

GOD PROVIDED VICTORY AND BROUGHT HIMSELF GLORY THROUGH GIDEON'S ARMY

FIRST THOUGHTS:

In a culture (including our churches) obsessed with big numbers, where quantity supersedes quality, it's hard to imagine God downsizing in a plan for victory. And yet that's exactly what takes place in this session. As Gideon learned how to trust God more, the Lord continued to provide new opportunities for him to grow in his faith. Whereas God wants to include human beings in His work, He also wants it clearly understood that He is the only One who does the saving. As a result, all the glory belongs to Him. There are many occasions in the Bible when God used unlikely people to do extraordinary things so that He would receive the glory. At every turn in his story, Gideon found that God had a plan, and he needed to trust that plan—even when it didn't make sense. As you prepare for this lesson, reflect on the times that God has led you safely through your battles and struggles, perhaps using strategies you weren't expecting. Thank Him for these moments, and ask Him to help you trust Him more in the future because of what He has done for you in the past. Ask Him to guide you in this Bible study so you can see Him as He really is. God is *"the King of Glory, strong and mighty, mighty in battle"* (Psalms 24:8). Hallelujah! 🙌

UNDERSTANDING the CONTEXT:

A key kingdom principle confirmed throughout Scripture is that God delights in accomplishing His will through His selected servants. It's not as though He needs our help. After all, creation and redemption were carried out through the collective work of the Trinity. Yet, when it comes to advancing His kingdom, God has included those crafted in His image. In general, He takes pleasure in calling those who are relatively unknown, least likely, or unheralded. That certainly rang true in the era of the judges. From approximately 1350-1050 BC, God raised up a slate of twelve leaders—mostly from obscurity, to gain victory over Israel's enemies. Gideon proved to be one of the more significant judges in the group. Yet, he didn't start out that way. The youngest member of one of the weakest families in his tribe (Manasseh), Gideon had done nothing to distinguish himself before God called him. In fact, when the Lord did come calling, Gideon was hiding from the Midianites, trying to gather enough food to stay alive. It's not always the most famous or most talented people who make the biggest impact in the kingdom. Trust matters most. We enter into a relationship with Christ based on trust. We thrive in that relationship through trust as well. The kingdom perspective says that "there's no limit to what God can do through a person who cares most about giving God all the credit. As Gideon learned, trusting God and giving God the glory is what matters most. God led Gideon and Israel to a miraculous victory over the Midianites. *"...not by might, nor by power, but my Spirit says the LORD of host"* (Zechariah 4:6).

KEY DOCTRINE: God the Father

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. (See Psalm 47:8; Job 42:2.)

MEMORY VERSE: Judges 7:2

2. The Lord said to Gideon, "You have too many troops for me to hand the Midianites over to them, or else Israel might elevate themselves over me and say, 'I saved myself.'"

Too Many (Judg. 7:1-3)

"The Lord told [Gideon] he had too many troops for the Lord to give the Israelites a victory over the Midianites. Certainly, the Lord could do whatever He wanted to do. The issue was not the Lord's ability but Israel's misplaced trust and lack of humility. The Lord knew that if He gave Israel the victory with their thirty-two thousand troops . . . then Israel would boast and take credit for the amazing victory instead of recognizing that it was God who did it for them. Therefore, the Lord instituted a two-pronged Israelite army reduction plan. The first stage was straightforward. God told Gideon to announce to his troops that whoever was fearful and trembling at the prospect of fighting the Midianites could leave." Gideon lost two thirds of his soldiers in a matter of minutes. The worrisome discrepancy between the armies had grown larger—but God wasn't done yet. Gideon started out with 32,000 men to fight the army of the Midianites who were *"as countless as locust with camels" "as countless as the sand on the seashore"* (Judges 7:12). 22,000 men went home leaving Gideon with 10,000 men. Yet, Gideon obeyed God because he trusted God in spite of what he saw in the natural. At some point in your life, you must decide to believe God, trust God, and obey God. Everybody can't always go with you when you are on assignment from God. Fear, if you let it, can get in the way of trusting, obeying and serving God. Fear is a spirit that does not come from God. God has given us *"the spirit of power, love, and sound judgement"* (2 Timothy:1:7).

