

## **Gideon: Coward, Catalyst, and Conqueror!**

### **Judges 6:1-7:20**

No church is perfect because every church is made up of imperfect people. The Bible itself is full of imperfect people. It is this very humanness that makes the Biblical characters refreshing. They may have had flaws of biblical proportions, but thankfully God uses imperfect people.

The Book of Judges is set shortly after the conquest of Canaan. Judges 17:6 tells us that everyone did what was right in their own eyes, because there was no king. The people had no vision, because they did not have strong, stable leadership. Therefore, they fell into idolatry and other sins. So, to bring them back, God allowed their enemies to bully and harass them. When the oppression became unbearable, Israel would cry out to God for help and God would raise up a hero, a champion to lead the people to victory and spiritual renewal. These spiritual, military leaders were called judges.

If you ever need a reminder of God's tolerance and love, you'll find it in the book of Judges. If you ever wonder how in the world God could use you to change the world or make a difference, look at these people—flawed people in the hands of a flawless God. Today, we will consider the narrative surrounding Gideon (6:1-7:20).

Chapter 6:1 - God sent the Midianites harass the Israelites, because they had become evil in God's sight. The Midianites were a nomadic tribe that would wait until the Israelites had harvested their crops and raised their cattle, and then swoop down and raid their farms—stealing what they could and destroying the rest. Finally, after seven years of this, the Israelites cried out to God, and God raised up a young man, Gideon, to rescue His people. At first, Gideon was a coward

### **Gideon Was a Coward**

Judges 6:11 - We are introduced to Gideon as the angel of the Lord comes to him as he is thrashing wheat in a winepress. Why is he doing this? Because he was afraid of the Midianites. He could hide and thrash wheat at the same time. He was being a coward.

Two reasons for his cowardice: *bitterness and poor self-esteem*. Yet, in verse 12, the angel addresses him as a mighty warrior (hero). In v. 13, however, you can hear his bitterness and frustration with God: "Where are You?"

V 14 The angel tells him that God has chosen him to save Israel, and God will be with him.

V. 15 Gideon, however, reveals his pessimistic heart, his poor self-esteem.

*Gideon was a defeatist who questioned God's presence altogether. He sees himself as worthless, and he sees God as worthless. He allowed his circumstances to cloud his vision of who God is and what He had done for his people. Can you relate?*

For Gideon, it took a personal encounter with the living God to assure him that he no longer had to be afraid. From the bottom of the winepress, Gideon heard the earth-shattering voice of God himself call out, promising to be with him (v. 16). *This changed his heart.*

*Realizing God's presence in your life is the only thing that can transform cowardice into courage.* When Gideon realized that God was indeed with him, Gideon became a catalyst for change.

### **Gideon Was a Catalyst**

Gideon's decision to climb out of that winepress and follow God's call sparked renewal and revival in his little tribe. God's first mission for him was to destroy his father's altar to Baal (vs. 27).

Gideon rose above the influence of his idolatrous Israelite neighbors and destroyed the altar to Baal, erecting an altar to the one true God in its place. Although his actions were first met with resistance, he eventually inspired the entire tribe of Manasseh to give up their false gods and return to the Lord. One man changes the hearts of thousands of people. One of the most amazing things about genuine faith is how it inspires other people to step out in faith.

EX – The four minute mile

Modern-day Gideons stand up and step out on faith. They accomplish what everyone else says is impossible, and they inspire and challenge others to do the same. One person can change a church, a community, or even a country. Gideon put an end to idol worship in his generation, but his job still wasn't over. Finally, God would transform Gideon from a coward to a conqueror.

### **Gideon Was a Conqueror**

Vs. 33-36 With this victory under his belt, Gideon issued a call to arms across all of Israel and rallied thirty-two thousand men who were willing to stand up and fight against the Midianites. Before heading off to battle, though, Gideon had a conversation with God. He was still struggling with doubt, and so he asked God for small sign. He laid a wool fleece on the ground and asked God to keep the grass dry but allow the dew to collect on the fleece in the morning. God condescended to his request and assured Gideon that he was indeed with him. The next day, he asked God to do just the opposite, keep the wool dry but the grass wet. Once again, God proved patient and did as Gideon had asked. Only then did Gideon find the courage he needed to become a conqueror.

Chap. 7:1 Early in the morning, Gideon and his men set up camp just south of the Midianite militia, who were in the valley near Mount Moreh.

Vs. 2-6 - Gideon's men were outnumbered three to one, but apparently that was still too many Israelites for God. Through two separate commands, God whittled the number down to 300 men. Three hundred men against an army of a hundred thousand.

Vs. 16-20 Gideon divided the three hundred men into three groups. He gave each man a trumpet and an empty jar with a burning torch inside. He then instructed them to do exactly as he did once they reached the edge of their enemy's camp. Gideon and the one hundred men with him came to the edge of the enemy camp just after they had changed guards. It was during the middle watch of the night. Then Gideon and his men blew their trumpets and smashed their jars. All three groups of Gideon's men blew their trumpets and smashed their jars. They held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands. Then they shouted, "A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!" The Midianites in their confusion began to slaughter each other.

God wanted Gideon and all of Israel to know that the battle belonged to the Lord. They were victorious because God was with them and if they followed his instructions, he would always fight their battles for them. What was true for them, is true for you, too.

God wants you to be a conqueror! But he's the one who will fight the battles and win the victory. Your job is simply to trust him to do so and obey his instructions. Trust and obey—that's how you become a conqueror.

### **Challenge**

Gideon was a fearful man in command of a fearful army, yet through him God still accomplished a fearsome victory. Gideon became a champion, not because he was a fearless warrior, but because he had enough faith to do what God called him to do despite his own fears—to trust and obey.

God is still looking for modern-day Gideons—men and women of courage who are willing to stand up and step out on faith, willing to make a difference. Nothing Gideon did was incredibly difficult—he had a promise to believe, an altar to build, a torch to burn, and a trumpet to blow—but he acted in faith and God gave him the victory. God uses ordinary, imperfect people to do extraordinary things.

You might just be that person... but it takes faith to find out.

Do you have flaws of biblical proportions, yourself? God uses people just like you. If you feel like Gideon did this morning—like Where's God in all of this? or like I can't do anything great, I'm nobody—I want to invite you to put your life in God's hands and just watch what he can do with it.