

# **Judges 6-8**

## **“The Life of Gideon”**

### **Introduction**

- Tonight we continue in the book of Judges and we have come tonight to the story or the life of Gideon.
  - Most judges of Israel we get a verse or two about their life, some get a chapter or so of information.
  - But God slows down to give us the story of really two judges, Gideon and Samson.
- Now Samson is more famous than our hero tonight, but God has much to teach us through the judge Gideon.
  - And I want to give these three chapters the justice they deserve.
  - So we need to jump right in and look at these chapters through a lens of a 6-part play that encompasses the Life of Gideon.
  - So write these down and we will explore them one at a time.

### **The Life of Gideon – Judges 6-8**

#### **#1 – Gideon’s World – Judges 6:1-10**

#### **#2 – Gideon’s Call – Judges 6:11-35**

#### **#3 – Gideon’s Fleece – Judges 6:36-40**

#### **#4 – Gideon’s Battle – Judges 7:1-25**

#### **#5 – Gideon’s Leadership – Judges 8:1-21**

#### **#6 – Gideon’s End – Judges 8:22-35**

- So let’s look at these one at a time this evening, starting with....

### **The Life of Gideon – Judges 6-8**

#### **#1 – Gideon’s World – Judges 6:1-10**

- As we talked about last week Israel many times in the book of Judges finds itself in the Cycle of sin.
  - As chapter six opens up it has been 40 years since Deborah and Barak won a great victory against the Jabin and Sisera.
- For 40 years Israel has experienced peace and prosperity.
  - But then they started to go after the gods of Baal and Ashtoreth.
  - They started to worship other gods again.
- And because of this, God gave them over to the Midianites.

### **Now the Midianites were relatives of the Jewish people.**

- Abraham, the Father of the Jews had Ishmael, who was the father of the Arab people and Isaac, another father of the Jews.
  - But once Sarah, who was Isaac’s mother, had died, Abraham married another girl by the name of Keturah.
  - One of Keturah’s sons was named Midian of whom his descendants are known as the Midianites.

### **Now as chapter six continues the Midianites have been oppressing Israel for seven years.**

- It wasn’t an oppression of occupation, the Midianites did not live in the land of Israel, and they would come in from the south right at harvest time.
  - They would take all the crops, all of the cattle, and what they could not take they would burn and kill so the Jews had nothing.

### **Now learn from history that the Midianites were able to accomplish this because they were the first people group to use camels in warfare.**

- Camels can travel great distances without much food or water.

- And so the Midianites used that ability plus the size of the camel to travel into Israel and then intimidate the Jewish people.

**So after seven years of this treatment, the Jews finally cry out to God.**

- And don't miss this, first God sends a prophet verse 7 to them.
  - Why a prophet – what they need is a military leader, not a preacher.
  - But of course that is from our perspective.

**God understood what the root problem was.**

- The root problem wasn't Midian; it was the Jewish people's worship of the false gods of Baal and Ashtoreth.
  - And God understood if we don't deal with the root issue of Baal worship, then even though He frees you from the Midianites, they will just be replaced by another foreign power.
- Your problem is Baal.

**We need to see this as well.**

- We can cry out because we are going through the effects of our sin and rebellion against God.
  - And we should cry out – hopefully it doesn't take you and me seven years to turn to God.

**We should cry out – but once we do we need to realize the root of the problem isn't the effect of sin, that is just a symptom.**

- The real problem is our sinful condition and choices that have put us in this situation to begin with.

**And until we deal with the root issue we will find ourselves again and again in the same trouble.**

- Different name, different circumstance, same problem.
  - Because the problem is never Midian, oh it seems that way.
  - But the root issue was sin, it was the worship of something other than God and that caused the oppression.
- God help us to see in our own hearts what the real issue is.
  - So we can confront that.
  - Not just the symptoms of the sin that we will have to confront again and again if we don't get to the root.

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**#1 – Gideon's World – Judges 6:1-10**

**#2 – Gideon's Call – Judges 6:11-35**

- After showing them what the root cause of their problems were, now God is going to raise up a deliverer.
  - But God's choice and God's method of delivering is also so different than ours would have been.

**The scene opens on Gideon who is threshing wheat in a wine press.**

- Now that says a lot of Gideon right there.
  - Normally you would thresh wheat on a hilltop because you are trying to separate the wheat from the chaff or the stalk, which is not eatable.
- But he is doing this low to the ground, showing you he is afraid, he doesn't want the Midianites to see him.
  - It also shows you he has very little harvest.

**But to this man in this situation, God says, verse 12, "The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor."**

- Now some commentators see this as God mocking Gideon.
  - What's up big tough guy, threshing your wheat in a wine press – let me see your muscles.

