

The Lord Gives Gideon a Sign

Judges 6:25-40

Big Ideas: The Lord is always with us, giving us the courage to obey Him. He gives us victory over false ideas and selfish feelings.

Overview: The Lord commands Gideon to destroy his father's altar to Baal and in its place build an altar to the Lord. Gideon does this, even though he is afraid. The Midianites are gathering, getting ready to fight. Gideon asks the Lord to give him a sign that He will give the Israelites victory. The sign is given through a fleece or sheep's wool that Gideon twice sets out overnight.

Lesson 2: The Lord Gives Gideon a Sign

Lesson Sections	Activity Options	Materials Provided	Materials Needed
1. Welcome (2-3 minutes)	All Ages Wet and Dry explore the properties of wool	directions p. 2	sample of wool (e.g. fleece, wool sock, sweater), spray bottle of water, large plastic bag or plastic tablecloth, bowl
2. Reading & Discussion (5-7 minutes)	All Ages Read & discuss Judges 6	Judges 6 reading p. 3 questions pp. 4-5	
3. Projects & Activities Choose 1-2 activities (15-20 minutes) <i>Note:</i> Activity ages are approximate. Choose activities that will work for your group.	Ages 3-6 Gideon, Two Altars and the Fleece act out the story	directions p. 6 script p. 7 <i>Baal Figure</i> p. 8	see list of props on p. 20
	Ages 7-10 Mirror Image—Wet and Dry create a double picture	directions p. 9 <i>Ground for Fleece</i> p. 10	white felt or paper, white glue, blue paint or food coloring, lids or paper plates, cotton buds (Q-tips), tape, scissors
	Ages 11-14 Altars of Falsity and Truth interactive project	directions p. 11 <i>Stone Altar Paper</i> p. 12 <i>False God & True God Ideas</i> p. 13	scissors, stapler or tape, markers
	Ages 3-10 Gideon and the Fleece picture to color	p. 14	crayons or markers
	All Ages Recitation	Recitation Cards p. 15	scissors or paper cutter
4. Closing (2-3 minutes)	All Ages wrap up notes	p. 16	

Welcome: Wet and Dry

Materials Needed

sample of wool (e.g. fleece, wool sock, sweater, etc.), spray bottle filled with water, area that can get wet (*option*: cover table or floor with large plastic bag if needed), bowl for squeezing water into

New Church Concept Lambs

“A Lamb means innocence. God’s truth emanating from the Lord in heaven has innocence at the center of it.” *Arcana Coelestia* 9127

The Lord is called in the Word a lamb, a lamb signifying innocence. Because innocence is the inmost in all the good of heaven, it so affects minds that when it is felt by a person—as when an angel of the inmost heaven approaches—they seem to themselves to be no longer their own master and are moved, as it were carried away, by such a delight that no delight of the world seems to be anything in comparison with it. See *Heaven and Hell* 282

1. Let’s look at wool. I’m going to pass this wool around. What does it feel like? Is it smooth? Is it soft? What can you tell me about it?
2. As students pass the wool, discuss it and its properties.

- Wool comes from sheep. Farmers shear sheep once a year.
- Wool that is cut off is called a fleece. Shearing sheep doesn’t hurt them. It is like getting a haircut.
- Wool has “scales”. It can be spun into a strong thread called yarn because the scales lock together. (Hair does not have scales. It cannot be spun.)
- Yarn can be woven or knitted into useful clothing like socks or sweaters.
- Wool is special. Unlike other fibers wool does not become cold if it gets wet.

3. Let’s see what happens when the wool gets wet. Encourage children to take turns spraying the wool with water. How much water can the wool hold? Let’s see what happens when we try to squeeze out the water. (Squeeze the water out over a bowl.)
4. Today’s story includes a miracle the Lord did for Gideon. The miracle involves a fleece and water. Do you know what dew is? If you have gone outside early and found the grass wet when it didn’t rain, you have seen dew. Dew is water that forms on the ground overnight when the air is warm and the ground is cold. Dew evaporates and the grass dries out as the sun gets hot. Let’s find out about the miracle that happens with a fleece and the dew.

