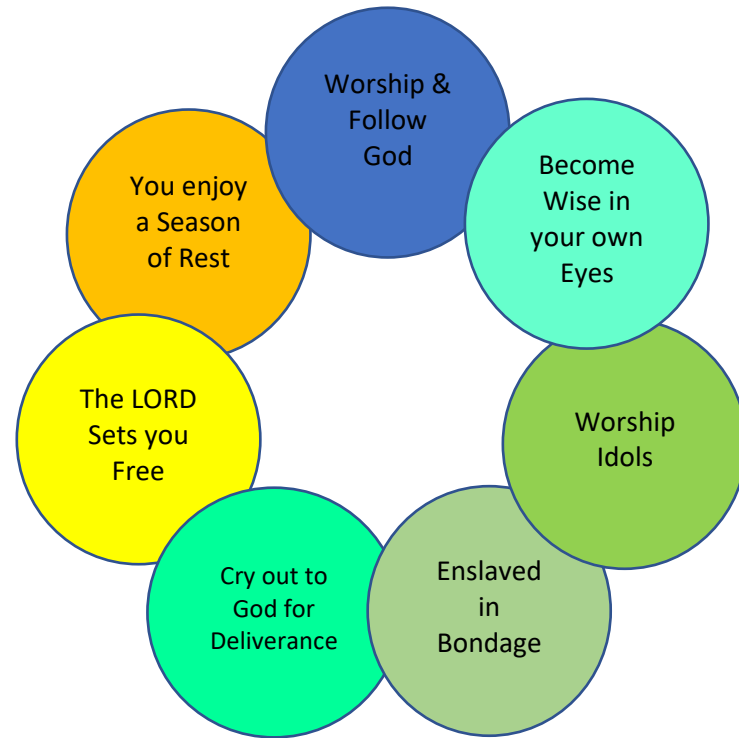


7 cycles of Sin in Judges and in our Hearts



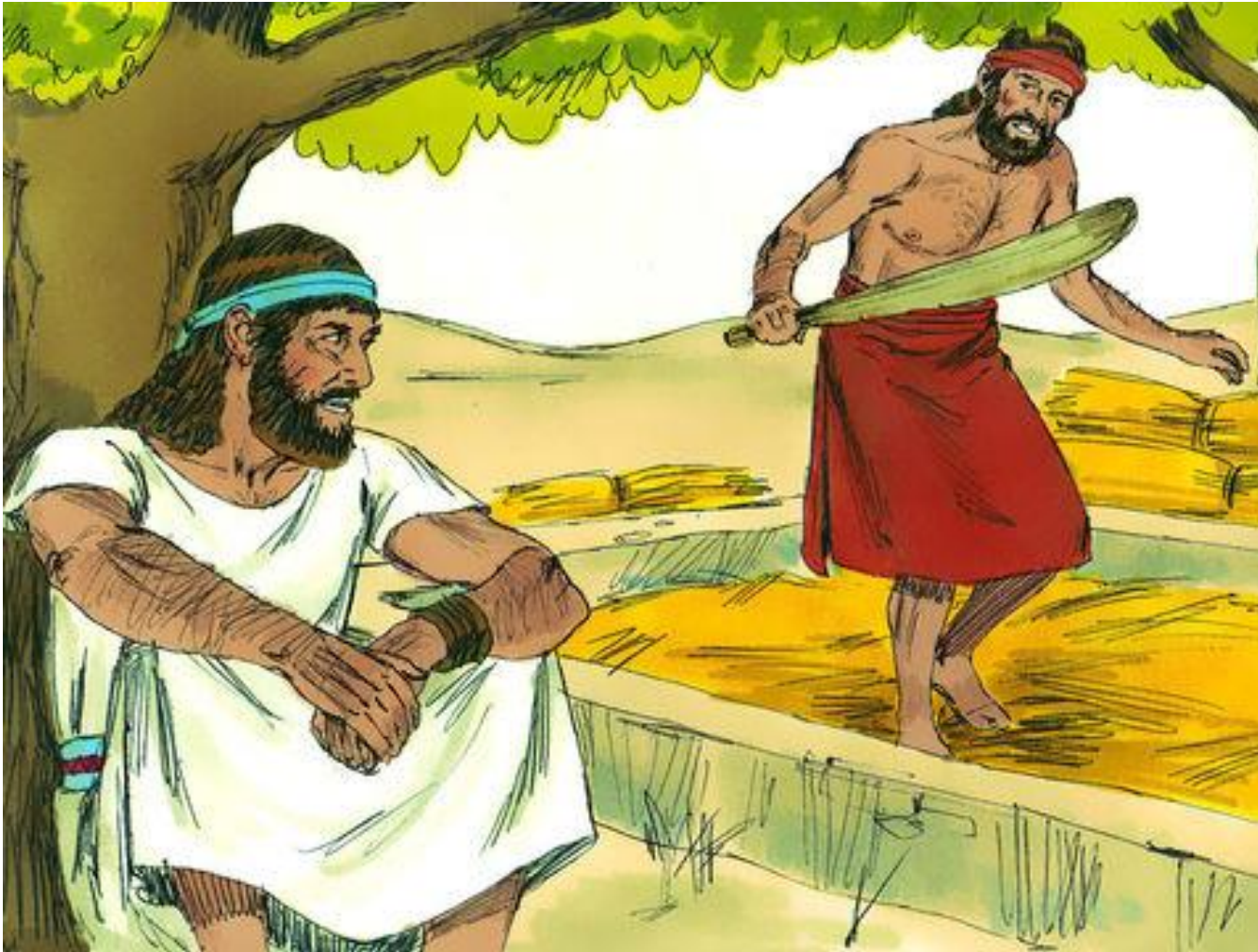
Cycle of Sin in Judges



Cycle of Sin in Our Lives

Last week we learned about how the Israelites did not obey God. God had to correct them because they did not follow His commands. Mean, evil people would come and hurt the Israelites. Once they realized they had sinned against God, the Israelites would cry out to Him for help. God would send someone to rescue His people, and those people were called judges. We can see how this process works the same way in our lives.

Last week we learned about a judge named Deborah and how she helped God's people defeat the evil Canaanite King Jabin. This week we learn of another judge delivering the Israelites from people who wanted to hurt them.



