

## **Gideon And The Struggle To Trust God And Stay Consistent**

### **Judges 6-8**

#### **Background:**

The book of Judges takes place right after the initial conquest during the time of Joshua and showcases the people's struggles to stay consistent with the mission of the conquest and maintain a relationship with God.

The majority of Judges focuses on the repetition of a consistent cycle:

The People sin → God is upset with their sin and sends an oppressor → The people call out to God in their oppression → God hears their call and sends a deliverer (Judge) → The Judge brings deliverance and God grants them peace → The people eventually forget God brought their peace and sin.

Judges 2.11–23 illustrates this cycle at the beginning of the book, which helps us interpret everything that follows.

Gideon story starts similarly and illustrates the need to remember God brings the victory; we cannot let our status go to our head; and, the power of God's mercy and patience.

#### **Outline of Gideon's Story**

6.1–10: The cycle starts

- The people of Midian are raised as an oppressor in response to the people's sin
- The people call out to God
- God sends a prophet to explain to them why they are being oppressed

6.11–27: Gideon is called

- We meet Gideon working in his family's winepress trying to hide the crop from the Midianites invading
- An angel of the Lord visits him and tells him he is going to be a deliverer of the people
- Gideon doesn't think that he is significant enough to be a Judge
  - He specifically mentions being from the least significant family in the least significant tribe (Manasseh), which begins the theme that where God will follow through with his promise, but in unexpected ways. The people would not expect a deliverer from Manasseh.
- The angel gives Gideon a sign through consuming a sacrifice, and this causes Gideon to believe and worship.
- We also learn that there are idols on his family's property and Gideon is told to tear them down, which he does.

6.28–35: Aftermath of the destroyed idol

- The people of Gideon's hometown are upset their idol is destroyed, and they want the destroyer killed.
- Gideon's father calms the people down saying that Baal has power, let him find vengeance for the destroyed idol himself.
- This gives Gideon a new name, and he begins gaining influence.

6.36–40: The sign of the fleece

- Gideon seeks further validation, and it is given to him through the sign of the fleece.
- This seems to illustrate a couple different things.
  - Gideon is still lacking faith but can be pushed in the right direction for God's purpose.
  - God has a lot of patience with Gideon.

7.1–8: The many become 300

- Gideon gained a following of 22,000 people, which is quickly whittled down to 10,000 and then 300.
- The purpose of this is to emphasize that regardless of the outcome the battle, it is God who is in control.

7.9–18: The 300 are promised victory and plan to take on the Midianites

- God sends further confirmation to Gideon, speaking to him directly and allowing him to visit the enemy's camp and witness the retelling of a dream where the Midianites are prophesied to easily lose their camp.
- Following this confirmation, the people make plans to battle.

7.19–25: The 300 gain victory

- God starts the battle by making the people in the camp confused and fight amongst themselves.
- The 300 barely have to fight because by the time the Midianites are ready they are on the defensive and no match for Gideon and his men.
- They win the battle and begin chasing the kings of Midian.

8.1–13: Gideon's leadership is tested.

- Ephraim is jealous they were not a bigger part of the victory, and they approach Gideon about this. Gideon is able to calm their anger.
- Gideon and his men continue to pursue the kings of Midian and come across the cities of Succoth and Penuel. In both cases, Gideon asks for supplies to help his men, but the people of the cities deny his requests.
  - It makes sense that Gideon's men would need supplies, and it might have been wrong for the people to deny helping him, but the focus of this story is Gideon and his reaction. Ultimately, Gideon is given an opportunity to trust in God to provide for him and his men, and to reflect the same patience and grace God showed him previously.

8.14–27: Gideon fails his test

- When Gideon left the people of Succoth and Penuel previously, he promised to return and bring destruction. Once he captures the kings, he does just that.
- He not only brings destruction instead of grace to those people, but he also pressures his firstborn son to be cruel by requesting that he kill the kings once he learns that they killed his family members. Again, an example of a understandable human response, but ultimately showcases Gideon's lack of grace and patience.
- After returning following the death of the kings, the people ask Gideon to become their king. He says no, that the people's only leader should be God.
  - This is a good thing to say, but is ultimately something only expressed in word and not deed. In the following verses, Gideon does several king-like things.
    - He has the people make an idol and worship it in his hometown.
    - He takes many wives and concubines
    - He names his Abimelech (roughly meaning my father is a king)
- Gideon never fully internalizes God's grace and patience, and ultimately allows the position God gave him to become a source of pride and destruction. Not only does it hurt him and his family, but the people around him fall into sin as well.

8.28–35: God grants peace

- Even with Gideon's sin, God still gives the people 40 years of peace, and grants Gideon a long life. One final example of God's patience and grace shown towards Gideon that Gideon doesn't seem to follow receive.

**Application**

- 1) Recognize that God is the one that brings the victory.
  - a. We have many blessings and successes in this life. We need to remember that all good things we have come from God. If we forget that we risk becoming like Gideon.
  - b. Additionally, when we are faced with trials we need to lean on what God has given us to see us through towards victory. Ultimately, victory with his son and the gift of eternal life.
- 2) Don't let your status go to your head
  - a. Each of us has been given a certain sphere of influence and leadership from God (think 1 Peter 2.9ff). That is a great and awesome thing, but we cannot allow that to become a source of pride.
  - b. We also cannot look at the success of others and think that we are due similar success because of who we are. This makes us like the people of Ephraim that wanted a portion of Gideon's victory.

- c. Also, if we allow our success to go to our heads, we are more likely to sin, and when we are sinning from a position of influence we are more likely to cause others to sin with us. (see Hosea 4.7ff)
- 3) God reflected a lot of love, patience, and mercy towards Gideon and the people of Israel here. We cannot forget that as we journey here, but need to take these stories as opportunities to be thankful for God's mercy and patience and reflect it towards others.