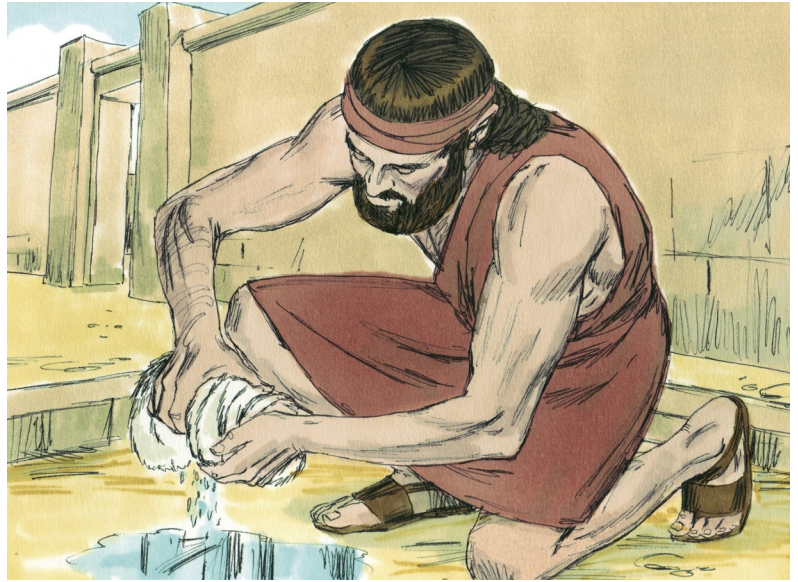


Reading: The Lord Gives a Sign

Read: Judges 6:25-40 excerpted below. For young children you may wish to summarize some of the story and read aloud only the sentences in **bold**. There is a picture of Gideon's men destroying the altar of Baal on p. 16.

²⁵ Now it came to pass **the same night that the Lord said to him, "Take your father's young bull, the second bull of seven years old, and tear down the altar of Baal that your father has, and cut down the wooden image that is beside it; ²⁶ and build an altar to the Lord your God on top of this rock in the proper arrangement, and take the second bull and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the image which you shall cut down."**

²⁷ **So Gideon took ten men from among his servants and did as the Lord had said to him. But because he feared his father's household and the men of the city too much to do it by day, he did it by night.**



²⁸ **And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, there was the altar of Baal, torn down; and the wooden image that was beside it was cut down, and the second bull was being offered on the altar which had been built. ²⁹ So they said to one another, "Who has done this thing?" And when they had inquired and asked, they said, "Gideon the son of Joash has done this thing."**

³⁰ Then the men of the city said to Joash, "Bring out your son, that he may die, because he has torn down the altar of Baal, and because he has cut down the wooden image that was beside it."

³¹ But Joash said to all who stood against him, "Would you plead for Baal? Would you save him? Let the one who would plead for him be put to death by morning! If he is a god, let him plead for himself, because his altar has been torn down!"

³² **Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, "Let Baal plead against him, because he has torn down his altar."**

³³ Then all the Midianites and Amalekites, the people of the East, gathered together; and they crossed over and encamped in the Valley of Jezreel. ³⁴ But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon; then he blew the trumpet, and the Abiezrites gathered behind him. ³⁵ And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh, who also gathered behind him. He also sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali; and they came up to meet them.

³⁶ **So Gideon said to God, "If You will save Israel by my hand as You have said— ³⁷ look, I shall put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said." ³⁸ And it was so. When he rose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece together, he wrung the dew out of the fleece, a bowlful of water.**

³⁹ Then Gideon said to God, "Do not be angry with me, but let me speak just once more: Let me test, I pray, just once more with the fleece; let it now be dry only on the fleece, but on all the ground let there be dew." ⁴⁰ And God did so that night. It was dry on the fleece only, but there was dew on all the ground.

Discussion Questions

The discussion questions are grouped by approximate age levels. If you have a mixed age group, we suggest you read through all the questions before class and decide which ones you wish to use.

