



5 MINUTE LESSONS ON THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Keep Yourself from Idols

³You must not have any other gods except me.

⁴You must not make for yourselves any idols. ⁵You must not worship or serve any idol. This is because I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God. A person may sin against me and hate me. I will punish his children, even his grandchildren and great grand-children. ⁶But I will be very kind to thousands who love me and obey my commands.” (Exodus 20:3-6 NCV)

¹¹The angel of the Lord came and sat down under the oak tree at Ophrah that belonged to Joash, one of the Abiezrite people. Gideon, Joash’s son, was separating some wheat from the chaff in a winepress to keep the wheat from the Midianites. ¹²The angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon and said, ‘The Lord is with you, mighty warrior!’

¹³Then Gideon said, ‘Sir, if the Lord is with us, why are we having so much trouble? Where are the miracles our ancestors told us he did when the Lord brought them out of Egypt? But now he has left us and has handed us over to the Midianites.’

¹⁴The Lord turned to Gideon and said, ‘Go with your strength and save Israel from the Midianites. I am the one who is sending you.’” (Judges 6:11-14 NCV)

“...So Gideon and his servant Purah went down to the edge of the enemy camp. ¹²The Midianites, the Amalekites, and all the peoples from the east were camped in that valley. There were so many of them they seemed like locusts. Their camels could not be counted because they were as many as the grains of sand on the seashore!

¹³When Gideon came to the enemy camp, he heard a man telling his friend about a dream. He was saying, ‘I dreamed that a loaf of barley bread rolled into the camp of Midian. It hit the tent so hard that the tent turned over and fell flat!’

¹⁴The man’s friend said, ‘Your dream is about the sword of Gideon son of Joash, a man of Israel. God will hand Midian and the whole army over to him!’

¹⁵When Gideon heard about the dream and what it meant, he worshiped God. Then Gideon went back to the camp of Israel and called out to them, 'Get up! The Lord has handed the army of Midian over to you!' ¹⁶Gideon divided the three hundred men into three groups. He gave each man a trumpet and an empty jar with a burning torch inside.

¹⁷Gideon told the men, 'Watch me and do what I do. When I get to the edge of the camp, do what I do. ¹⁸Surround the enemy camp. When I and everyone with me blow our trumpets, you blow your trumpets, too. Then shout, "For the Lord and for Gideon!"'" (Judges 7:12-18 NCV)

²²When Gideon's three hundred men blew their trumpets, the Lord made all the Midianites fight each other with their swords!..." (Judges 7:22 NCV)

²²The people of Israel said to Gideon, 'You saved us from the Midianites. Now, we want you and your son and your grandson to rule over us.'

²³But Gideon told them, 'The Lord will be your ruler. I will not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you.' ²⁴He said, 'I want you to do this one thing for me. I want each of you to give me a gold earring from the things you took in the fighting.'...

²⁵They said, 'We will gladly give you what you want.' So they spread out a coat, and everyone threw down an earring from what he had taken. ²⁷Gideon used the gold to make a holy vest (which became an idol), which he put in his hometown of Ophrah. But all the Israelites were unfaithful to God and worshiped it (as an idol), so it became a trap for Gideon and his family."

³²So Gideon son of Joash died at a good old age. He was buried in the tomb of Joash, his father...

³³As soon as Gideon died, the people of Israel were again unfaithful to God and followed the Baals. They made Baal-Berith their god. ³⁴The Israelites did not remember the Lord their God, who had saved them from all their enemies living all around them. ³⁵And they were not kind to the family of... Gideon, for all the good he had done for Israel." (Judges 8:22-35 NCV)

How does this story apply to us today? The Apostle John in the New Testament tells us, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." (1 John 5:21 KJV)

An idol is anything that you place above God, anything that is more important to you than God, whether it be a home, possessions or a person. It could be entertainment, wealth, success, etc. The New Living Translation really hits the mark as it translates this verse.

"Dear children, keep away from anything that might take God's place in your hearts. (Keep yourselves from idols)" (1 John 5:21 NLT)

Questions

- 1** How does New Testament repentance correspond to the lesson in this story today?
- 2** Discuss with your group how Gideon tore down the alter of Baal.
Read Judges 6:25-32 (NLT).

