A FEW GOOD MEN...AND WOMEN

TEACHER INSIGHT

Personal Preparation for the Study:
The most effective way to prepare is to experience the study first as a participant. Each of the studies centers on Bible stories that have rich meaning and can impact your life in deep ways.

Take at least an hour to go through the exercises as a participant. Make sure you spend time watching the videos, doing the reading, and engaging in the response activities. Write down your answers to the discussion questions. Try hard not to let your mind wander to how you will teach this lesson! This will be an important time for you to discover your own insights, and it will also help you anticipate your group’s responses.

Leading this Study:
After you go through the study for your own growth, go through it from a teacher’s perspective. Note activities and options that you feel will work well with your group and ones that you want to change or omit.

In the story for chapter 8, the narrative is told through several “main” characters and several smaller stories of battles fought by the Israelites. Because of repetition, these stories have been abbreviated in the video and the StoryReader script to two predominant stories and characters: The story of Gideon and the story of Samson.

While teens should focus on themes from these two primary stories during your time together, make sure to emphasize the scale of the numerous and miraculous victories the Israelites achieved with God’s help. Also make sure to remind the teens that the story goes much deeper, with detail and nuance, into the lives of the (very different) men and women whom God chose to lead Israel. Encourage them to take time on their own throughout the week to read more about these characters and their amazing stories.

As always, continue to encourage your teens to give their full attention while engaging with this story. Remind them that discussion outside of the parameters of this story is for another time. Encourage teens that if they engage the story like a movie, allowing themselves to enter it, they will learn new things.

Chapter 8: “A Few Good Men...and Women” can be found in Judges 2–4; 6–8; and 13–16.

AVOID CHRISTIAN JARGON!

Keep the conversation as accessible to teens as possible!

While leading a discussion, it’s important to use language that teens understand. Even though some adolescents have a “churched” background and may understand some theological concepts and words (e.g., justification, righteousness, sovereignty, etc.), chances are there may be some who are totally unfamiliar with Christian words or concepts. Be aware of using more complex Christian ideas in answering questions, and make sure to give background or an explanation in everyday terms whenever possible.
TEACHER PLANNING

Supplies:

- Copies for every participant of the Chapter 8 Handout: A Few Good Men...and Women (on curriculum DVD)
- Provide 8 to 10 copies of the StoryReader for your storytellers (on curriculum DVD). See the StoryReader Assignment section below for details. Make extra copies for teens who’d like to read along.
- Copies of the JOIN the Story sections of this guide for Small Group Leaders
- Show The Battle Begins Recap video and A Few Good Men...and Women video from the curriculum DVD.
- JOIN the Story Activity: Extra paper, pens, markers, paints, and clay for participants to create an imaginative response
- Creative Option: A large sheet of paper for every 2 to 3 teens, and an assortment of markers for each group
- Optional: The Story: Teen Edition—a Bible that corresponds with this study (published by Zondervan)

StoryReader Assignment:

Give out StoryReader scripts (from curriculum DVD) to teen and adult volunteers as far in advance as you can. Ask for volunteers who are comfortable with and skilled at reading aloud. Never force a teen to read! Mix this up and use different people each week. Often the best storytellers are those who have some dramatic training.

The StoryReader scripts are segments of Scripture taken directly from Zondervan’s The Story: Teen Edition (NIV). Each script takes about 10 minutes to be read aloud. These segments have been formatted into a Readers’ Theater. A Readers’ Theater is an activity in which a few participants are asked to read directly from a script, with the intent of telling a story in a lively manner. Readers are not expected to memorize or improvise from the script, but use voice inflection and some gestures appropriate to their characters’ actions and words in order to bring the story to life.

(The major parts in this week’s story are read by the Narrators. Make sure to pick a teen or leader who won’t mind reading large portions of the story.)

Additional Storytelling Options

For each lesson, we recommend three additional storytelling options in order to provide some optional variety to your teens’ experience of the Scripture. You may use them to either supplement or replace the Readers’ Theater experience. For each of the three options, you may use the StoryReader script provided or have teens read directly from Scripture. (Scripture references are noted at the top of the StoryReader script.)
1. TWO LENSES
• Using copies of the StoryReader scripts (or the actual passages from the Bible), have teens read the selection quietly on their own. Have them read it with this particular question in mind: What stands out as being most important or most unusual in this story?
• When they finish, have the teens read the story again. This time, have them focus on the question: What does this story mean for my life?
• Encourage teens to take notes of things that stand out to them during each reading.