New Church Concept Altar

An altar is a representative of Divine worship. There is worship of the Lord from good, and there is worship of Him from truth. The worship of the Lord from truth was represented by an altar of stone. See *Arcana Coelestia* 8940



New Church Concept External Worship

“The external worship of the nations in the land of Canaan, who worshipped the Baals and other gods, was very similar [to the worship of the Israelites]. They had not only temples and altars but also sacrifices, so that their external worship differed little from the worship of the Jews. The only difference was the name they had for their god.”

Arcana Coelestia 1094

Questions for Ages 3-6

1. The children of Israel forgot the Lord and started worshiping false gods called Baals. They set up altars to Baal and made offerings to him. What did the Lord ask Gideon to do to the altar of Baal? (Tear it down.)
2. What else did the Lord ask Gideon to do? (Set up an altar to the Lord and offer a sacrifice.)
3. Gideon did as the Lord asked him at night. Why do you think he waited until it was dark to do what the Lord asked? (Gideon was worried about what others might think or do.)
4. What new name did Gideon’s father give him after the people discovered what he had done? (Jerubbaal)
5. After Gideon destroyed the altar, the Midianites came to eat the crops. Gideon called the children of Israel for help, but before going to battle he asked for a sign. What sign did Gideon ask for? (The sign of the fleece. First the fleece was to be wet and the ground dry. Then the ground was to be wet and the fleece dry.)
6. The sign of the fleece was a miracle! What did this miracle show Gideon? (It showed that the Lord would be with Gideon and help him fight Israel’s enemies.) The Lord makes the same promise to us. He is always with us, helping us to make good choices to love Him and to help others.

Questions for Ages 7-10

1. The children of Israel were to worship at the tabernacle in Shiloh where the Ten Commandments were kept. Over many years the children of Israel forgot about the Lord and set up altars to false gods, called Baals. This brought terrible problems. The problem in this story was that Midianites were invading Israel and eating all their crops. The Israelites were starving.
2. What was the first thing Gideon was asked to do to get rid of the Midianites? (Tear down the altar of Baal near his home.)
3. Why do you think Gideon destroyed the altar at night? (He was afraid of how others would react.)
4. What did Gideon do next? (He built an altar and sacrificed to the Lord.)

5. How did the people of the city react when they discovered what Gideon had done? (They were angry.) Did Gideon's father want them to kill Gideon? (No. He said that if Baal was a god, he should defend himself.)
6. As the Midianites began to come into the valley to look for food, Gideon blew a trumpet and sent messengers for help. But Gideon wanted one more sign that the Lord would be with him. What sign did he ask for? (Gideon asked for the sign of the fleece.) Explain what happened.
7. What did the miracle of the fleece show Gideon? (The Lord would be with him to fight Israel's enemies.)
8. The Lord promises that He will be with us to fight our spiritual enemies too. Who are these enemies? (Our enemies are evil spirits, who rob us of good and true thoughts.) We need to ask the Lord to get rid of selfish thoughts and feelings that take away our joy and peace. If we do this, He will bring victory over these enemies so that after this life is over we can enjoy the happiness of heaven.

New Church Concept Wood

Wood is representative of good, as was the wood placed on the altar when burnt offerings were made. But people who attribute good to themselves and make it meritorious are also said in the Word to worship wood or a graven image made of wood. See *Arca-na Coelestia* 2784

