

BIBLE TIME LINE ASSEMBLIES

31. GIDEON

Bible Base: Judges 6, 7

Key Christian Belief: God wants His people to be strong.

Aim: To help children understand that God gives us strength to do what is right.

You will need:

- the PowerPoint presentation attached

Introduction

Ask if anyone knows who Clark Kent is? (Superman) Bruce Wayne? (Batman) Peter Parker? (Spiderman) Bob and Helen Parr? (Mr and Mrs Incredible)

As each answer is given, reveal the picture on the PowerPoint slide and comment on that superhero's special powers or gadgets. When the world is in danger, threatened by the bad guys, these superheroes come to the rescue.

When God's people moved into the Promised Land, there were other people living nearby, who often invaded and tried to take over their land from them. They needed heroes to rescue them. We are going to hear about one of them today.

This hero was not like the superheroes we have mentioned, however. He didn't have any special gadgets or superpowers to help him. He was just an ordinary person like you or me - and yet he was able to do something quite amazing. How was he able to do it? Let's hear the story and find out...

Story

Choose a boy to play the part of the hero. Tell him that his name is Gideon and that he is to act out what Gideon does as you tell the story. Then tell the story as follows:

Gideon was a farmer. He was out working in his fields one morning, when he decided to stop and take a break. He took a sip from his water bottle and stood thinking for a moment. He was feeling sad and fed up.

'I don't know why I bother' he said to himself. 'Every year it's the same thing. As soon as I get a nice field full of corn, what happens? Our enemies - those big bullies, the Midianites - come and burn it all down. They did it last year and the year before and the year before that. For seven years now they have been coming and burning down all our crops. It's just not fair. I wish someone could put a stop to it!'

'And as soon as I get nice fat flock of sheep, what happens? Our enemies - those big bullies, the Midianites - come and steal them all away! They did it last year and the year before and the year before that. For seven years now they have been coming and stealing all our sheep away. It's not fair. I wish someone could put a stop to it!'

That morning, Gideon got a surprise - because there in the field, right in front of him, was an angel. *(Choose a girl to come up to the front and play the part of the angel. Gideon and the angel face each other.)* Gideon rubbed his eyes to make sure he wasn't seeing things. Then the angel spoke. 'The Lord is with you, brave and mighty soldier!'

Gideon looked all round the field, but there was no one else there. 'Are you talking to me?' he said. 'Yes' said the angel. 'The Lord is with you, brave and mighty soldier.'

'I don't know what you are talking about' replied Gideon. 'I'm not a brave and mighty soldier - I'm just a farmer; in fact I'm the least important person in the least important family in the whole of Israel. What makes you think I'm a brave and mighty soldier?'

'God has sent me to you today to tell you that He wants you to be the one to put a stop to what your enemies - those bullies, the Midianites - have been doing.'

This time Gideon laughed out loud. 'Don't be so daft!' he said. 'I couldn't possibly do that. This must be some kind of joke!'

'It's no joke' said the angel. 'This really is what God wants you to do. But don't forget, Gideon, God says He will be with you.'

Well - it took Gideon a very long time to be convinced that God could possibly want him to be the one to fight against the Midianites, but finally he was persuaded and the angel left and went back to heaven. (*The angel goes back to her seat.*)

Next day Gideon decided to get a great big army together. So he sent messengers all round the country telling all the fighting men to come and meet him. It was time for them all to get together and put a stop to what the Midianites had been doing.

Explain that at this point you need 32,000 volunteers. Begin to count the children, realise there aren't going to be enough and just ask everybody to stand.

When Gideon saw how many had turned up, he was very pleased. 'With an army this size' he thought, 'we can soon do the job!'

But then Gideon got another surprise. 'Wait a minute' God said. 'Before you go - just one thing - your army is too big.'

'What?' said Gideon. 'How can my army be too big? Surely the bigger my army is, the better chance we have of winning.'

