

Sunday

When the armies of Midian, Amalek and the east joined to fight the Israelites, God told Gideon he was to lead an army to fight them. But Gideon wanted to be sure, so he asked God for a sign; he left a woollen fleece out over night and prayed that it would be wet and the ground dry; and that is what happened. The next day Gideon asked that the ground be wet but the fleece dry - and God did just that.

So Gideon called the fighting men of Israel and 32000 came. But the Lord said to Gideon, "You have too many warriors with you. If I let all of you fight, they will boast that they saved themselves by their own strength." Judges 7:2 NLT God said anyone who was afraid should go home, so 22,000 of them did, leaving only 10,000 to fight! But God said there were still too many. He told Gideon to take them to the river; those who drank from their hands would stay and the rest would go home.

Only 300 men were left! That night the Lord told to Gideon to take his servant and sneak down to the Midianite camp. As they crept up to an enemy tent they heard a man telling about a dream he had had. "A loaf of barley bread came tumbling down into camp; it hit a tent and knocked it flat!" Another man said, "Your dream can mean only one thing, God has given Gideon and the Israelites, victory!"



Gideon returned to the Israelite camp and shouted, "Get up! The Lord has given us victory!"

He divided them into three groups and gave each man a ram's horn and a torch covered by a clay jar. They surrounded the enemy camp, then on Gideon's signal, they blew the rams' horns and broke their clay jars so that the torches shone brightly. They shouted, "A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!"

The Midianites woke up in a panic and God caused them to fight each other!

Gideon's army of only 300 men won a great victory that night.

Friday

Exodus 20:5^{NLT}, "I lay the sins of the parents upon their children; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations of those who reject me."

That doesn't seem fair does it? These days we think of ourselves as individuals who, once we grow to adulthood are free choose what we want to do in life. This wasn't true back in Bible times. Children would grow up and spend their whole lives with the family, raising their own children as a part of the one big extended family living in the same place and working together.

But even with our lives as individuals today we are still affected by our parents. Children who listen to their parents or grandparents complain about things will learn to be complain themselves. Children who watch, or are told by, their parents to steal will think stealing is ok. Children who hear their parents or grandparents lie, will think lying is ok and so on... Of course each individual has the choice to change, we don't have to make the same mistakes as our parents, but it is much easier for us to continue in the same way as we have been brought up.

Exodus 20:6^{NLT}

"But I lavish unfailing love for a thousand generations on those who love me and obey my commands."

Build a personal relationship with God. make the effort to obey Him – and remember that He is always ready to forgive those who ask.

And God will not only bless you, but your children and grandchildren for 1000 generations!

What a wonderful blessing which shows us how much God loves us and wants to do for us.

W O N D E F R F U L B L E
S S B U T O B E Y C I N L
G G E N E R A T I O N S O
W O W F A M W H O M E A V
Z I N A G T W O O M Y N E
L A V I S H D U E A N D R
O F U L L O B S L N E S I
V S I I N S G A W D O W A
E M O N A E Z N I S N G A
W O N G D E R D F U L B L

Find the words from Exodus 20:6^{NLT} in the grid.

Thursday

Did you read the first and second commandments yesterday? Did you notice some strange things that it said?

Exodus 20:4-5 "You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea. You must not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God who will not tolerate your affection for any other gods."

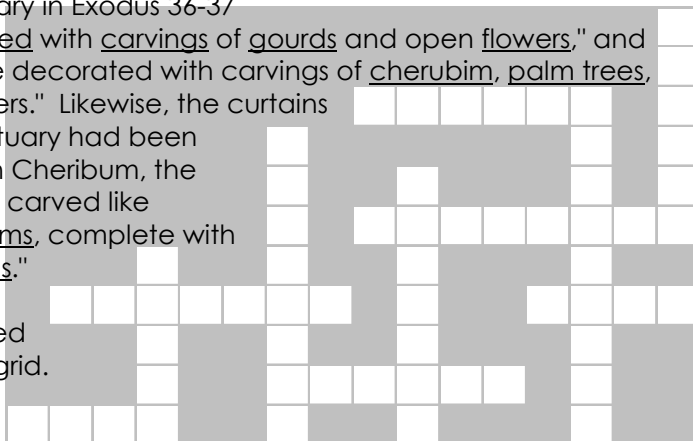
Many people have made the mistake of taking a single verse from the Bible, without looking at the verses surrounding it to understand the context in which it was used. If you take verse 4 by itself you might think that paintings, photographs and even having pictures in books is breaking the Commandment! To understand the real meaning you need to add the next verse about bowing down and worshipping.

Of course they didn't have photographs back then, and we don't have access to the original letters or books so we don't know if they were ever illustrated with pictures, but there are some verses in the Bible that talk about images which were not idols.

Read a description of Solomon's temple in 1 Kings 6:14-35 and the original Sanctuary in Exodus 36-37

It "was decorated with carvings of gourds and open flowers," and the doors "were decorated with carvings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers." Likewise, the curtains in the old Sanctuary had been decorated with Cherubim, the lampstand was carved like "almond blossoms, complete with buds and petals."

Fit the underlined words into the grid.



Monday

After being God's tool to lead the Israelites to victory you might expect Gideon and his family to continue to serve God in a mighty way, but the rest of their story is rather a sad one.