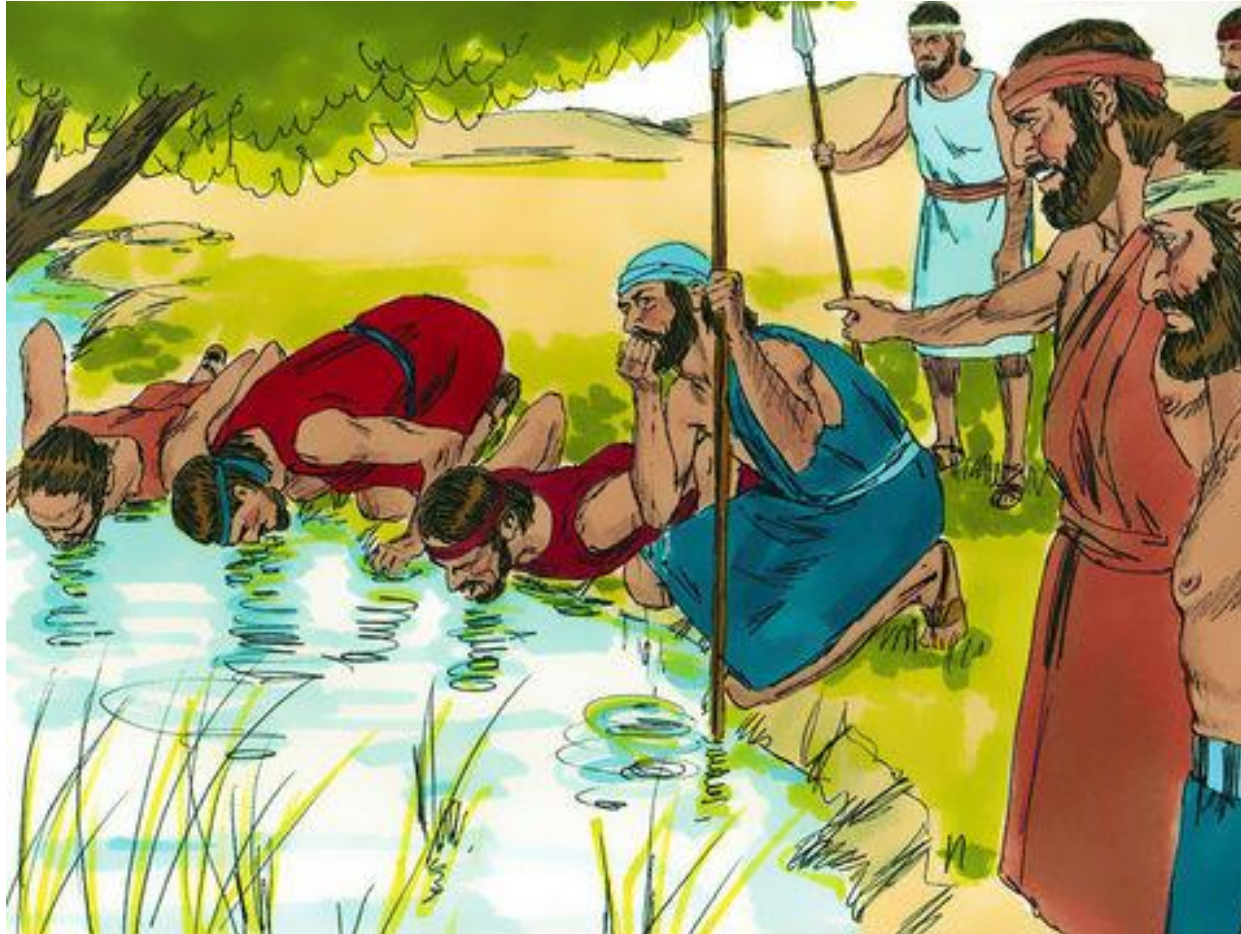
Gideon

One day the angel of the Lord came and sat under an oak tree. There He found an Israelite man named Gideon. Gideon was busy hiding wheat so the Midianites could not destroy it. The Midianites did not worship God and did not like the Israelites. The Midianites liked to destroy the wheat the Israelites were growing so God's people would not have any food to eat. The Midianites destroyed many things that the Israelites owned. The Lord said to Gideon, "The Lord is with you and the Israelites. You must be a mighty warrior!" "But sir," Gideon answered, "if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? It seems as if the Lord has just left us in the hands of the Midianites." The Lord then gave Gideon a very important message; "I am sending **YOU** to save Israel from the Midianites." "But how can I save Israel? I am the weakest and least important of all," Gideon responded. Then Gideon received the answer he needed, and we all need, "I will be with you." With the Lord on Gideon's side, he would be a mighty warrior and be able to save Israel.