'But Gideon - you are forgetting something. The reason you are going to win today is not because you have a great big army. It is because I am with you. I want you to remember that - so I'm asking you now to send anyone who is scared back home.'

So Gideon went around his army to see whose knees were knocking together and who was looking very pale and he sent them all home - all 22,000 of them. (*Ask roughly two-thirds of the children to sit down.*) There were 32,000 to begin with; now 22,000 have gone home. How many are left? Just 10,000.

Gideon scratched his head. 'There's bound to be more of them than there are of us' he thought. 'How are we meant to do this?' But then he remembered that the ones who were left were all brave fighting men. They weren't going to be scared of anything. They wouldn't run home to mummy when things got tough. 'Maybe...' he thought 'maybe, with brave, strong soldiers like this we can do the job.'

Then Gideon got yet another surprise. 'Hold on, Gideon' said God. "Before you go - there is just one other thing. Your army is still too big!"

'But there are already far more of them than there are of us' wailed Gideon in despair.

'I know that' said God 'but don't forget Gideon - the reason you are going to win today is not because you have a great big army and it's not because your men are brave and strong either. It's because I'm with you. I want you to remember that - so please take your men down to the river and watch them drink.'

At this point ask for a volunteer to come up to the front to demonstrate how, if they had to, they might drink water from a river. Then ask if anyone can think of a different way and invite someone up to demonstrate this. (One should pretend to use their hands to scoop the water up; one should put their head into the water to drink.)

As Gideon watched, some of his men used their hands to scoop up the water and some put their heads into the river and used their tongues to lap up the water. And God told Gideon to keep the ones who used their hands and send the others home. Unfortunately, nearly all of his men put their heads into the river and Gideon had to send them home.

(Choose three of those still standing to remain standing and tell the others to sit down.) Now look at Gideon's army. 9,700 more have gone home - only 300 are left!

'How on earth' thought Gideon 'are we supposed to fight an army the size of the Midianites with an army of just 300. It's like playing football with three men against eleven. It's impossible!'

'But Gideon' said God. 'You are forgetting something. It's not just you and your 300 men. I'm with you and that's what will make all the difference.'

Explain that you don't have time to tell the children exactly how it happened - though they can read about it for themselves in Judges chapters 6 and 7 - but believe it or not, with just 300 men Gideon and his army won! They chased the Midianites away and for many years to come they did not dare to come back. The Israelites and their land were safe once again thanks to Gideon and his army.

Exploring Christian Belief

How was it that Gideon and his men won that day. It wasn't because they had superpowers, it wasn't because they had a great big army and it wasn't because their men were so brave and strong. The Bible says that it was because God was with them!

Display Ephesians 6: 10 and explain that this was something Paul wrote to the Christians in Ephesus to remind them that God was with them too. Christians believe that God gives us His mighty power to help do everything He asks us to do. Being a Christian is not about us doing our best to keep lots of rules; it's about discovering the amazing things that God can do as we trust Him and ask Him to be with us and to help us each day.

When Gideon first heard what God wanted him to do he thought it was impossible. But he discovered that with God's mighty power He was able to do it. The Bible says that God wants us to get rid of wrong things from our lives - bad temper, bad language, being selfish, rude, unkind or lazy. You might think that's impossible - but with God's help you can do it!

The Bible also says that God wants us to make a difference in the world around us - bringing His love to those who are hurting, lonely or struggling. You might think there is nothing you can do - but with God's help it's amazing the difference you can make. You might not ever be a world-famous superhero but with God's help you can be a hero to someone!

So if there is something you know God wants you to do - some way in which you need to change, or some person you can be a friend to, don't say as Gideon did at first 'I can't do that.' Instead why not say, 'With God's help I am going to do it' and see what happens?!

Song

'God's People Aren't Super Brave Superheroes' by John Hardwick would be a good song to use with this assembly.

Prayer

Finish with a prayer asking God to help the children do what is right and make a difference to others in the week ahead.