

Jacob's Ladder

Program 1: The Reluctant Hero

Teaching Plan For Youth

Summary: The Hebrew people have forgotten about the God of their forefathers. They have stopped obeying Him and depending on Him. They are being lulled into idol worship by their Midianite conquerors. God calls the young man, Gideon, to stand up to these oppressors and their false gods. Questions for discussion are in *italics*.

Scripture: Judges 6:1-32.

Teaching Themes: God wants to be first in our lives. Sharing stories of God's faithfulness helps to strengthen each other's faith.

Take a Pulse (gauge the students' understanding of some key words and get them thinking about the topic):

1. **King vs Prophet Activity:** In the promised land of Canaan, the Israelites saw that the pagans all had kings. Meanwhile, God sent prophets to the Israelites to call them back to Him. He wanted to be their only king. Have one student dress as a king in regal clothing and a crown. Have a second student dress as a prophet in simple Bible times clothing. Allow the class to brainstorm some of the types of things each would say. Discuss the difference between the roles of each.
2. **Modern Idols Brainstorm:** Have students draw or list some of their favorite free-time activities on poster board or the black board. This will be a reference for possible "idols" in their lives.
3. **God is Faithful Stories:** Give each student a half sheet of paper. Ask them to write down one thing that God has done for them or someone they know. If they can't think of anything, they can write something God has done for His people. They should not write their names on the papers. Collect the papers.

View the 30 minute video. Discuss initial reactions and any points of confusion.

Explore the Story:

1. *Why were the Hebrews such an easy target for the Midianite invaders? See Judges 6:1.*
2. *Do you think the Hebrews drifted away from following God slowly or quickly?*
3. *How did the prophet try to remind the Hebrews of their God? Review Judges 6:7-10. Why didn't they listen?*

4. *Compare Baal and Asherah to the one true God.*
5. *What motivated the Hebrews to worship these false gods? Does their worship seem genuine?*
6. *Even though Gideon saw an angel, he was still afraid to follow God's command. Why?*

Live the Lesson

1. *God was speaking to the Hebrews through the prophet. How does God speak to His people today?*
2. *Discuss the free time activities that were shared at the beginning of class. How would you know if these activities become more important to you than God? What do you do when your favorite activities conflict with church activities or activities that would help you connect with God? What can you do to hold yourself accountable in this?*
3. *Distribute the papers that were collected at the beginning of class in a random fashion. Invite some of the students to share what is on their papers. Discuss: Why is it important for us to remember and share what God has done and is doing for His people?*
4. *Is there something God is asking you to do today or this week to put Him first in your life? Make a plan to obey Him. Ask someone in the group to hold you accountable for your decision.*

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Program 2: Warrior by Faith

Teaching Plan For Youth

Summary: An angel has told Gideon he will free God's people from the enemy, the Midianites. But, Gideon is not a warrior and there is no Hebrew army. Gideon finds it hard to believe God's plan and hard to act on faith. Questions for discussion are in *italics*.

Scripture: Judges 6:11-16, Judges 6:33-7.

Teaching Theme: God may call us to do something that is impossible to accomplish through our own strength and abilities. God leads His people in many different ways.

Take a Pulse (gauge the students' understanding of some key words and get them thinking about the topic):

4. **A Fleece Challenge:** Bring aluminum pie plates and small 3" X 3" pieces of fleece-like fabric or felt. Fill spray bottles with water. Challenge some students to use the spray bottle to make the fleece soaking wet without getting any water on the pie plate. Challenge other students to wet the pie plate while keeping the fleece dry.
5. **Explore natural gifts/strengths:** Display some items to represent work that foreign missionaries might do: a hammer (construction), medicine (medical work), a cooking pot (service), a Bible (leading Bible studies), a microphone (preaching), etc. Have the kids discuss what these items represent in terms of missionary work. Discuss which types of work the students would or wouldn't want to do. *Why are certain tasks less desirable to some, but inviting to others?*

View the 30 minute video. Discuss initial reactions and any points of confusion.

Explore the Story:

7. *Why does Gideon have doubts about his calling to save Israel from the Midianites? See Judges 6:14-15.*
8. *Besides being visited by angels, how many other specific signs does Gideon receive from the Lord? Why does God allow this one man to see so many signs of his power?*
9. *Gideon uses a test to be sure of God's will. Is Gideon showing a strong faith or a weak faith?*

10. *Once Gideon makes his decision to lead the army, how do you think he did as a leader? How does God continue to strengthen Gideon?*
11. *The Israelite army is small and ill-prepared in contrast to the Midianites. Why does God take the step of reducing Israel's power even more by having a large portion of their army go home? What do you think of God's method for selecting who should leave?*

Live the Lesson

5. *Are there certain types of Kingdom Work you hope God never asks you to do? Why? (Note: possible answers include fear, lack of skill, or simply dislike.)*
6. *Many people will not have the benefit of a heavenly visitor to show them the path God wants them to take. What other methods does God use to lead His people and call them into service?*
7. *Have you ever tried to learn God's will by "laying out a fleece" as Gideon did? Describe this experience. Did it strengthen or weaken your faith?*
8. *Is "laying out a fleece" a valid way of seeking guidance from God? If not, why not? If yes, under what circumstances?*
9. *Invite a church leader or missionary to your class to share about their calling to ministry. Ask them to share how they knew God was calling them to the work they do.*

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