteens to pair themselves based on a matching question and answer. If there is an odd number of preteens, give a card to a leader.
- After preteens have paired themselves, direct them to sit down.
- Review by inviting preteens to read each question and answer on their cards. Gently correct any mistakes.

4. UNIT VERSE CHALLENGE

- Invite preteens to locate Psalm 119:34 in their Bibles.
- Give time for those not familiar with the Bible to locate the verse.
- Teach: "Although David wrote most of the Psalms, we are not 100% positive that he wrote this one. Psalm 119 is a psalm honoring God. There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet, and Psalm 119 has 22 sections, with 8 verses in each section. It is the longest chapter in the Bible."
- Mention that Psalm 119 follows an acrostic pattern, which means that each section starts with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, which has 22 letters.
- Show the "Hebrew Psalm 119:34 Poster" and display it where all preteens can see it.
- Provide highlighters for highlighting in a Bible and lead preteens in marking the unit verse.
- Relate the verse to today's Bible story by inquiring: "At what parts in the story did you notice that Gideon listened to the Lord's instruction and chose to obey?"

5. APPLY THE BIBLE AND PRAY

- Show "The Adventures of Dab and Derek" video.
- Ask preteens to share how the video corresponds to the life point—People can choose to obey God.
- Indicate for preteens to bow their heads as you express a prayer for each of them to choose to obey God in every circumstance.
- Dismiss preteens to Live It Out groups.



BIBLE LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. WHEAT PAINTING

Paint using stalks of wheat. Encourage preteens to dip it in paint and use it like a paintbrush, or to dip it in paint and press it onto your paper to leave its outline. Use red, white, and blue paint for an extra Fourth of July flair.

2. CUP STACKING

Preteens will stack cups into a pyramid shape, and then put them back in a stack as quickly as possible. **Say, “Just like how the people in Gideon’s town built an altar to a false god, and Gideon obeyed God by taking it down, we will build something and take it down.”**

3. LEGO

Build a LEGO structure that will survive a fall. **Say “Gideon trusted God by obeying and destroying the altar to a false god, even though his town got really mad at him!”** Challenge preteens to build a LEGO structure they can drop without it shattering, like the altar to the false god did when Gideon and his men broke it down. Challenge preteens to drop it from heights of 1 inch, 6 inches, and 1 foot. Use a measuring tape. Keep adding a few inches and see whose structure can survive the biggest fall!

4. DICE GAME

In partners, give one child one die, and the other partner two dice. Kids roll their dice at the same time. Continue until the player with only one die rolls a higher number than the player with two dice added together. Say “It was unlikely that the player with one die would roll a higher number than the player with two. It was unlikely that Gideon’s small army could defeat the big Midianite army. The odds were not in their favor, but God was with them. **The Israelites won because God was with them.**”

5. PLAY-DOH SMASH

Using Play-Doh, pretend to make items from the story like grapes, wheat, cakes, goat, meat, pot, torch, and basket. Then, smash it! Say “Gideon was found hiding in a wine press when God asked him to obey. In a wine press, you smash grapes! Just like how we smashed items from our story. **Where have you been when God has asked you to obey?**”