- And I find that funny because I am a mocker.
- But I don't really think God is – I don't think that is what is happening here.
  - I think, like so often happens with God – He sees us in our potential, He sees us in who we are going to become in Him, not who we are in the flesh.

**God called the apostle Peter a rock long before Peter ever demonstrated that himself.**

- Peter struggled greatly with being a coward.
  - But when God was done shaping and molding, what happened?
  - Peter asked to be crucified upside down.
  - God saw Peter as what he would become.

**And I want you to see that because God does the same with you and me.**

- He has made you promises and He has whispered things in your ear about what you should do.
  - And it is easy for us to look at ourselves in our current situation and say – you are crazy God.
- I'm sure Abraham and Sarai wanted to say that when God told them you will be the Father of many nations.
  - But that is exactly what happened.
- And friend – the God of Abraham and the God of Gideon, that is your God.
  - And He sees you and speaks to you and me so often not in who we are but in who He knows we will become.

**Well God has a lot of work to do, true, and he did with Gideon as well.**

- Notice verse 13.
  - Gideon is questioning God's character.
  - If you are for us – then why are we going through what we are going through?
- He is questioning God's word?
  - What about all those stories we have heard? How can they really be so?

**And I want you to notice this church because the enemy's methods rarely change.**

- He wants to get us to question God's character.
  - Lord why are you doing what you are doing to me right now? It seems mean, unloving.
- The enemy wants to get you to question God's Word.
  - I don't know how I can believe any of your promises ever again!

**It is amazing to me how God will take the effects of our sin, something we have chosen to do in rebellion to Him and yet when we experience the consequences, God gets the blame? What's wrong with us – but we do it.**

- Listen, the enemy wants to get you to question God's character, to question God's Word, His promises.
  - But can I ask you – what has God ever done to you to earn that kind of treatment from us.
- Well He took my loved one.
  - He did – it wasn't death, or sickness – things God calls an enemy and effect of man's rebellion and He will one day do away with that stuff?
- Well He didn't give me what I wanted.
  - How do you know it would have been good for you – how do you know God won't give it to you in the future – psalm 84:11 says, No good thing we he withhold from him who walks uprightly.

**What has God done to earn this treatment?**

- Nothing is the correct answer.
  - Nothing – so let's stop treating Him like His character is in question, like His faithfulness has failed.
  - We have correct character, we are faithless and God never is.

- God has a lot to do in Gideon but it starts by this Call upon His life.

### **You keep talking about God calling but isn't this an angel in the story we are reading?**

- No – the text says this is, “The Angel of the Lord.”
  - Whenever you read that, what the Bible is telling you is this was an Old Testament appearance of Jesus.
  - Jesus wasn't born in Matthew, well He was on earth, but He has always existed.
  - And you see him with different titles in the OT, this one being the Angel of Lord.
- Gideon realizes this because verse 22 says he is worried because he has seen the Lord face to face and he is going to die.
  - But God reassures him he will not die; in fact I have things for you to do.

### **The first part of Gideon's call starts at home.**

- We can surmise from verse 25 that Gideon's father is like a priest of Baal.
  - Talk about God choosing the foolish things of the world.
  - I mean if you or I were picking a deliver to help the Jewish people recover from the effects of Midian, whom would you pick?
  - Who among you would pick the son of a Baal priest – none of us would – but God is amazing!

### **However Gideon can't save the nation until he starts by serving the Lord at home.**

- and this principal is true for all of us.
  - You are not going to see revival happen at work or in our community until it is happening in your home.
  - Until it is happening in your heart.
- The call of God begins at home.
  - And God calls Gideon to cut down the alter to Baal in his Father's house.

### **So He does and the next morning the people want to know who did this?**

- And someone obviously who was with Gideon rats him out, then the people go to his dad and say the kid has to die.
  - But I love it.
  - Gideon's radical living has its first convert – His dad – let Baal defend himself.
- Gideon's Dad realizes what am I doing as a Jew helping people worship this false God that can't even defend himself.
  - So he renames his son Jerubbaal – which means “contender with Baal.”

### **Because of this revival at home and because the call started with him.**

- Many of the nation of Israel rally behind Gideon and they are ready to go to War with Midian.
  - But before we see the battle we see Gideon in verses 36-40 still a little unsure of God's call upon his life.

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#### **#3 – Gideon's Fleece – Judges 6:36-40**

- Now we looked at these verses on Sunday.

### **Gideon has the clear Word of God.**

- But he is still unsure, so he devises a little test to prove God's will to his own heart.
  - If I put the fleece outside overnight, let the ground be dry and the fleece be wet.
  - And when it happened, Gideon, still not convinced thinks – well let's try the opposite, let the ground be wet and the fleece dry.
- And then that happens too.

