

6-2-24 The Book of Judges

Text: Judges 6:1–40; 8:1–35

Big Idea of the Message: We must put our trust in God alone.

Application Point: Put your ultimate trust in God, not in human beings who are fallible and will often let you down.

Today we will look at one of the more famous judges, Gideon. The book of Judges isn't kid friendly. It isn't Bluey, or Paw Patrol. Gideon is a judge you may remember from Sunday school. He's famous for setting out a fleece, and God choosing three hundred men who lap up water. His story starts out in **Judges 6**, when Israel is being oppressed by the Midianites.

The angel of the Lord appears and informs Gideon that God has chosen him to deliver Israel. It is an interesting exchange (**Judges 6:14–15**). It would appear, at least at the start, that Gideon might have some positive traits: is he humble, and understands his own weaknesses and limitations? It also appears he struggles with self-doubt and trusting God. I can see myself in some of those adjectives.

But as the years and the battles go on, Gideon changes, he accepts some of the credit for what God has done. Maybe not directly, but indirectly through accepting extra fringe benefits. The people of Israel are quick to put their trust in MAN (any different than today?) rather than where it belongs, in God.

Judges **chapter 6:1** starts off with a line that is repeated seven times in this book; **"...Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord."** I think that could be said of me on any given day. God corrected Israel through the Midianites and Amalekites. Pondering on this for a moment, pause, and ask yourself, where is God sending correction into my life? Is He trying to get my attention somewhere?

God still sends correction for disobedience and rebellion. The Holy Spirit is still giving feedback. Our ultimate penalty for our sins were taken care of on the cross by Jesus. But we are not given a sin at will free card because of the cross. God will correct His children, and He can use whatever means He deems necessary. I can speak for myself, I have been corrected physically, emotionally, and financially because of my disobedience, rebellion, and blatant sin. (share Peggy Thompson's testimony) God's design for correction is to bring us to a place of confession and repentance.

Gideon and Israel had a repeated thoughts in their heads, the same ones we might have as well. With all that is going on in this world I have caught myself asking several questions.

I. Does God care about us? (Verses 1-13)

- Gideon is judge number five. Othniel, (40 years of peace), Ehud, (80 Years of peace), Shamgar, (Unknown), Deborah (40 years of peace).
- For seven years Israel was under the control of Midian and the Amalekites. They were so oppressed that they tried to find refuge in the mountains and live in caves. When their crops were ready to harvest it would be taken from them. Everything they had was taken from them or destroyed.
- **Verse 6 "So Israel was greatly impoverished..."**

- I can't imagine the carnage they were living in and looking out at on a daily basis. A mother and father with nothing to feed their children. I wonder how many orphans there were running around.
- **Read verses 7-10.**
- In **verses 7-10** we read, God cares about them, but more importantly, they don't care about Him. They have lost their first love, priority; He alone was responsible for setting them free and giving them everything they had. And how did they reward Him? Through complete abandonment and rebellion.
- In the next verses we see a Theophany. Pronounced "thee-off-a-knee" (the-oph-a-ny) a visible manifestation to humankind of God. Theophanies are revealed in the Old Testament and foreshadow the coming of Christ. Gideon is having an exchange with Jesus.
- Look at Gideon's heart cry out to Jesus. (**Verses 11-13**)
- I often say that God has a sense of humor and one place we can see it is in His Word, (...**The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor.**) Where did Jesus find Gideon? Hiding...
- Gideon's response, "**If, Why and where?**"
- How often have I found myself in that exact spot? Me standing there in total disobedience and rebellion, breaking the heart of the one who loved me first, asking why and where.
- Mankind chooses us based on what they see and know about us. What family we came from, what are resume shows, our past successes, mistakes, etc. God chooses us based on what He already knows about us. If we are humble, pliable, and teachable, there isn't anything He cannot do through us.
- God didn't see the cowardice of Gideon, or the run from his problems of Moses, or the lack of experience and age of David, or the murdering, slanderous, hatefulfulness of Paul. God cares enough to see what He can do through anyone that is FAT (Faithful Available Teachable) or PHAT (Pliable Humble Available and Teachable).
- Does God really care about us? What does the cross say? (**Romans 5:8**)

II. Does God know what He is doing?

- **Read verses 14-24.**
- Gideon is such a man of mighty valor that God must tell him four times, "**...you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites...**"
- Look at our mighty man's response back to God, "**...how can I save Israel my clan is the weakest...I am the least (youngest) in my father's house.**"
- Just as with Gideon, God is building up His people. He meets us where we are at. He not only allows us to doubt Him, but He reassures us when we doubt. "**Surely I will be with you...**" (verse 16)
- **Notice verse 18, "...I will wait until you come back."**
- First test, Will God enjoy his cooking?
- **Read verse 22.**
- Gideon know believes that this is in fact God and builds an alter to Him. Don't miss what God said in **verse 23. "Peace be with you; do not fear, you shall not die."**
- There have been times in my life that I had doubt, fear, and confusion. I have even thought, God, do you know what you are doing? Then I am reminded that I have never been promised

an easy life, nor a fair one. What I have been promised by God is that He loves me, redeemed me from my sinful transgressions and while I walk this life, He will never leave me, nor forsake me. He will wait for me!