Questions for Ages 11-14

1. After the Lord gave Moses the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai, He gave instructions for building a tabernacle. The tabernacle was a special tent used for worship of the Lord. The children of Israel worshiped in the tabernacle for forty years as they wandered in the wilderness. After they conquered Canaan the tabernacle was set up in Shiloh. This was the only place the Israelites were to worship. But people turned away from the Lord and set up altars to the false god Baal throughout the land. The first thing the Lord asked Gideon to do was tear down the altar of Baal near his home. How did Gideon feel about destroying the altar? (Gideon destroyed the altar *at night* because was afraid of what his father and the men of his city might do.)
2. What kind of false gods do we set up for ourselves? ("False gods" are things we put above the Lord in our lives, e.g. wanting to look good in front of others, being popular, being "right", etc.)
3. Did Gideon's father and the men of his city react in the way he thought they would? (The men of the city were angry, but his father defended Gideon and gave him a new name, Jerubbaal—"let Baal contend", meaning that if Baal is a god then he can defend himself.)
4. What signal did Gideon give for his family, the Abiezrites, to come to fight the Midianites? (He blew a trumpet. The sound of a trumpet corresponds to truth coming from the Lord. Gideon called people to fight from the true principles from the Word.)
5. Why did Gideon ask the Lord for the miracle of the fleece? (As the Midianites gathered in the valley of Jezreel, Gideon needed assurance that the Lord would be with him.)
6. How does the Lord promise He will be with us when we are struggling against false gods? (He invites us to pray and gives us an inner confidence that He will be with us through truths we know.)
7. Our spiritual enemies are false ideas and selfish loves that steal into our minds and rob us of a true sense of perspective and joy. Conscience alerts us to these attacks, so we can muster true ideas to fight against them. Only the power of the Lord can overcome these enemies. As we say in the Lord's Prayer, "Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory."

Gideon, Two Altars, and the Fleece (Ages 3-6)

Materials Needed

See list of props on the right below.

Prepare in Advance

Construct an “altar of Baal” out of blocks. Print and prepare (see prop list at right) the picture of Baal (p. 8) and place it next to the altar. Read through the script (p. 7). Set up an area for the miracle, putting down a plastic bag or table-cloth. Fill a spray bottle with water. Place the fleeces or wool clothing and a bowl for squeezing water into nearby.

New Church Concept Idols

“The material of which idols were made, their forms, and their garments, among the ancients, represented the falsities of religion, from which was their worship. Idols of wood signified falsities concerning good works. All these falsities exist in those who do not do the work of repentance, that is, shun evils as sins against God. For a stone in the Word signifies a truth in its ultimates.” *Apocalypse Revealed* 459

A teacher or an older student tells the story as children act out Gideon tearing down the altar of Baal, building an altar for the Lord, and asking for the sign of the fleece.

Characters:

- Gideon
- servants
- men of the city
- Joash (Gideon’s father)
- Gideon’s family

Props:

- *Statue of Baal* (p. 8) printed, stapled or taped to another piece of paper in a circle so it will stand up
- large wood or cardboard blocks to build an altar
- large rock (cardboard box)
- “trumpet” (e.g. rolled paper, cardboard tube)
- two pieces of wool fleece, or two items of clothing made from wool
- spray bottle filled with water
- large plastic bag or plastic tablecloth to cover the floor
- bowl to squeeze water into
- *optional*: simple costumes such as T-shirts



