

Miracle in the Making

October 17, 2021

PREPARATION

▶ STUDY

Spend the week studying Judges 7:1-25. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools to enhance your preparation.

▶ PRAY

Pray for our pastors and this week's message, the upcoming group time, your group members, and their openness to God's Word.

▶ LANDING POINT

Trusting God gives me the greatest advantage in life.

GROUP DISCUSSION

- ▶ **CONFIDENTIALITY** | What's said in the group stays in the group.
- ▶ **NO CROSS-TALK** | Be considerate of others as they share. Refrain from side conversations and texting during group time.
- ▶ **NO FIXING** | We are not in the group to fix each other. Jesus does that part.
- ▶ **SHARING** | Be sensitive to the amount of time you share. Don't talk too much or too little. Every person brings something valuable to the group.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

THE UNDERDOG

Who doesn't love a good underdog story? There's something truly inspiring about someone overcoming seemingly insurmountable odds on the way to triumph. This week your group will discuss the final chapter in our unlikely hero's story. On the surface, Gideon and Israel's army look like the underdogs. However, as you look closely, you will see that they were the ones who actually had the upper hand in the battle.

Q: *What's your favorite underdog story? What makes it your favorite?*

DEEPER DIVE

UNLIKELY MEANS

Everything in Gideon's story has been leading up to a final confrontation with Israel's biggest enemy at the time. The author sets the scene for us. On one side of the Jordan, the Midianites and their allies are encamped. On the other side there are Gideon and men from Israel's northern tribes. As both sides prepare for battle, God tells Gideon, "You've got too many men." Let's look at what happens next and how God will use unlikely means to achieve His purposes.

Q: *Have a volunteer read Judges 7:1-25. Have another volunteer retell the story in their own words as if it were a campfire story.*

Q: *Share about a time when you had to totally depend on God in a situation.*

Q: *God wanted the glory for Israel's victory. Take some time to give God the glory for the good that He's done in your life recently.*

REFLECTION AND NEXT STEPS

FRAME AND CHOOSE

The true advantage Gideon and his troops had in the battle wasn't the size of their army, their intelligence, or their creativity. It was God. They had the most powerful person in the universe fighting for them! They truly had the upper hand in the battle.

Maybe you feel like the underdog in your own story. You're facing a hardship, setback, failure, tragedy, or problem you can't seem to fix. Life is hard. We know that by experience. But even at life's worst, we are never the underdogs when we put our trust in God. The next time you feel like an underdog you need to do two essential things:

1. *Frame your situation.* Make sure you're looking at life through the right frame. Seeing your life through God's frame enables you to see how God works all things for your good and His glory. The gospel gives you hope in every circumstance (Romans 8:28).
2. *Choose your thoughts.* You can only think one thought at a time, so choose the positive thought over the negative thought every time. Ask yourself, *How is this drawing me closer to Him and His heart? How am I growing because of this? What good can come from this?*

Q: *Describe someone who trusts God completely with their life. How are they different from most people?*

Q: *Think of a situation you're facing currently. How could you frame it with God's frame?*

Q: *What are some practical things you can do to choose to focus your thoughts on positive rather than negative things?*

Q: *How can the group be praying for you this week?*

COMMENTARY

THE MIDIANITES “Yahweh commands Israel to treat the Midianites as adversaries and destroy them because of the Midianites’ attempts to undermine worship of Yahweh in Israel. Midianites conspire with Moab to have Balaam curse Israel (Num. 22–24). Later, Cozbi, the daughter of a Midianite leader, engages in sexual relations with a Simeonite man. This act, in the context of the Baal worship at Peor, is considered to be part of the broader spiritual contamination deliberately engineered by the Midianites (Num. 25:16–18).

Judges 6–8 describes the Midianite oppression of Israel and the resistance organized by Gideon. After the Israelites settled in Canaan, the Midianites used their superior numbers to extract agricultural resources from Israel (Judg. 6:3–4). In a night attack, Gideon pretended to have a much larger army than he actually possessed. The ruse proved successful, and the Israelites routed Midian and killed its leaders. After Gideon’s victory, the biblical text refers to Midian only as a region (1 Kings 11:18) or as a defeated people (Ps. 83:9; Isa. 9:4; 10:26; 60:6; Hab. 3:7).¹

ALL FOR GOD’S GLORY “Within the Gideon story proper (6:1–8:35) the plot reaches its climax in chap. 7 as Yahweh provides a spectacular victory over the dreaded enemy. But the victory is not immediate. One might have expected the narrative to move quickly from v. 1 to v. 19, but it takes several detours, the first instigated by God (vv. 2–8) and the second originating with Gideon (vv. 9–18). The author’s inclusion of both episodes is intentional, highlighting in different ways the fact that if the Midianite menace is ever removed it is entirely to Yahweh’s credit.”²

OUR WEAKNESS, GOD’S STRENGTH “There will often be times when God strips away the things or the people we lean on and brings us into situations in which we become very aware of our weaknesses. This makes us more dependent upon him and provides greater potential to glorify him.”³

ENDNOTES:

1. Rob Fleenor, “Midianites,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).
2. Daniel Isaac Block, *Judges, Ruth*, vol. 6, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 274.
3. Simon J Robinson, *Opening up Judges, Opening Up Commentary* (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2006), 43–44.