

Judges & Ruth

God's *Faithfulness* Remains

women's | BIBLE STUDY

*Scripture quotations are taken from The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Publishers, 2016.
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LESSON *Six*

Fighting the Midianites

To open this new scene, God stripped Gideon’s army down to almost nothing. Fearful yet again, Gideon was given one more sign of God’s faithfulness and then went to fight the Midianites. After a long pursuit, the Israelites were successful. In the end, however, rather than giving glory to the God who saved him, Gideon’s heart turned away.

JERUBBAAL

Gideon’s father renamed him Jerubbaal after hacking down Baal’s altar. The name Gideon means “hacker,” and the new name Jerubbaal means “let Baal contend.”³³

ARMY

While an odd way to choose which men would fight and which would return home, it is likely that the men’s drinking posture was not in any way connected to their character. It was simply a way to reduce the army.³⁴

ENEMY

Notice the poetic wording of verse 12. Sit in this imagery for a minute. Gideon’s army was up against an innumerable foe.

Read Judges 7:1-8:32 before answering the following questions.

1. In the chart below, give each major section of Scripture in this lesson a short title (less than 5 words). This helps you see the bigger picture of the narrative before studying the details.

SCRIPTURE	SHORT TITLE
Judges 7:1-18	
Judges 7:19-8:21	
Judges 8:22-32	

Read Judges 7:1-18.

2. Read Judges 6:1-6 to be reminded of the enemy Gideon is fighting. Now consider: God stripped Gideon’s army down from 32,000 men to just 300. How did this happen? Why did God want to strip down Gideon’s army?

3. In verses 10-15, how did God make an allowance for Gideon's fear? Do people need to be fearless in order to lead? Explain.

“There are three stages to every great work of God; first it is impossible, then it is difficult, then it is done.”

—*J. Hudson Taylor* ³⁵

4. Looking at verses 1-18, what was the Israelites' role? What was God's role?

What is one principle you can take away from this?

5. In what situation in your life does it feel like the opposition is stronger than you? How are you learning to trust God through it? (See Appendix: Faith.)

GOD SPEAKS

One of the interesting things about the story of Gideon is the way he communicates with God (Ex: Judges 7:2, 4, 9, etc.). Look at John 16:13 and Hebrews 1:1-2 to see how God speaks to His people today.

FOR GIDEON?

Notice how in verse 18 Gideon instructs his army to shout, “for the Lord and for Gideon” when he blows the trumpet. This is an indication that Gideon might have had a wrong view of who deserved credit if they won the upcoming battle.³⁶

TORCHES

It appears that Gideon had the men carry torches in jars to prevent the enemy from seeing their approach.³⁷

LISTEN TO THE BIBLE

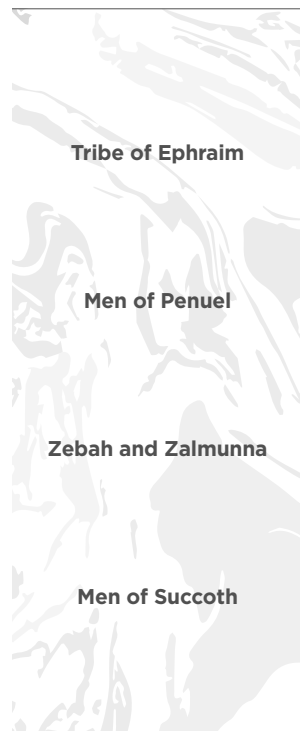
This story can be a little hard to follow. Try listening to the audio on biblegateway.com to understand the main point of this passage.

SUCCOTH AND PENUEL

Succoth was a city located about 4.5 miles east of the Jordan River. Penuel was another 5 miles beyond Succoth. For other references to these cities in the Bible, read Genesis 32:22-32 and Joshua 13:27-31. Both were Israelites territories. See the map on page 11.

Read Judges 7:19-8:21.

6. Pause and put yourself into the story. Hear the jars smashing, the trumpets sounding, and the men shouting. Feel the armor heavy on your shoulders. You are armed not with a sword, but with only a jar and trumpet in hand. God's promise is in the back of your mind, but an enemy army of thousands stands before you. What do you imagine Gideon's men were thinking and feeling?
7. Draw a line between the groups of people and the distinct role they play in this story.



Denied Gideon's army hospitality. This resulted in Gideon tearing down their tower and killing the men of their city.

Though they were upset at being initially left out, these men were allies of Gideon who helped his army fight.

The kings of Midian who fled after Gideon's army attacked. They were captured and executed once Gideon discovered they killed his brothers.

Refused to give Gideon's men food, taunting them about the failed capture of their enemy. Gideon taught them a lesson with the "thorns of the wilderness."

How did the battle with the Midianites end?

8. Consider Judges 7:1-8:21 in light of Paul's words about Jesus in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10. Where do you see God's power in the Israelites' weaknesses? Where or when can the power of Christ be demonstrated through your weaknesses?

Read Judges 8:22-32.

9. What was the Israelites' request in verse 22 and what does this show you about their relationship with God?
10. Read Judges 8:23 to see Gideon's response to Israel. Why are Gideon's actions in verses 24-27 confusing in light of this declaration? (Remember also Judges 7:2.)
11. Be honest with yourself. Where might you be committed to God in word, but compromising in thought or behavior? (See also 1 John 3:19-24.)

Take a few minutes to sit in silence before the Lord. Ask Him to search your heart for areas that need further surrender. Ask for God's power to help you confess, turn away from your sin, and turn back to Him. Note any thoughts you have below:

EPHOD

An ephod was "a sacred vestment that was worn and employed by the high priest." Gideon was not a priest, and, therefore, should not have worn this garment. This ultimately was disobedience to God and His Word. (Exodus 25:7; 28:4-35; etc.)³⁸

REST

Judges 8:28 is the last mention in the book about Israel experiencing rest. After this, "...the land no longer recovers its rest. This is a gift Israel loses, an enjoyment she forfeits."³⁹

DELIVERER

Remember, while Gideon was one of Israel's deliverers, he was still in desperate need of a Perfect Deliverer.

12. In what ways did Gideon fail as a leader?

CHAPTER	FAILURE
 6	
 7	
 8	

Even still, God used him. God's faithfulness remains. How does this encourage you today?

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

Turn to page 64 for an optional activity on honest prayer.



BIG IDEA

What is your biggest takeaway from this week's lesson?

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY: Honest Prayer

Though his motives were sometimes questionable, Gideon was not afraid to be honest with God, stating his fears and desires openly. Gideon was not the only person in Scripture who modeled this behavior. For example, Moses spoke up about his insecurities (Exodus 3) and Hannah cried in distress over her infertility (1 Samuel 1). Now that you have seen how others modeled honest prayer, here is a chance to put this discipline into practice. (Note: This is not for the purpose of discussing in small group, but to help you grow in your relationship with Jesus.)

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Hebrews 4:15-16)

Clear your mind. Set aside distractions. Take a few deep breaths. As you consider these questions and prompts, simply talk to God.

1. Where are you struggling? (Maybe it is a sin you keep going back to, tough circumstances, conflict, difficult relationships, etc.)
2. Tell God where you are having a hard time following Him.
3. Tell God your fears.
4. Where are you tempted to turn to first instead of God?
5. What if God doesn't respond in the way you want Him to?
6. God understands you. Do you believe this? Why or why not?

Notes