After their great victory, the Israelites asked Gideon to become their ruler, but he refused; all he asked for was some of the gold earrings collected from their enemies. Gideon took the gold and jewels they gave him and made an ephod, similar to the one worn by the High Priest and put it in his home town. Although there was peace for the remainder of Gideon's life, the people started worshipping the ephod Gideon had made, as an idol.

Gideon grew very old and died and the town of Shechem was ruled by his 70 sons - (He had had many wives.) One day their half brother, Abimelech offered to rule instead; the town leaders agreed and gave him money from their idol temple, which he used to hire men to follow him and help kill all his brothers; only the youngest one escaped. But after three years the people of Shechem grew tired of Abimelech's rule, they tried to ambush him but failed. Gaal, son of Ebed tried to lead the people of Shechem against Abimelech but in the resulting battle, the city of Shechem was totally destroyed. Then Abimelech attacked the town of Thebez but the people retreated into a tower in the city. As Abimelech prepared to set fire to the tower, a woman on the roof dropped a millstone on his head.

Tola is the next judge mentioned in the Bible, followed by Jair of Gilead. Again the Israelites worshipped idols, then after eighteen years, Jephthah, who had been chased from his father's property by his half brothers, but was called back by them to lead the Israelites against the Philistines and Ammonites.

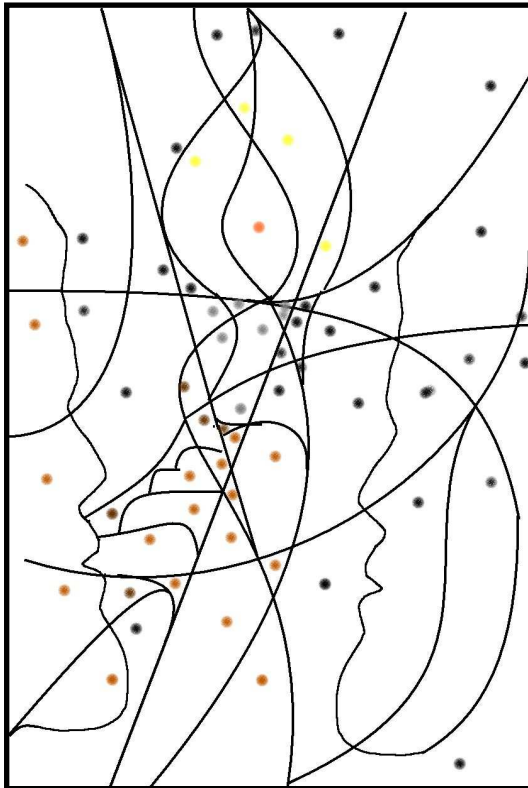
After Jephthah, Ibzan of Bethlehem led Israel, he was known for his thirty sons and thirty daughters. Then Elon from the tribe of Zebulun became judge and after he died, Abdon from Pirathon. Abdon had forty sons and thirty grandsons who all rode donkeys.

Tuesday

God said something surprising to Gideon. It is underlined on Sunday. See how many of the underlined words you can find.



T H E M S E L V E S A S W W B
O A R D T F O R T A H M A N Y
E V L O R R D A N V D F R O R
G E I D E E O T H E Y N R A S
W O R D N F O R T D H E I L O
R D F I G H T A N D F T O O O
R G I D T E H O N A S W R O R
D W I T H F E O R B O A S T T
H I E L O R I F D A W N D F O
R L E T G I R D E O N N A S W
O L R H D F O R T H E L O R D
A N D A F O R G A L L I D E O
N A S T H E Y W O R D F O R T
H E L O R D O A N O F D F O R
G I D E Y O U O N A S W O R D
F O R T O H E L O R I D A N D
F O R G U I D E O N A S W O R



What did Gideon give his 300 soldiers?

What did they do with the things?

Wednesday

What happened? Why did Gideon make the ephod which people worshipped like an idol? The Bible doesn't exactly say. Ellen White in Patriarchs and Prophets says that since the angel had burned or sacrificed the food that Gideon had set on the rock (you read about this last week) he felt that God had appointed him as a priest and so he made the ephod to provide another place for the people to worship. Even if he only made it to be a reminder of God's deliverance, as soon as he realised that people were going to worship it he should have destroyed it. God had plainly told the Israelites that they must not worship like the idol-worshipping nations and that he would designate one place of worship in the Promised Land for them to offer sacrifices and bring their tithes and offerings.

Deuteronomy 12:4-6^{NLT} "Do not _____ (9a) the Lord your God in the way these pagan peoples worship their gods. ⁵Rather, you must seek the Lord your God at the place of worship He Himself will choose from among all the tribes – the place where His name will be honoured. ⁶There you will bring your burnt _____ (5a), your _____ (2d), your _____ (8d)..."

Exodus 20:3-6^{NLT}, "You must not have any other _____ (1d) but _____ (4d). ⁴You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of _____ (6a) in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea. ⁵You must not _____ (10d) _____ (7d) to them or _____ (6) worship them, for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God who will not tolerate your affection for any other gods. I lay the sins of the parents upon their children; the _____ (9) entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations of those who reject me. ⁶But I lavish unfailing _____ (11a) for a thousand generations on those who love me and obey my _____