Choosing the Army

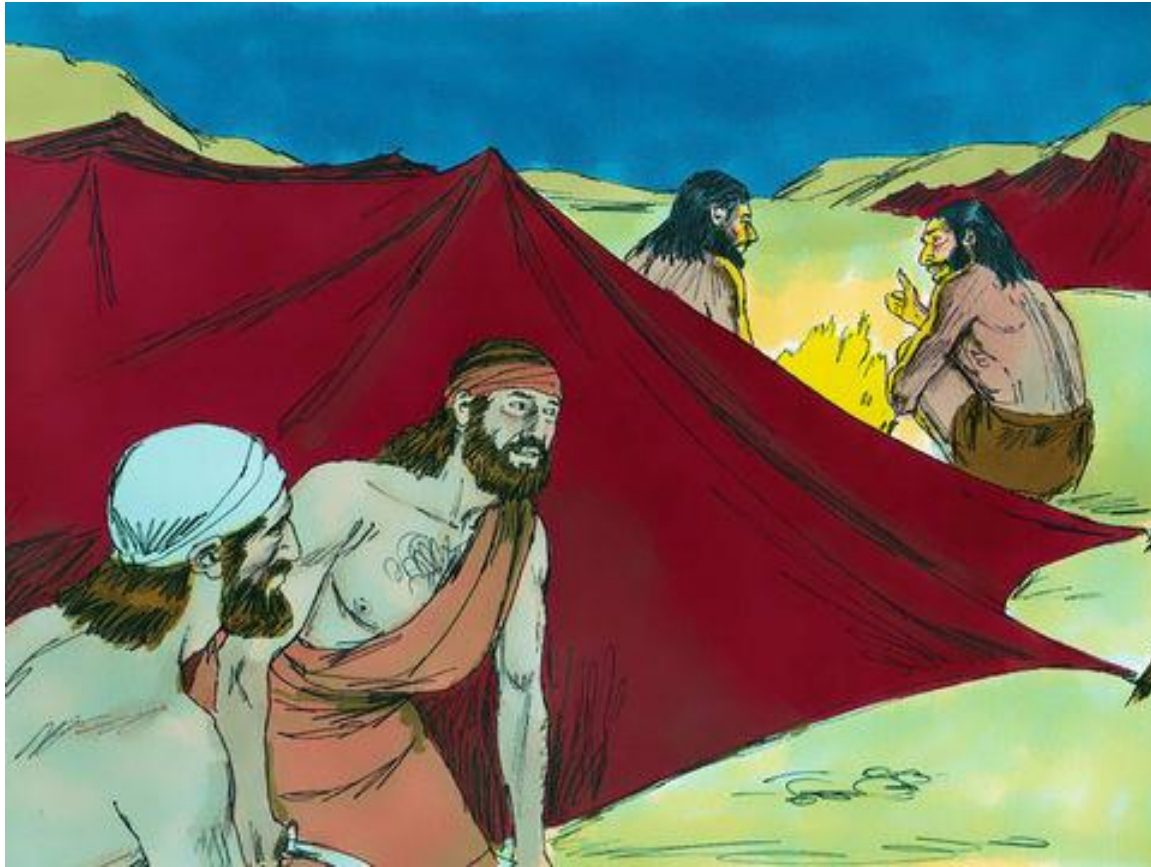
Finally, the time came when God decided that the wicked Midianites would no longer harm his people. Gideon called for all the soldiers to gather to fight against the Midianites. Quite a few soldiers came, 32,000 of them. But 32,000 soldiers were not enough. The powerful and strong Midianite army had more soldiers than Israel did. The Bible says the Lord looked at all the soldiers who had come to fight and said to Gideon, “You have too many men for me to deliver you from the Midianites. Israel may be proud and boast and think that they were strong enough all by themselves. Israel may boast that her own strength is what saved her. So, tell the soldiers that anyone of them who is afraid can leave.” The Bible says when Gideon told the soldiers that any of them who were afraid could leave, 22,000 went home. That left 10,000 soldiers to fight against the powerful, strong Midianites.



But then the Lord spoke to Gideon again, “There are still too many soldiers.” God decided there would be a test to see which soldiers would fight the Midianites. God told Gideon to take the soldiers down to the water. Then He said, “The men who drink water by lapping it from their hands like a dog gets a drink put them together in one group, and the men who kneel down and drink like a person would put those men in another group.” Gideon did not have the slightest idea what God was doing, but he obeyed. Gideon watched to see how they drank water. 300 men drank the water like a dog would. But the rest of the men drank like a person would. There were now two groups: A small group of 300 men and the rest of the soldiers. Now which group do you think would fight against the strong and powerful Midianites? Perhaps the big group, the group with the most soldiers? But God chose the 300 men to fight the Midianites.

God would deliver Israel from the powerful and strong Midianites by His power. God did that by telling Gideon to send the larger group home.

The 300 men would be Israel’s army.