### **Now some Christians have taken this practice of devising a little test to prove or discover God's will as the preferred method to discover God's will.**

- And as we looked at that on Sunday, that is ridiculous.

- You cannot use Gideon's fleece as prescriptive of what we are suppose to do when we need to know God's will.

### **#1 – Because Gideon's fleece was a miracle.**

- What we do is we say, okay, well if my heart is twitter patted then I know I am suppose to marry her, or if I have a bad day at work, then I know I am suppose to quite my job.
  - What? – No.
  - You are supposed to be twitter patted if you see a girl you like.
  - You are suppose to not like your job, most people's job is part of the curse – oh I didn't have good day – maybe Adam your forefather shouldn't have sinned in the garden.
- If you want to pray let my car be able to fly to work instead of drive, then that is closer to Gideon's fleece.
  - But it still won't help us be delivered from indecision because we don't have a promise that God will do a miracle just to confirm His will to you.

### **#2 – Gideon had the will of God.**

- He wasn't trying to figure out what God was calling him to do, he knew that.
  - He just wanted confirmation.
  - I do think if you are going to lay out a fleece to confirm what you already know to be God's will, then that is closer to being okay but it is still dangerous.
- Because what if the fleece doesn't work out – has God's will changed?
  - You see, don't miss the fact that Gideon wasn't convinced by the fleece – after the first time he just thought, well maybe that would have happened anyway.
  - It didn't really help.

### **Instead we need to obey the Lord.**

- And to hear the Lord, to discern His will.
  - I need to be in the Word.
  - I need to seek Godly counsel.
  - I need to listen to His Spirit in my heart.
  - And I need to open my eyes to circumstances.
- I need to take all those things and pray what James 1:5 says – if anyone lacks wisdom, let him ask of God.
  - Amen!
- Gideon had the call, the people came to him, and next it just gets better as we see the battle...

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- God wins a great victory for the nation of Israel, and when I say God won the victory, I mean it.
  - 32,000 men show up to go to battle against 135,000 Midianites – 4 to 1 odds.

### **But God notices their hearts and says that is too many people. You winners will think you are just better solders to overcome 4 to 1 odds.**

- So you have too many with you for me to get the glory for this battle.
  - Tell the men Gideon if any are afraid they can go home.
  - So Gideon obeys and 22,000 leave.

### **But God says I still see a problem.**

- If I were Gideon I would say, yes, about 125,000 problems, that is how many troops we are short.

- But God says, no, you still have too many.
- And this goes to show just how easy it is for us to take the credit for what God has done.
- Even at 10,000 verses 135,000 – we will still claim the victory.

**So God has Gideon perform another test.**

- He wants them to go down the brook and have them take a drink of water.
  - And separate those who get down on their knees and drink from those who take handfuls of water out of the stream.

**And I was thinking this through I thought, a drink of water, there is nothing more ordinary to life than having a drink of water.**

- And yet the choice of whether or not they were going to be used by the Lord came down to something so simple as a drink of water.
  - **Zechariah 4:10 – “don’t despise the days of small things.”**
- Things we think, this doesn’t matter how I handle this opportunity, it doesn’t matter how I deal with this issue in my life.

**How do you know it doesn’t matter – do you think these guys thought they were being evaluated on the way they took a drink of water?**

- We need to live for the Lord, to be faithful to him especially in the ordinary things.
  - We seem to gear up for the big things God calls us to do – we will do those well.
  - But the simple things, the things not a lot of people see – are those things done for the glory of God by the power of His Spirit?
- Don’t think they are not important.
  - These men were put into groups based on how they took a drink of water.

**And I bet Gideon’s heart sank when he saw 9,700 men just jump in.**

- Because you would think he would assume God wasn’t doing this just to get rid of 300 men.
  - And certainly that was the case.
- All those guys who got down on their knees and stuck their head in the stream, Gideon had to tell them to go home.
  - Now the guys who brought water up to their mouths, with those 300 I will defeat the Midianites.

**Now I have heard some great sermons in my life on how these 300 men were the Navy Seals of Gideon’s army.**

- These were the best of the best.
  - They knew to stay on guard, looking around for the battle even when taking a drink of water.
  - These guys were the elite soldiers and if we are going to serve the Lord we need to stay alert and be ready for battle.

**But my problem with that understanding is it kinds doesn’t fit the theme.**

- God is getting rid of guys so we won’t take the glory.
  - And now he wants the 300 elite solders.
  - I don’t think so.