- And I will never spiritually die, one day my faith will be rewarded by seeing Jesus' face to face, and He will say, "Well done my good and faithful servant."
- God knows what He is doing, it's just my sight is skewed, I can't fully see what He is doing.
- Familia, one day we will see our savior face to face. One day we will fully understand and experience His peace. God knows what He is doing. We are asked to trust Him and follow Him, obediently.
- What does the cross say about God knowing what He is doing?

III. Will God take care of me?

- **Read verses 25-27.**
- God gives Gideon an assignment. Go and remove the false altar and destroy it.
- Where was the altar to Baal at?
- Did God tell him to take others to help him do it?
- Why did Gideon and these 10 men, one or more who would be a snitch destroy the altar at night? (**verse 27**)
- What did God tell Gideon in **verse 23**?
- **Read verses 28-32.**
- How did the men of the city respond to the altar being tore down? They were not happy and when they found out that it was Gideon they wanted him dead.
- Satan, and our flesh will not like it when we start tearing down and replacing the altar that we built and allowed to take priority over God.
- What are some altars that you have allowed to take priority over God? (Pause and be honest)
- God intervened through Joash, Gideon's father. Joash simply said if Baal is so powerful let him deal with Gideon. I am sure at some point during the blood thirsty cries for Gideon's head he probably doubted and wondered, will God take care of me.
- When you face those times and you will, remember **verse 34**, "**...But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon...**" That same Spirit is still here today and resides in the heart of every born-again believer.
- Jesus said He came to bring us life more abundant, also, we will face troubled times, and persecution. Homes and families will be divided over Him. He also said that if we build our lives on Him when the storms of life come, we will stand. Nothing can remove us from His love and wherever we are, so is He. He will never leave us nor forsake us. He will be there to welcome us into heaven.
- Will God take care of me? What does the cross say? (Stop! Save the rest for next week)

Conclusion

It takes courage to enlist in the Lord's army. It takes courage to live counter to the popular trends of this world today. But many are doing it!

What enemies are you facing? What has made you feel defeated & discouraged? Perhaps today is the time to take a stand. God is coming to you in this moment & saying, “The Lord is with you, Mighty Hero!”

“Who me?” you might answer. “If you are with me then why am I going through all this?”

But God is calling you to victory. He is calling you to trust in Him despite your doubt and walk in faith. He is calling you to be a doer, not a complainer.

We keep wanting God to do something without our help. We keep wanting somebody else to do it. But God wants to use you and me. He always works through people.

God called Gideon a mighty warrior, but that was not who he was at first. It was who he would become, with God’s help. God looked at his potential rather than his weaknesses.

That is what God is doing now if you will walk in faith and do what He is calling you to do. The Lord challenges us, “Go with the strength you have...for I am sending you!”.

Are we willing to come out of hiding, or move forward even though we might be full of fear, or misunderstanding?

Finally, **“I will wait until you come back.”**

Week 2 6-9-22

IV. Does God keep His promises?

Not one word of all the good promises that the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass. Joshua 21:45

“Blessed be the Lord, who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised. There has not failed one word of all His good promise, which He promised through His servant Moses. 1 Kings 8:56

For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory. 2 Corinthians 1:20

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; Hebrews 10:23

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. 2 Peter 3:9

- **Read verses 36-40.**
- Here we see Gideon test God the second and third time. This time he uses a fleece. Now this test is not meant for believers to use today.
- **“If YOU will save Israel by my hand as YOU have said...”**
- God kept His promise to Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, and He kept His promise to all of mankind. God kept and showed His love towards mankind by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

- Jesus promised that He would NEVER leave us nor forsake us. He has gone ahead of us to prepare us a place and one day SOON He will return for us.
- God proved Himself to Gideon. Does God have to prove Himself? No, but He desires to have communion with us and building our faith will lead to that.
- God instructs us to test Him in our giving.

Malachi 3:10, Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.

- When things in life go off the rails or contrary to what we think or feel it is easy to doubt Him. But that is exactly when we need to lean in and trust Him the most.

