

Study Series: Gideon: Your Weakness. God’s Strength.

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Lesson Title: “An Idol by Any Other Name” (pp. 179-192)

Session 13

August 27, 2023

The main point of this lesson is: Regardless of what we call it, anything that functions as an idol is an idol.

Focus on this goal: To help adults recognize, remove, and guard against idols in their lives

Key Bible Passage: Judges 8:22-35

Before the Session

1. Gather several things to take to class that might represent idols (money, marriage certificate, new car ad, a career award, and so forth). (Step 1)

2. Take butcher paper and markers to class. (Step 3)

3. Take a gold earring to class. (Step 3)

4. Enlist a learner to study and prepare to report on what an ephod is. (Step 6)

During the Session

Step 1. Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

To introduce this session, display the items brought to class to represent idols. Challenge learners to identify what all of the items have in common. After brief discussion, state that while there is nothing bad about any of the items, they can become things that draw our devotion and worship away from God and can become idols.

Observe that this lesson, with Gideon as our teacher, will remind us to recognize, remove, and guard against idols in our lives.

Step 2. No Other Gods

Call on volunteers to read Exodus 20:4-6 and Luke 10:27. Challenge learners to state in their own words the clear biblical teaching.

State that Gideon, victorious in battle because of God’s leadership, was slipping into the sin of idolatry and taking the Israelites with him. Invite learners to share their answers regarding a definition of idolatry (Day One, activity 1, p. 179).

Ask a volunteer to read Judges 8:22-23. Lead learners to imagine a ticker-tape parade as Gideon returned home from his victory. Call on learners to explain the Israelites’ request of Gideon in their exuberance, and point out that they were looking for a king to be their idol.

Inquire of learners how Gideon responded to the invitation to rule. Invite learners to note any problem in Gideon’s response at this point. State that idolatry sneaks in on stealthy feet, both in Gideon’s life and in our lives.

Step 3. Good to Bad, Bad to Worse

Call on a volunteer to read Judges 8:24-27. Form the class into two groups. Instruct each group to visualize on the butcher paper of Gideon’s descent into idolatry. After a few minutes, invite the groups to share and explain their depictions.

After the groups have reported, hold up a gold earring and say that earrings were transformed into a snare or an idol that would negatively impact generations of Israelites.

Call on learners to discuss their answers in Day Two, activity 1 (p. 182) about how good things can become idols.

Step 4. Emotions Make Poor Leaders

Challenge learners to describe a two-year-old. Draw parallels of how Israel at this time in history was much like a two-year-old: Even in their enthusiasm about Gideon’s victory, the Israelites displayed unstable emotions, leading them to want an earthly king.

Guide learners to discuss how both adversity and prosperity can lead people astray from God and toward idolatry (Day Three, activity 2, p. 184-185). Invite learners to read or share the Scriptures about devotion to God that they listed as part of the activity.

Step 5. The Problem with Me

Call on a volunteer to read Proverbs 16:18-19. Ask learners if they believe pride had anything to do with the sin of idolatry in Gideon’s life. Point out that while Gideon stated he didn’t want to be king, his actions told a different story. The old saying that actions speak louder than words was true in Gideon’s life and is true in our lives.

Draw attention to the six action verbs highlighted by the author (pp. 186-187) that demonstrate Gideon relished the idea of being a king.

Invite learners to discuss their answers in Day Four, activity 2 (p. 187) regarding Gideon’s actions.

Step 6. Convenient Christianity

Call on the person enlisted earlier to discuss the meaning and purpose of an ephod in the Jewish faith. Guide learners to consider if there could have been any sincerity in Gideon’s heart in creating the ephod.

Point out the descriptive verb about how the Israelites responded to the ephod (Judg. 8:27). Guide learners to understand that the tearing of the temple veil when Jesus died completely transformed how people communicate with God (Day Five, activity 1, p. 188).

Call on a volunteer to read Judges 8:28-35. Discuss the generational consequences of Gideon’s slide into idolatry. Stress: Just as the study of Gideon began with generational sins, so the end of the study on Gideon focuses on generational sins.

Step 7. Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Close in prayer that learners will consider how their actions today can have consequences in future generations, particularly with the sin of idolatry. Ask that God help learners commit to living lives that will create a generational legacy of loving and obeying God.

After the Session

Continue to follow up on and plan the possible mission outreach from the previous session.