2. RETELLING THE STORY
• Divide teens into 2 to 3 groups, depending on the length/complexity of the story and size of your group. Assign a different part of the story to each group. Have each group read their part of the story amongst themselves.
• After 3 to 5 minutes, have members from each group retell what happened in their section of the story in front of the rest of the large group. Encourage them to recount as many details from the story as they can.
• OPTIONAL: Encourage group members to act out what happens while the story is being retold. For a fun element, limit retellings to 1 minute each, so teens are forced to do a fast-paced reenactment.

3. STORYBOARD
• Divide teens into groups of 3 to 4. Have each group read through the StoryReader script within their groups.
• At the front of the room, hang 6 to 8 large pieces of paper. After 10 minutes, have one volunteer at a time (one from each group) come up and draw a major “scene” from the story on each large piece of paper. (Encourage teens to use stick figures—just enough to represent what is happening in the scene.)
• When the storyboard outline is complete, review the series of events and ask the teens if they feel any major events from the story have been left out.

Another Creative Option
A story-specific idea for an additional creative exercise has also been provided with this lesson. You may use and adjust the instructions for the exercise to fit the needs of your group. (See the “Creative Option” sidebar under the JOIN the Story section of the Teacher Lesson Script.)

(Please note that additional materials may be required for this exercise, and the exercise may take longer than the allotted time for the JOIN the Story section, given the type of activity and the size of your group.)
Outline for a session that is approximately 75 minutes long:

**PART ONE: REWIND THE STORY** *(large or small group)*

- Introduction and Prayer *1 minute*
- *The Battle Begins Recap Video* *2 minutes*
- Brief Responses to Video *2 minutes*

**PART TWO: SEE THE STORY** *(large or small group)*

- Explanation and Handouts *1 minute*
- *Chapter 8: A Few Good Men...and Women Video* *3 minutes*
- Create Symbols for the Story *2 minutes*
- Share about Our Symbols *4 minutes*

**PART THREE: HEAR THE STORY** *(large or small group)*

- Explanation *1 minute*
- StoryReader Scripture Telling *12 minutes*
- Response to Scripture *7 minutes*

*BREAK: Teens move to small groups* *5 minutes*

**PART FOUR: JOIN THE STORY** *(small group)*

- Discussion *15 minutes*
- Create Responses to the Story *12 minutes*
- Share Responses to the Story *7 minutes*
- Closing Prayer *1 minute*
Teacher Script: (please personalize this)

Hello, everyone! I’m so glad you’re here for another great week of discovery through God’s Story. Let’s pray together before we begin:

God, we are grateful for another chance to come together and learn more about you and your amazing Story. We pray that you’d help us to set aside anything that would keep us from hearing from you during our time today. Teach us something fresh and new about ourselves and about you, and show us how we can change ourselves and the world around us. Amen.

This week we’re continuing our Story, and I hope you’re as excited as I am to find out what comes next. But before we do, let’s take a look back at what happened in our story last week. As usual, it will go by fast, so watch and listen carefully.

[CUE: Play The Battle Begins Recap video from the curriculum DVD (2 minutes).]

Teacher Script: (please personalize this)

So what did you think of that video? What parts stood out to you?

[CUE: SHARE—Get a few quick responses to these questions; don’t spend more than a minute or two discussing.]

Just as a reminder, in every Bible story we go through together, we’re looking for TWO story lines: An Upper Story and a Lower Story. The Upper Story tells the big picture, the grand narrative of God seeking relationship with human beings as it unfolds throughout history. The Lower Story consists of the smaller stories we’ll look at each week that tell the details of particular people and the events that happen in their lives.

[CUE: It may be helpful to call on teens to briefly define the Upper Story and Lower Story to ensure that teens are starting to remember these from week to week.]
Let's watch this week’s video, *A Few Good Men...and Women*. It’s packed with action, so you have to pay careful attention so you don’t miss anything. Ready?

[CUE: Play *A Few Good Men...and Women* video from the curriculum DVD (3 minutes).]

[CUE: Give each teen the *Chapter 8: A Few Good Men...and Women* handout found on the curriculum DVD.]

**Teacher Script:** (please personalize this)

Get with a partner. The SEE the Story area in the upper left corner with the EYE on it is where you and a partner will now create an **image or symbol** for this story. It can be something simple, but put some thought into how it represents the story. In a couple of minutes, we’ll share our creations.