“²⁵That night the Lord said to Gideon, ‘Take the second bull from your father’s herd, the one that is seven years old. Pull down your father’s altar to Baal, and cut down the Asherah pole standing beside it. ²⁶Then build an altar to the Lord your God here on this hilltop sanctuary, laying the stones carefully. Sacrifice the bull as a burnt offering on the altar, using as fuel the wood of the Asherah pole you cut down.’

²⁷So Gideon took ten of his servants and did as the Lord had commanded. But he did it at night because he was afraid of the other members of his father’s household and the people of the town.

²⁸Early the next morning, as the people of the town began to stir, someone discovered that the altar of Baal had been broken down and that the Asherah pole beside it had been cut down. In their place a new altar had been built, and on it were the remains of the bull that had been sacrificed. ²⁹The people said to each other, ‘Who did this?’ And after asking around and making a careful search, they learned that it was Gideon, the son of Joash.

³⁰‘Bring out your son,’ the men of the town demanded of Joash. ‘He must die for destroying the altar of Baal and for cutting down the Asherah pole.’

³¹But Joash shouted to the mob that confronted him, ‘Why are you defending Baal? Will you argue his case? Whoever pleads his case will be put to death by morning! If Baal truly is a god, let him defend himself and destroy the one who broke down his altar!’ ³²From then on Gideon was called Jerub-baal, which means ‘Let Baal defend himself,’ because he broke down Baal’s altar.”
- Judges 6:25-32 (NLT)

3 Discuss in your group the angel of the Lord visiting Gideon.

Read Judges 6:11-24 (NLT).

“¹¹Then the angel of the Lord came and sat beneath the great tree at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash of the clan of Abiezer. Gideon son of Joash was threshing wheat at the bottom of a winepress to hide the grain from the Midianites. ¹²The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said, ‘Mighty hero, the Lord is with you!’

¹³‘Sir,’ Gideon replied, ‘if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? And where are all the miracles our ancestors told us about? Didn’t they say, ‘The Lord brought us up out of Egypt’? But now the Lord has abandoned us and handed us over to the Midianites.’

¹⁴Then the Lord turned to him and said, ‘Go with the strength you have, and rescue Israel from the Midianites. I am sending you!’

¹⁵‘But Lord,’ Gideon replied, ‘how can I rescue Israel? My clan is the weakest in the whole tribe of Manasseh, and I am the least in my entire family!’

¹⁶The Lord said to him, ‘I will be with you. And you will destroy the Midianites as if you were fighting against one man.’

¹⁷Gideon replied, ‘If you are truly going to help me, show me a sign to prove that it is really the Lord speaking to me. ¹⁸Don’t go away until I come back and bring my offering to you.’

He answered, ‘I will stay here until you return.’

¹⁹Gideon hurried home. He cooked a young goat, and with a basket of flour he baked some bread without yeast. Then, carrying the meat in a basket and the broth in a pot, he brought them out and presented them to the angel, who was under the great tree.

²⁰The angel of God said to him, ‘Place the meat and the unleavened bread on this rock, and pour the broth over it.’ And Gideon did as he was told.

²¹Then the angel of the Lord touched the meat and bread with the tip of the staff in his hand, and fire flamed up from the rock and consumed all he had brought. And the angel of the Lord disappeared.

²²When Gideon realized that it was the angel of the Lord, he cried out, ‘Oh, Sovereign Lord, I’m doomed! I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face!’

²³‘It is all right,’ the Lord replied. ‘Do not be afraid. You will not die.’ ²⁴And Gideon built an altar to the Lord there and named it Yahweh-Shalom (which means ‘the Lord is peace’). The altar remains in Ophrah in the land of the clan of Abiezer to this day.” - Judges 6:11-24 (NLT)



Discuss in your group: What kind of idols do Americans have in their lives?

We want to hear from you!

We would love to hear your feedback on these lessons and how you use them in your own study or in discipling others. If you have any thoughts, stories, testimonies, comments, or questions we would love to hear them!

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Answer Key

7 How does New Testament repentance correspond to the lesson in this story today?

A continuing theme through the Old Testament and into the New Testament is God calling people to repentance or to turn to or to return back to Him. (Acts 20:20-21, Luke 24:46-47 KJV)

“²⁰And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, ²¹Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” - Acts 20:20-21 KJV

“⁴⁶And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: ⁴⁷And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” - Luke 24:46-47 KJV