God says, “Do not fear [anything], for I am with you; Do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, be assured I will help you; I will certainly take hold of you with My righteous right hand [a hand of justice, of power, of victory, of salvation]. (Isaiah 40:10). Be careful not to take the credit or glory for any victory in your life because God is serious about His Glory! **Isaiah 42:8**, “I am the LORD, that is My Name; My glory I will not give to another, and **Revelation 4:11**, “God alone is *worthy* to receive glory.” Every victory in your life was because God did it!

- **Believers dishonor God when they seek the glory that belongs to Him alone.**

Still Too Many (Judg. 7:4–8)

We are now at 22,000 up against 135,000 (according to scholars). The odds are, for every 1 Israelite there are 13.5 Midianites. God says still too many. He tells Gideon to take them to the water and let them drink, and I will test them. Only 300 men passed the test and were chosen to go with Gideon. It looks impossible, BUT GOD ... with these 300 men says to Gideon, “I will deliver you and hand over the Midianites to you.” God is encouraging Gideon before the battle and reassuring Gideon of the outcome again! In Judges chapter 6 God had already told Gideon “*The LORD is with you*,”. And God already said to Gideon, “Do not fear; you shall not die.” Now 700 men are sent home and only the 300 are left. The odds now with only 300 men are for every 1 Israelites there are 450 Midianites! Gideon still obeys God in spite of what it looks like in the natural. In this world we cannot just go by what we see and hear with our senses. God is the king of the natural world and the spiritual world. His presence and His power determine the outcomes in heaven, in this world and in the world to come. Trusting Him based on His word and obeying him is our default position. . In a normal military campaign, the more men you have, the better outcome you might have. But God has chiseled the 32,000 down to 300. God wants a willing heart over a large number. He’s wanting the remnant, not the crowd. Like a sculptor, He has chiseled away the excess using just what is essential: faithful, obedient, and dedicated men. So, the 300, they take provisions and ram’s horns to win the battle, but no weapons! No swords!

- **Believers need to trust that God’s way of doing things is always best**

Just Right (Judg. 7:19–23)

Gideon divided his men into three groups of one hundred in each company. He equipped each man with a ram’s horn in one hand and an empty pitcher with a torch inside of it in the other hand. They had dispersed themselves all around the camp. . . . First, they blew their horns. Second, they smashed their jars. Third, they held up their lit torches that had been concealed in the jars. In a normal nighttime military maneuver, only someone at the front of a company would have been carrying a lit torch. Gideon’s three hundred men appeared to be three hundred companies surrounding the Midianites. Finally, they shouted, “A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!” . . . There was so much chaos that the Lord caused all of the Midianites to begin attacking each other. The survivors cried out and started running eastward to cross the Jordan River. Then the men in the tribes of Naphtali, Asher, and Manasseh joined in the battle and pursued the Midianites. Often in Scripture, God allows the enemy to turn on themselves. The Lord fulfilled His word and gave Israel an incredible victory. Everyone knew it had to be God who gave them the victory. Listen for believers today! God has already won the victory for the saints, through Christ on the cross, He has defeated and shamed the devil publicly. Now when we fight our enemies, we are fighting from the position of victory, we are not fighting to gain victory. God has already won because, “*the battle is not yours, it’s the Lord’s*”

- **Believers should pray for God to do what only He can do.**

APPLICATION:

The size of the enemy means nothing when we remember the size of our God. Stop trying to fight in worldly ways. **2Cor. 10:5-3** (GNT) says- *It is true that we live in the world, but we do not fight from worldly motives. ⁴ The weapons we use in our fight are not the world's weapons but God's powerful weapons, which we use to destroy strongholds. We destroy false arguments; ⁵ we pull down every proud obstacle that is raised against the knowledge of God; we take every thought captive and make it obey Christ.* Use the divine weapons of God to fight. God uses the small and the weak to defeat the proud, the strong and the powerful in this world. When we trust in God and are obedient to His word it positions us to witness the glory of God in our lives. When we face struggles and battles, they may seem great and impossible to overcome in our eyes and in our own strength, but with God all things are possible. Don’t be intimidated by the enemy, God is always working behind the scene. God stands ready to go into battle for His people and He always wins.

Next Week: Judges 16 Compromise