[CUE: DISCUSS—After 2 minutes, ask a few teens to share briefly about the symbol they created. Ask them to explain the thoughts behind their drawings. After 3 or 4 minutes of sharing, go to the next part.]

**PART THREE: HEAR THE STORY** *(LARGE OR SMALL GROUP) 25 MINUTES*

**Teacher Script:** (please personalize this)

As usual, there’s a lot to take in from this story. We want to spend some time diving deeper into it, so I’ve asked a few of you to help us as StoryReaders.

While the story is being read, I encourage you to draw or write down key events that stand out to you in the HEAR the Story section on your handout.

[CUE: Have preassigned teen and adult volunteers read the StoryReader script all the way through without stopping (10 minutes). NOTE: For alternate ways of interacting with the text, see the Additional Storytelling Options section under Teacher Planning.]

**Teacher Script:** (please personalize this)

Take the next minute to answer the questions in the HEAR section on your handout.

[CUE: DISCUSS—After 2 minutes, ask a few teens to share their responses with the entire group. Allow 5 to 7 minutes for sharing. Use these questions from the handout as a guide:]

- What were the key events from the story?
- What was most meaningful to you from this story?

**Teacher Script:** (please personalize this)

Right now we’re going to explore the story a bit further in small groups.

[CUE: Send teens into small groups. Make sure the discussion leaders have copies of the JOIN the Story segment of this study.]
PART FOUR: JOIN THE STORY

[CUE: DISCUSS—Adjust questions as needed and don’t feel like your group must answer all of them.]

- Not all of you got to share your responses from the HEAR the Story section of the handout. Would anyone like to share what you came up with?
- What encouragement does Gideon’s story provide?
- Why do you think God uses people who are uncertain or weak like Gideon?
- Why do you think the Israelites kept repeating their downward cycle of sin and rebellion?
- What kinds of temptations do you think Samson faced as a warrior with superhuman strength?
- What are the strongest temptations you face? How do you fight such temptations?
- What did Samson’s decision to die accomplish for his purpose? What might this teach you about sacrifice?

Teacher Script:

Pick ONE of the following questions and create a response: (These questions are also on the handout.)

- In which character or part of the story did you see yourself?
- Have you ever felt as though you were stuck in a destructive or rebellious pattern?
- How did this story challenge or inspire you to live differently?

Create a sketch, collage, poem, prayer, journal entry, song, or whatever you can come up with in the next 10 minutes!

I know many of us have some ideas already. But even if we’re still unsure about what this story means for our lives, sometimes it’s good to just begin writing or creating in response to the Story. You may discover something in this exercise that you’ve never realized before about yourself or about God. In a few minutes, we’ll talk about your responses. I’m really excited to see what you come up with!

CREATIVE OPTION:

Divide teens into groups of 2 or 3, and give each group a large piece of paper and some markers.

Tell them to divide the piece of paper into 8 boxes. (They can do this by folding the paper in half three times.) Say something like, “In your groups, you are going to create either a superhero or a story about a human being with super powers or abilities. In the boxes, you’re going to create a comic strip about your superhero’s life.” Tell the teens they must follow three rules:

- The superhero must have a particular strength or ability that he or she uses for good.
- He or she must exist in the world that you live in—your school, neighborhood, city, etc.
- The superhero must have a weakness.

After the teens have had about 10 minutes to create their superheroes and comic strips, allow each group to share. Make sure they include their superhero’s strength, weakness, and the way he or she does good in the world they know.

(While teens are working on their responses, walk around and encourage them. Also ask adult leaders to participate in this activity.)
[CUE: SHARE—Ask a few willing teens to share their responses to the story. After 9 or 10 minutes of sharing, move to the closing prayer.]

**Teacher Script:** (please personalize this)

Thank you for wrestling with these questions. As we’ve seen, they can be pretty tough at times. We know these stories can connect with us in powerful ways, and I’m seeing great things come out of our time together. I wish we had more time to continue our sharing, but we can look forward to the next chapter of the Story!

Let’s pray as we end our time:

> God, we thank you for a Story that continues to amaze us and teach us more about you and about ourselves. Thank you for being a God who gives us courage, strength, and confidence to face the toughest obstacles in our lives. We pray that you would remind us that we cannot do it on our own, and that we must look to one another—and most importantly, to you—for help. Thank you for being so faithful to your people. Amen.