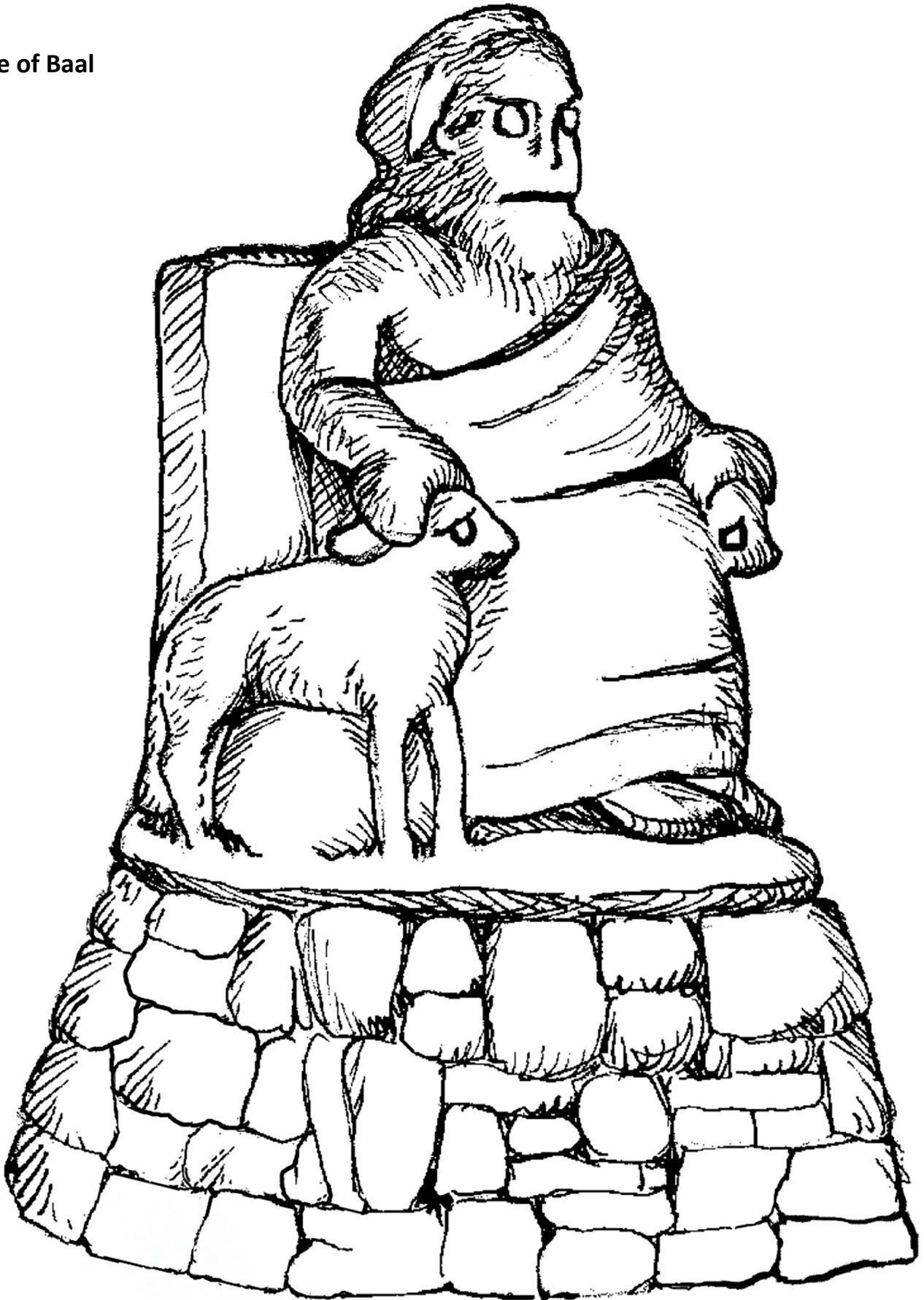
New Church Concept True and False Faith

Faith in the one and only true God is what makes our goodness truly good even in its inner form. Faith in a false God, on the other hand, makes our goodness good in outer form only. This type of goodness is not intrinsically good; for example, the faith the Canaanites had in Baal. This kind of faith is completely different from faith in the Lord, who is the true God and eternal life. What is a faith in God but a looking toward him and experiencing His presence as a result, and also a sense of confidence that He is helping us? If faith of this kind is united to goodness, the verdict is eternal life. The outcome is markedly different if faith is not united to goodness; it is even worse if faith is united to evil. See *True Christian Religion* 655

