

## Lesson 3      12 February 2012

### God Uses Gideon

#### Lesson Scope: [Judges 6-8](#)

#### Lesson Focus

After Deborah and Barak's victory, Israel experienced rest for forty years. But when Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord, He delivered them into the hand of Midian.

A multitude of Midianites, Amalekites, and others swarmed over Israel's land, destroying their crops and driving them into hiding in the mountains and caves. This extreme poverty led Israel to cry out to God. He sent a prophet to remind them of His faithfulness and of their disobedience. Israel knew who to turn to in their pitiful state.

In these times of Israel's failure, Gideon exemplifies the faith and commitment that God could use in His service. Gideon led God's people in the work of deliverance. He heeded God's direction in destroying the idolatry in his own family and in his battle with the Midianites.

The Lord's work requires individuals with unwavering commitment. God blesses those who serve faithfully wherever they are called.

The Scriptures do not condemn the men from Gideon's army who were sent home. We should be careful how critical we are of them. God used Gideon's fleece to give clear direction and inspiration to a sincere seeker. Gideon did not have the written Word as we do today, and God communicated with him in a different manner.

**Lesson Aim:** To study requirements for usefulness in God's service.

**Theme Verse:** [2 Timothy 2:21](#). If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

## Lesson Text:

### God's Call

**Judges 6:6** <sup>6</sup> And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the LORD.

**Judges 6:11-15** <sup>11</sup> And there came an angel of the LORD, and sat under an oak which *was* in Ophrah, that *pertained* unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide *it* from the Midianites. <sup>12</sup> And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD *is* with thee, thou mighty man of valour. <sup>13</sup> And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where *be* all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. <sup>14</sup> And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee? <sup>15</sup> And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family *is* poor in Manasseh, and I *am* the least in my father's house.

### God's Direction

**Judges 6:25-27** <sup>25</sup> And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Take thy father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that *is* by it: <sup>26</sup> And build an altar unto the LORD thy God upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down. <sup>27</sup> Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the LORD had said unto him: and *so* it was, because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city, that he could not do *it* by day, that he did *it* by night.

**Judges 6:34** <sup>34</sup> But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered after him.

**Judges 7:2-7** <sup>2</sup> And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that *are* with thee *are* too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me. <sup>3</sup> Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever *is* fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead.

And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand. <sup>4</sup> And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people *are* yet *too* many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, *that* of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go. <sup>5</sup> So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink. <sup>6</sup> And the number of them that lapped, *putting* their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. <sup>7</sup> And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the *other* people go every man unto his place.

### **God's Victory**

Judges 7:19-22 <sup>19</sup> So Gideon, and the hundred men that *were* with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that *were* in their hands. <sup>20</sup> And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow *withal*: and they cried, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon. <sup>21</sup> And they stood every man in his place round about the camp: and all the host ran, and cried, and fled. <sup>22</sup> And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the LORD set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host: and the host fled to Bethshittah in Zererath, *and* to the border of Abelmeholah, unto Tabbath.

### **Questions for Study**

#### **God's Call**

1. Identify traits of Gideon's character that made him useful to God.
2. How can we cultivate these qualities in our lives?
3. What are some guidelines for understanding God's call today?

#### **God's Direction**

4. Which of Gideon's actions in these verses show his courage?
5. What are some of God's commands that test our faith and courage?

6. What lessons can we learn from God's direction in Judges 7:2?
7. List areas in which we must take the offensive in facing the enemy today.

### **God's Victory**

8. What applications can we make from Gideon's battle plan?

### **Analyzing the Passage**

Israel was greatly impoverished (Judges 6:6), which means that they were "brought low or distressed." God brought Israel to the end of themselves.

It is thought that the Midianites were descendants of Abraham's son Midian (Genesis 25:1-2) and therefore related to the Israelites. The Midianites were a tent-dwelling nomadic people of great number. Evidently they were a very prosperous people.

The Lord sent a prophet (Judges 6:8-10) to remind Israel that their oppression was a direct result of their disobedience.

Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress (Judges 6:11) so that the Midianites would not come and seize his harvest.

It seems that the thirty-two thousand people who were with Gideon would have encouraged him (Judges 7:2). But God stated that this was too many for Him to give them victory, lest they vaunt (embellish or boast) themselves against Him because of their accomplishments. When the Lord started reducing those numbers, it likely was a great test of Gideon's faith.

After Gideon's victory, Midian "lifted up their heads no more" (Judges 8:28). The victory over the Midianites was complete.

### **Principles and Applications**

#### **God's Call**

1. Usefulness in God's service depends on a relationship with God and communication with Him (Judges 6:11-12). Gideon's might was a result of his relationship with God. Human strength alone will fail in God's work. Today we have free access to the Word of God and abundant opportunities to serve Him. Let us use these freedoms to build a relationship with the Lord that will help us to serve faithfully each day.

2. The Lord can use those who are profitably occupied in the work at hand (Judges 6:11). Diligence and determination in the material realm is excellent preparation for spiritual responsibilities. God chooses His servants

from those who serve diligently even in the small areas of congregational life. Song leaders, Sunday school teachers, and devotional leaders have an important place in church life. God blesses those who are willing to serve wherever they are called.

3. The Lord is able to use those who show interest in God's work and a concern for His people (Judges 6:12-13). Gideon was at one with the spiritual interests of God's people, and he maintained the heartbeat of faith in troubled times. We cannot depend on others to keep the faith for us; we must build personal convictions. Furthermore, we endeavor to keep our families in tune with the convictions of the broader church and help them understand the spiritual dangers of accommodating in even small issues. Parents, let us keep up our interest in God's work and instill a spiritual vision in our young people.

4. The Lord is able to use those who are humble (Judges 6:15). Gideon recognized his need before God and his lowly position in his family. Humility is essential for us to be useful to the church. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" (James 4:6).

5. God can use those who are urgent in promoting the truth (Judges 6:25-27). Gideon sensed that urgency and put obedience to God ahead of his family. He arose that night and destroyed the idolatrous altar and grove and built an altar to the true God. We cannot be effective in God's work if we let an "altar of Baal" stand between us and God. We must be loyal to the truth, keeping our focus on the unchanging principles of God's Word rather than respecting persons.

### **God's Direction**

6. The Lord is able to work through those who enlist the help of others (Judges 6:34). Gideon blew a trumpet and called together God's people for the work of deliverance. Do we sense the spiritual danger we face today? Do we encourage others in spiritual warfare by our example? It is encouraging when faithful brethren work together to further God's kingdom. The work of our schools and missions is blessed by the unified efforts of many devoted brethren and sisters.

7. Those who are fearless can be of use in the service of the Lord (Judges 7:3). The Old Testament Law commanded that the fearful be sent home (Deuteronomy 20:8). Fearful soldiers would hinder God's cause. God uses fearless people today. As parents, we must not be afraid of what civil au-

thorities might do if we use corporal punishment in training our children. We place our faith in God and do not buy commercial insurances for our earthly goods. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). Let us continue to exercise godly courage in the seemingly difficult issues we face and continue to honor God in all areas of our life.

8. Those who endure the testing of the Lord can be of use in His service (Judges 7:4). God tested Gideon's men before He used them, and He tests us in various ways also. Can we remain faithful in the midst of prosperity? Can we help our families maintain a safe practice of separation? These are tests that come to us in the regular round of duty. Will we endure and stand firm on God's Word or turn back from the spiritual heritage we have?

9. The Lord is able to work through those who are alert in the details of life (Judges 7:7). The three hundred men who lapped were able to be alert while they drank. Parents need to be alert to the activities of their children and young people. They cannot become engrossed in material pursuits and ignore the spiritual dangers their families face. Church leaders are watchful for trends that might test our conservative practices. God calls us all to be awake in our Christian walk. Faithful and alert warriors benefit God's kingdom much more than a multitude who have neither the courage to face the enemy nor the vigilance and commitment needed for the battle.