“Trusting God means that in spite of our questions, doubts, and fears we draw on his grace and continue to believe that he is loving, that he is in control, and that he is always working for our good. Such trust helps us to continue doing what is good and right, even in difficult circumstances.” (The Peace Maker by Sande page 65)

- Does God keep His promises? What does the cross say?

V. Why does God test our faith.

- **Judges 7.**
- Another point in scripture where I see God’s humor. Gideon is going to war against 120,000 with 32,000 men. That is a 3.75 favor for the Midianite army. Look what God tells Gideon in verse two of chapter 7. **“The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands...” (v. 2) I can imagine Gideon’s thoughts and facial expressions.**
- God instructs Gideon to let those that are fearful to leave and return home, 22,000 leave. Gideon only has 10,000 men left to fight 120,000; each guy would have to kill 12 guys. But God’s humor is not done yet. Look at verse four.
- God purges the group again and look how many Gideon has left to go to war with. **(verse 7)** God has appointed 300 men for Gideon to take to war. Now each man will be responsible to kill 400 each. YIKES!
- God knew Gideon was willing to go to war with 300 and had faith that he would come out the victor. But God wanted to give some encouragement to Gideon. He told Gideon that if he was afraid, he could go down and spy on the camp and he would see that God will be victorious.
- God will encourage our faith; we must step out by faith, and trust Him.

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Hebrews 11:1

By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. Hebrews 11:3

And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. Hebrews 11:6

- Now let's notice 2 things Gideon did that helped conquer his fear.
- First, **he trusted God completely**. He'd seen enough to be convinced God was with Him.
- That's what God asks of us, too. Jesus tells us,

"Don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?' (Matthew 6:31 (NLT))

- How many years must God provide for us before we're convinced that He will supply our needs?
- Secondly, **Gideon was obedient every step**. When God instructed him to go, he went - even though he was afraid. **Courage is not the absence of fear; courage is being afraid but proceeding anyway!**
- Gideon didn't say, "Oh, no, that won't be necessary, Lord." Instead, that night, he & his servant sneaked down to the edge of the enemy camp, where they overheard two enemy soldiers discussing a weird dream.
- God honors our faith (**verses 15-23**).
- One soldier said, **"I had this dream, and in my dream a loaf of barley bread came tumbling down into the Midianite camp. It hit a tent, turned it over, and knocked it flat!"**
- Now it was time for boldness. First, they held a worship service. They fired up the people of God. **"Arise, (Get up!) for the LORD has delivered the camp of Midian into your hand." (Judges 7:15)**
- He gave every man a torch, with instructions to put the torch inside a clay jar. Every man was also given a ram's horn trumpet. Then Gideon told them, **"Keep your eyes on me. When I come to the edge of the camp, do just as I do." (7:17)**
- We see three qualities of an effective leader. **1st, there is a reassuring confidence**, **"Arise, for the Lord has delivered the camp of Midian into your hand."** We are going to do this!
- **2nd, there is clear communication**, **"Look at me"** This is what you are to do.
- **3rd, there is a positive, godly example**, **"do as I do"** Gideon had now become the great mighty man of valor that God knew he was when He came to him earlier.
- The Israelites silently surrounded the Midianite camp. At a given signal, all 300 men smashed their clay jars, waved their flaming torches, & shouted **"A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!" (vs. 20)**, instantly awakening the sleeping enemy. Then they blew their trumpets, making the loudest racket they could make.
- When the suddenly startled Midianites saw the torches & heard the awful racket, they panicked. They thought they were surrounded by a powerful army.
- **Verse 22** says, **"When the 300 Israelites blew their rams' horns, the Lord caused the warriors in the camp to fight against each other with their swords."**
- Those who survived fled for their lives. Gideon & his mighty 300 were victorious, & God was once again honored in Israel.

Conclusion

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What enemies are you facing? What has made you feel defeated & discouraged? Perhaps today is the time to take a stand. God is coming to you in this moment & saying, "The Lord is with you, Mighty Hero!"

If you place your hope in Jesus, the Bible promises us that he will never forsake you! Why? Because when we couldn't hope in him, when we were too weak to care, too lost in sin to even want to live a meaningful life of integrity, Jesus died for you, and he died for me. Though it's easy to see how other people let us down, it's also true that our life is one of continually falling short of God's standards and letting Him down too!

That is why we need Jesus! We need Jesus to make us right with God. We need Jesus so that we can see that our self-worth isn't found in what we've done but in the love of God that is higher than any mountain and goes deeper than any sea.

No matter what other people may say, Jesus will not fail you. Trust in him over and above everyone and everything else, for Jesus is the only person who will not leave you on your own. Commit your life to him, entirely. Today.

Effective leaders:

Reassuring confidence. (We are going to do this!)

Clear communication. (Focusing of God's path)

Positive, godly example. (Follow me as I follow God, do as I do)