Gideon, Two Altars, and the Fleece Script

Characters	Reading	Actions
	The Lord told Gideon, “Tear down the altar of Baal. Cut down the wooden image of Baal beside it. Build an altar to the Lord on top of this rock. Offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the image you will cut down.”	Children listen to the story.
Gideon and servants	That night, Gideon took ten servants and tore down the altar of Baal and cut down the wooden image beside it.	Children creep to the altar, tear it down and put the statue of Baal down on its side.
Gideon and servants	Then Gideon built an altar to the Lord on top of a rock and offered a sacrifice with the wood of the image he had cut down.	Children build an altar to the Lord on the rock (cardboard box upside down). Lay the image of Baal on top.
Men of the city	When the people woke up early next morning, and saw what had happened they said, “Who has done this?” They were told, “Gideon the son of Joash has done this.”	People from the city point to the altar of the Lord.
Men of the city, Joash (Gideon’s father)	Then the men of the city said to Joash, “Bring out your son Gideon because he tore down the altar of Baal and cut down the wooden image that was beside it.”	The Men of the city gesture to Joash. Gideon comes out.
Joash, Men of the city	But Joash, Gideon’s father, said to them, “Would you save Baal? If he is a god, let him speak for himself, because his altar has been torn down!”	Joash gestures to the Men of the city.
Joash and Gideon	So Joash gave Gideon the name Jerubbaal, saying, “Let Baal plead against him, because he has torn down his altar.”	Gideon kneels while Joash names him.
	Then the Midianites and all the people crossed the river Jordan and camped in the valley.	Children “cross the river” and sit down.
Gideon and his family	Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon. He blew the trumpet, and his family gathered behind him.	Gideon blows the trumpet and his family comes to stand with him.
Gideon, his family, and the tribes	Gideon sent messengers to the tribes of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali. And they came to meet them.	More people come to join Gideon and his family.
Gideon, his family, and the tribes	So Gideon said to God, “If You will save Israel by my hand as You have said—I shall put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on the ground, then I shall know that You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said.”	Gideon puts a fleece on the plastic bag or tablecloth. Gideon and everyone go to “sleep”. The teacher, or an older student, wets the fleece by spraying water on it, being careful to keep the bag or cloth dry.
Gideon	And it was so. When he rose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece together, he wrung the dew out of the fleece, a bowlful of water.	All wake up. Gideon squeezes water out of the fleece into a bowl.
Gideon, his family, and the tribes.	Then Gideon said to God, “Do not be angry with me, but let me test, I pray, just once more with the fleece. Let it now be dry only on the fleece, but on all the ground let there be dew.”	Gideon puts a fresh dry fleece on the ground. Everyone goes to “sleep”. The teacher or an older student picks up the fleece, sprays water on the plastic bag or tablecloth and puts the dry fleece back.
Gideon	And God did so that night. It was dry on the fleece only, but there was dew on all the ground.	Gideon wakes up to find the fleece dry and the ground wet.

Statue of Baal



Mirror Image—Wet and Dry (Ages 7-10)

Gideon asked the Lord for a sign that the Israelites would be victorious over their enemies. He put out a fleece on two nights. After the first night there was dew on the fleece but the ground was dry. After the second night, the ground was wet with dew but the fleece was completely dry. Students will create a mirror-image picture of what happened during these two nights.



Materials Needed

copy of *Ground for Fleece* p. 10 for each student, white felt or paper, white glue, blue paint or food coloring, lids or paper plates for mixing, cotton buds (e.g. Q-tips), tape, scissors

Prepare in Advance

Print copies of *Ground for Fleece* for each student. Cut pieces of white felt or paper into rectangles of at least 4.5" x 3" (12cm x 8cm). Each student will need two white rectangles. Gather other supplies.

1. Have you been out early in the morning and seen drops of water on the grass when there has been no rain? If a toy or tool was left out on the ground it will be wet too. This wetness is called dew. Dew doesn't always happen, but when it does the ground and everything on it gets wet.
2. Gideon asked the Lord for a sign that He would give Gideon victory in battle. He first asked that dew cover the fleece, but that the ground be dry. The following night he asked that the fleece be dry and the ground around it be wet. We're going to make a two-sided picture to show the miracles the Lord did each night.
3. Hand out supplies (see above right). Have students fold the *Ground for Fleece* (p. 10) along the black line. Starting in the center of the fleece shape, poke the scissors through both pages. Cut out the fleece shape.
4. Unfold the *Ground for Fleece* page. It should have a fleece-shaped hole on each side of the black line. Tape a piece of white felt or white paper to the back of each hole so the "fleece" shows on the picture side of the paper.
5. Now we are ready to add the dew! Squeeze some white glue into a lid or onto a paper plate. Add a drop of blue paint or blue food coloring and mix it into the glue using a cotton bud (e.g. Q-tip).
6. Create the dew by dipping the end of a cotton bud into the blue glue. On one side of your page make blue glue dots *only* on the fleece to show what happened on the first night Gideon put out the fleece.
7. On the other side of the page make blue dots *only* on the ground to show what happened on the second night Gideon put out the fleece.