Encouragement

As Gideon and his small army camped on the mountainside, he looked at the 300 men who God had chosen to fight, and Gideon was very afraid. God saw that Gideon was afraid. God knows everything about us since He made us. God was not angry with Gideon because he was afraid. Instead, God did something kind for Gideon. "If you are afraid to attack," God said, "go down to the camp with your servant and listen to what they are saying. Then you won't be afraid to attack the Midianites." Quietly Gideon and his servant went down to the Midianite camp. The Bible says there were so many soldiers there. Not only did they see the Midianites, they also saw that other enemies of Israel had joined them. There were so many soldiers in the valley it looked like lots and lots of bugs! There were so many camels, it was impossible to count. As Gideon and his servant got closer to the camp, they heard two men talking, "I had a dream – a round loaf of barley bread came tumbling into our camp. It hit the tent so hard that the whole tent fell down." When Gideon's servant heard those words, he turned to Gideon and said, "God has given the Midianites into your hands." A little loaf of bread could hardly make a tent fall down, now could it? God allowed Gideon and his servant to hear that Midianite tell his dream. The dream meant the army of 300 men would come down that hill and the Midianites would be defeated. When Gideon and his friend heard the soldier's dream, they were no longer afraid. The Bible says Gideon worshipped God.



The Attack

When they returned to the camp, Gideon called out to his little army, “Get up! The Lord has given the Midianite camp into your hands.” Then Gideon separated the soldiers into three groups. But instead of swords and spears, Gideon planned to fight another way. The Bible says he gave trumpets and empty jars to each of the men in his army. Then he placed torches inside the jars. “Watch me,” he told his small army, “when I get to the edge of the camp, do exactly as I do. When I and all who are with me blow our trumpets, then everyone else blow yours and shout, ‘For the Lord and for Gideon!’”

When they reached the edge of the Midianite camp, one group of Gideon’s army blew their trumpets. Then the men broke the jars that they had been holding. The other two groups did the same thing. They blew their trumpets as they smashed the jars breaking them. The Bible says they held the torches in their left hands while they held the trumpets in their right hands. With a loud shout, the small army called out, “A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!” The sleeping Midianites woke up confused and scared. They saw torches burning and heard jars breaking, trumpets blowing and loud shouts! It was nighttime and very dark. Quickly the Midianites grabbed their swords and spears and began to fight. But they couldn’t see and were fighting with each other. The 300-man army of the Israelites did not draw one single sword. Gideon and his 300 men won the battle that night because of the Lord. It was a miracle for sure! God kept His promise to Gideon and Gideon was a judge over Israel for 40 years. During those 40 years, God’s people worshipped Him, followed His commands, and lived in peace.



Questions for Review

Have the kids answer “Yes” if it is true, or “no” with the correct answer if it is false.

- God wants us to worship and love Him. (Yes)
- God will never leave us. (Yes)
- God always keeps His promises. (Yes)
- The Israelites were friends with the Midianites. (No! The Midianites were enemies of the Israelites.)
- Gideon hid food from the Midianites. (Yes)
- God told Gideon he would be a mighty baker. (No! God said Gideon would be a mighty warrior.)
- God told Gideon He was with him. (Yes)
- God had Gideon separate the army by how they drank water out of the river. (Yes)
- Everyone used straws to drink the water. (No! Some drank the water like a dog, others drank the water like a person would.)
- Israel would only have 300 men to fight the Midianites. (Yes)
- Gideon and his men attacked the Midianites with trumpets, torches, and glass jars. (Yes)
- The 300 men fought the Midianites with their swords. (No! The Israelites never drew a sword or weapon to fight.)
- Gideon judged over Israel for 40 years. Israel worshipped God and everything was peaceful. (Yes)
- God always keeps His promises. (Yes)

Scripture Memory and Hand Motions for April:

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”
Joshua 1:9

- **Have I not commanded you?** (*point emphatically to people in front of you*)
- **Be strong and courageous.** (*flex biceps/arms and/or puff out chest*)
- **Do not** (*cross arms making an “x”*)
- **be frightened and do not be dismayed,** (*use hands to grab opposite arms showing fear*)
- **for the Lord your God** (*point upwards with both hands*)
- **Is with you** (*point to one another*)
- **Wherever you go** (*walk in place*).

Check out this song with motions to help learn the verse:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IU45XTawnSY>

The motions are close enough to ours to help you and your kids memorize it easily!
Also, use this song which teaches us about the book of Judges and how it points us to Jesus:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QBf-JToJVgw>