### **God's Victory**

10. The Lord uses those who are able to cooperate with others while they serve (7:19-22). The picture in these verses shows the beauty of God and man working together. Gideon led his three hundred men unarmed to the edge of the Midianite camp. Together they broke their pitchers and blew the trumpets while God worked a miracle and set the Midianites against each other. In the work of spiritual deliverance, we work together as brethren in obedience to God's Word. God can work mightily among a faithful few.

### **Important Teachings**

1. Usefulness in God's service depends on a relationship with God and communication with Him (Judges 6:11-12).
2. The Lord can use those who are profitably occupied in the work at hand (Judges 6:11).
3. The Lord is able to use those who show interest in God's work and a

concern for His people (Judges 6:12-13).

4. The Lord is able to use those who are humble (Judges 6:15).

5. God can use those who are urgent in promoting the truth (Judges 6:25-27).

6. The Lord is able to work through those who enlist the help of others (Judges 6:34).

7. Those who are fearless can be of use in the service of the Lord (Judges 7:3).

8. Those who endure the testing of the Lord can be of use in His service (Judges 7:4).

9. The Lord is able to work through those who are alert in the details of life (Judges 7:7).

10. The Lord uses those who are able to cooperate with others while they serve (Judges 7:19-22).

11. Being open to the Lord's direction is a useful quality (Judges 7:2).

### **Answers to Questions**

1. Identify traits of Gideon's character that made him useful to God.

Gideon was occupied in something useful. He had an understanding of God's work for Israel in the past. He developed a relationship with God. He obeyed God's commands, even though doing so tested his faith. He understood his lowly position in Israel.

2. How can we cultivate these qualities in our lives?

One way to develop these qualities is to build a healthy devotional life and to spend time each day studying God's Word. Practicing diligence and perseverance in material responsibilities is good preparation for greater, spiritual service. We must intercede for God's blessing on our lives so that God would show us His will and grant us the power to perform.

3. What are some guidelines for understanding God's call today?

God speaks to us through the church and the Holy Spirit. God speaks, most importantly, through the Scriptures. To clearly understand God's call, we must live in obedience to the Scriptures. The Spirit never calls us to disregard or disobey the teachings of God's Word. The church might call us to a field of service, and often we seek advice among faithful brethren.

4. Which of Gideon's actions in these verses show his courage?

Gideon tore down the family altar to Baal and endangered his life by obey-

ing God's command and practicing true worship. Gideon blew a trumpet and gathered a small army to fight the Midianites. Gideon obeyed God and reduced his army to three hundred men.

5. What are some of God's commands that test our faith and courage?

The Bible teaches us that we should practice a separated lifestyle.

It takes courage to appear as God's chosen people. The Scriptures plainly teach nonresistance. We do not protect our earthly possessions by using the law. We do not serve in the military or other government positions.

6. What lessons can we learn from God's direction in Judges 7:2?

The glory for the victory belongs to the Lord. The Lord does not want us to become proud or to glory in our accomplishments. For Israel to boast in their victory would not have brought glory to God. God is not limited by the size of the army. He can deliver with few or many. God wanted Gideon and his men to place their faith completely in Him.

7. List areas in which we must take the offensive in facing the enemy today.

We take the offensive when we reach out and speak a word for Christ. Passing out tracts or holding street meetings are other ways we take the offensive. We take the offensive in our personal lives and bring every thought into captivity.

8. What applications can we make from Gideon's battle plan?

Gideon and his men approached the camp of Midian in faith. Their weapons required dependence on God to give the victory. Gideon and his men cooperated with each other in circling the Midianite camp and blowing their trumpets all at one time. We move forward in obedience to God's directions in the Word. The honor for our victories goes to God.

### **Summarizing the Lesson**

God called Gideon to the work of delivering Israel and then directed him step by step in reducing his army and facing the Midianites. In kingdom work today, God uses people who follow His leading as Gideon did. May each of us attain the faith, courage, and determination of Gideon.

### **Research Guide**

In *Doctrines of the Bible*, read the chapter on "Christian Service."