New Church Concept White Wool

White wool signifies good in ultimates. See *Apocalypse Explained* 9263.4

New Church Concept Dew

"'And in the morning' means the beginning of a new state. 'There was a deposit of dew around the camp' means the truth of peace attaching itself. 'And the deposit of dew went up' means an introduction of truth." *Arcana Coelestia* 8450.

Ground for Fleece



Altars of Falsity and Truth (Ages 11-14)

The Lord directed Gideon to tear down his father's altar to Baal and cut down the wooden image of Baal next to it. Then Gideon was to build a new altar to the Lord, cut up the idol and use the wood to sacrifice a bull. Worshiping at the altar of Baal represents acting from false principles. The first step to building a life on true ideas is to tear down false ideas since falsity cannot be turned into truth.



Wood corresponds to good—to our loves. Loves may be purified. A love for evil may be purified to become a love of what is good. In the story of Gideon this is pictured by the wooden image of Baal being burned on the Lord's altar.

This activity looks at “false gods”, the “one true God”, and our ability to turn from loving what is false to loving what is true. Falsity is pictured by the altar of the Baal, and truth is pictured by the altar of the Lord.

1. The children of Israel worshiped false Baals, which represent the loves of self and worldly things.
2. We are going to make two “altars”. One altar will picture the false ideas of the Baals. The second altar will picture true ideas from the Lord.
3. Give students one piece of *Stone Altar Paper* (p. 12) and a copy of the *False god, True God Ideas* (p. 13). Using scissors, cut the *Stone Altar Paper* in half.
4. Make one half into an “altar of Baal” by writing false ideas on it, and the other half into an “altar of the Lord” by writing true ideas on it. For help thinking about what to write use the *False god, True God Ideas*.
5. When you have finished, fold the tops of each paper altar down and crease firmly. (See picture above.)
6. Staple or tape the paper into a column.
7. Put the altars next to each other on a hard surface. Like Gideon, we face a choice as to which altar we will serve each day. Make a fist and punch the altar of Baal to destroy it, as Gideon did.
8. We need to work to destroy false ideas in our minds and turn to the Lord.

Materials Needed

copies of *Stone Altar Paper* p. 12 and *False god, True God Ideas* p. 13 for each student, pens or pencils, stapler or tape, scissors

New Church Concept Other Gods

Thou shalt not worship other gods, requires people not to love themselves and the world; for people who love themselves and the world above all things worship other gods; for what any one loves above all things is his God. See *Apocalypse Explained* 935

New Church Concept Intellect & Love

“The intellect does not become spiritual and celestial, but the love does, and when the love does, it makes the intellect, its partner, spiritual and celestial also.” *Divine Love and Wisdom* 422



False god

I'm right.
Nobody cares about me.
I don't need others.
I'm the best.
Admitting I'm wrong shows I'm weak.
I don't ever need your help.
I must be perfect.
It's important to you, but it will have to wait.
I don't need to apologize.
I deserve more.
I can't help, I'm busy—my favorite show is on.
It's ok to throw a tantrum if I don't get my way.

True God

The Lord speaks the truth in His Word.
The Lord loves everyone—even me.
The Lord works through people around me.
The Lord alone has power.
The Lord gives life.
I can put the Lord's will above my own.
The Lord forgives.
Admitting you're wrong is the first step to starting over.
The Lord calls me to care for others.
The Lord creates everything.
The Lord knows what's in my heart.

False god

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True God

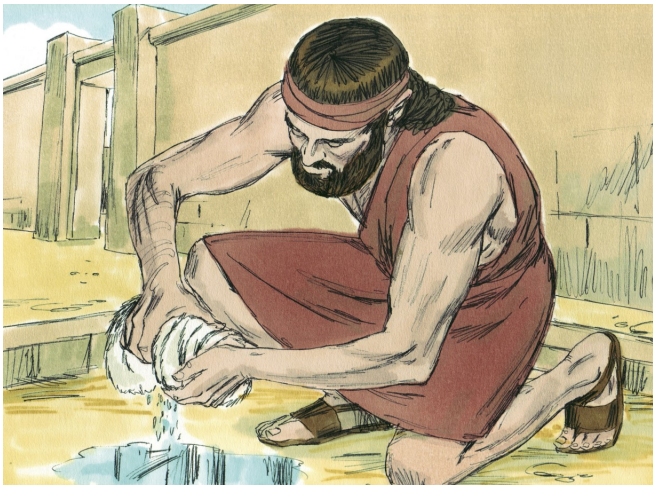
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The Lord creates everything.
The Lord knows what's in my heart.



