

Meet the Judges *(The Book of Judges)*

Week 4: Gideon - The reluctant leader

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing and sharing together.

What events or miracles have helped you to recognise God's presence and power? Share your stories.

WORSHIP

Ask everyone to write one reason why someone might have doubts about God? Discuss how we might grow through these doubts and/or live with them in faith.

Give thanks for the events and miracles that you discussed previously and offer up the doubts to the Lord as an act of prayer and worship.

WORD

Judges 6 starts with the now all too familiar pattern: the Israelites rebelled against God; God put them in the hands of an oppressor; the Israelites cried out to the Lord; and God raised up a new leader to bring peace.

On this occasion the Israelites' oppressor was Midian, whose men and livestock are said to be "like swarms of locusts" and "they invaded the land to ravage it", destroying the crops and taking the livestock. The few crops that survived had to be hidden to avoid being stolen. This was not a one-off, the Midianites made annual visits each with the same devastating effect. The Israelites left their homes and hid away in caves.

Growth Group Notes

Summer 2022



Read Judges 6:7-15

1. How does God's view of the situation differ from how Gideon sees it?

Read Judges 6:15-32

2. How does Gideon see himself?
3. How does God see Gideon?
4. In what ways do you feel inadequate to serve God?
5. How did the miracle in v21 change Gideon?

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God's first instruction for Gideon was to "Tear down your father's altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole beside it. Then build a proper kind of altar to the Lord your God on the top of this height. Using the wood of the Asherah pole that you cut down, offer the second bull as a burnt offering" (vv25-26)?

6. How did Gideon's self-image get in the way of him being fully obedient to God? (vv28-32)

Read Judges 6:33-40

Gideon asked again for a sign, and again God graciously respond. We need to remember that Gideon is not some extraordinary man. He was an ordinary man from an ordinary family in an ordinary tribe. Quite like you and me actually. He was weak enough to cause God to choose him, and obedient enough to follow God's call even with doubt and uncertainty.

Some have misinterpreted Gideon's actions in setting out the fleece. They have taken what Gideon did as a means for discovering God's will, and they encourage believers to "put out the fleece" when faced with a difficult decision. But Gideon knew what God wanted and was ready to obey. Gideon set out the fleece simply for encouragement, and God graciously provided.

Gideon had shown himself willing to obey God without encouragement. He had already raised his army before setting out the fleece. And he had already reduced his army to 300 men before God let him overhear the Midianite's dream (Judges 7:7-8 and 7:13-14). Obedience had led to encouragement, and encouragement led to greater obedience still.

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Gideon's experience reminds us that:

- We are to obey God without demanding “signs.” While God may give signs to encourage us, he gives them to those who trust and have obeyed rather than to those who doubt and hold back.
- God uses ordinary people to accomplish his purposes. The one thing that distinguished Gideon was his willingness to risk obeying God, as when he tore down his father's altar to Baal.
- God leads us one step at a time. Gideon hardly knew from his first encounter with the Lord that he would be expected to face the Midianite masses with a mere three hundred men. But by the time Gideon had to face that challenge, he was ready for it. Let's not worry about what the future may hold when God asks us to step out for him. One step at a time is enough for him and for us.

WHAT NEXT?

Pray for each person in the group, one at a time, Asking for words of knowledge, pictures and even a name that God calls them by.

Final thought for personal reflection

Our faith shows the depth of our relationship with God – the more we love him, the more we will trust and believe him. God is committed to building our faith and will take us through times of testing, not to destroy our faith, but to develop it.

James said, “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” (James 1:2-4)

While these tests may not feel like “pure joy”, they are for our good and ultimately for the good of others. Do we believe our faith is worth such testing?