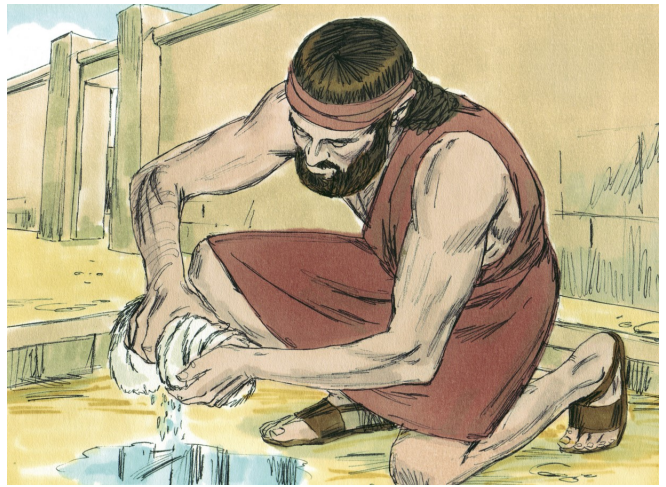
Recitation Cards

Print a recitation card for each student. To learn the recitation, say each phrase aloud. Ask the students to repeat after you. End by joining the phrases together. Ask students to take the cards home to practice the recitation.

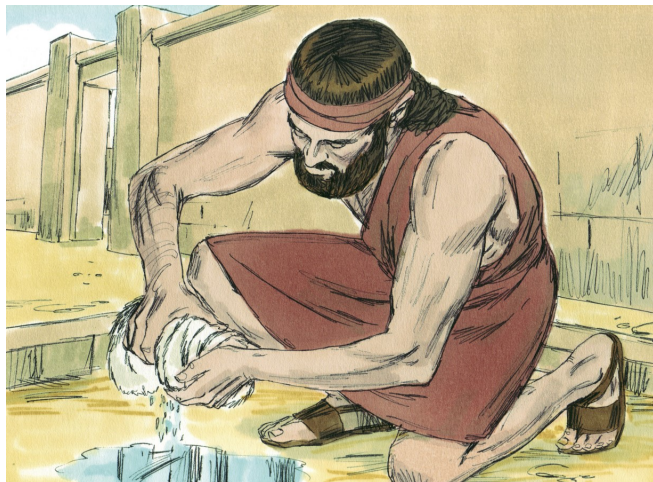
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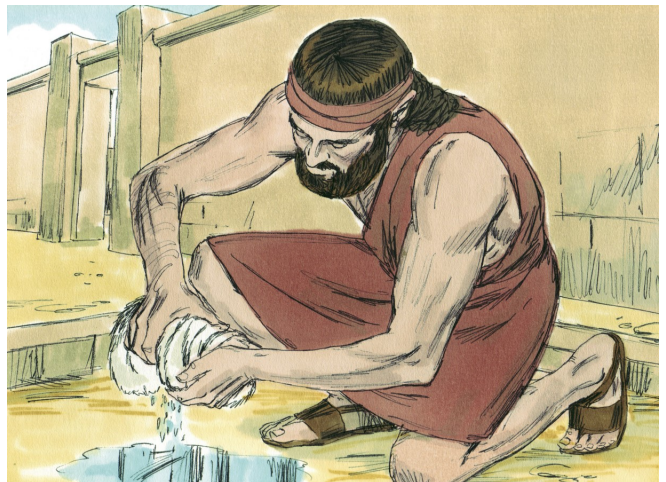
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Closing

The Lord is always with us, giving us the courage to obey Him. He can give us victory over false ideas and selfish feelings when we do what He tells us in His Word.



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