**I think these guys were not the elite solders but they were the old fat guys who could not get down on their hands and knees.**

- Their bodies didn’t bend that way.
  - Oh, but they were brave because when Gideon said, ‘anyone who is afraid can go home,’ they stayed.
  - Maybe they couldn’t hear – ah, what did that kid say, we can home if we know how to braid, and I don’t get that.

**That’s my opinion and you can be free to disagree with me.**

- But remember, God left Gideon with 300 fat guys who can't bend over and who can't hear.
  - And God says – now I know there is no way you guys are going to take credit for what I am about to do.

**You know friends, God will often put us into situations were we know we are over our heads.**

- I hear people sometimes say God will never give you more than you can handle.
  - I don't know where that is in the Bible.

**I know people point to I Corinthians 10:13.**

**“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” – I Corinthians 10:13**

- God will certainly not tempt to a point where you have no choice, you just have to sin, true.

**But there is no verse that says God will never give you more than you can handle.**

- It's not in there.
  - God often gives us more than we can handle.
  - God did that to Joshua as he entered the promise land with Jericho.
  - God is doing it here with Gideon – go defeat 135,000 Midianite warriors with 300 fat guys who can't hear – do you think Gideon felt like he was handed more than he could handle, you bet.

**God will often put us in situations like that.**

- So that when He does show up and wins the victory we won't be tempted to say, well of course I did that.
  - And because it gets us to cry out and depend on him.

**Gideon cries out and God gives him a special insight into the camp of the Midianites.**

- That they were afraid of him and his men.
  - God gives him encouragement and a plan.

**The plan is to take the 300 men and give to each of them a trumpet and a torch.**

- And you see in warfare in these days it was normal that the captain of a 1,000 men would have the trumpet and a torch.
  - Most warfare did not happen at night.

**So in the middle of the night, the Midianite army hears 300 clay pots breaking.**

- You know how you feel when you are abruptly woken up by something that crashes in the middle of the night; you hardly know where you are.
  - And while they are trying to get their wits about them – they see 300 torches, which in their mind means 300,000 men.
- Then they start fighting each other, total confusion.

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- As the battle is coming to a close, we see two sides of Gideon.

**First with the Ephriamites he is very tactful.**

- They want to know why he didn't invite them to the battle; they accuse him of just wanting glory for himself.
  - And of course, for those of us who have been paying attention – nothing could be further from the truth.

- Gideon didn't want at all to lead people into battle.

**As we continue in this book we are going to see the tribe of Ephraim continue in this pattern.**

- To show up after the battle is over and then complain that they were not part of the battle.
  - And they are going to get theirs – next week we look at a few judges including Jephtha who will not let Ephraim off easy.

**But Gideon is very tactful – oh you guys are here for the important stuff.**

- And this would lead us to think Gideon was just a big softy if it wasn't for the rest of the story we just read.
  - To the people of Succoth who refuse to help him and the people of Penuel – when the battle is done, he whips the leaders of Succoth and kills the people of Penuel.

**So why was Gideon soft on Ephraim and tough on Succoth and Penuel?**

- I suggest to you that the Spirit was leading him.

**Jesus was the same kind of leader.**

- To the woman caught in adultery, or to Zacchaeus the tax collector, Jesus is very kind and patient, way more than they deserved.
  - And yet He calls the Pharisees, snakes and vipers, white washed tombs.
  - He is very hard on them – He makes a whip just like Gideon and uses it on some people ripping others off in the temple.

**And I suggest to you that is because Jesus knew.**

- He knew what would be the most effective for that woman caught in adultery and Zacchaeus the tax collector, it was going to be kindness and gentleness that would be the most effective.
  - And He knew to get the little Pharisee, Paul the Apostle, he had to resort to some tougher love.
  - Jesus knew because He was filled with the Spirit of God.

**And that is good news as we try to lead our families and the people we work with.**

- We are certainly not Jesus.
  - But we are filled with the Holy Spirit.
  - And as we walk in the Spirit, not in the flesh, I can let him lead me.
- What does my kid need right now – it is gentle grace or tuff love.
  - What does this co-worker, throwing up all their sin on me really need – gentle grace or for me to make a whip?
  - We don't know – but He does.
- So if we are going to be effective leaders like Gideon and of course Jesus – we must be filled with the Holy Spirit.
  - Well we talked about that last week, so lets move on.

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**#6 – Gideon's End – Judges 8:22-35**

- Gideon starts out so well.
  - Not just in the story we have been reading tonight but even after the battle.
  - At first the people want to make him and his sons kings forever in Israel.
  - And Gideon says, no, I will not rule over you and my sons will not rule over you.
  - Seems so good until we get to verse 24.

**One request, can I have all the gold?**



- And He decides to use that gold to build himself an ephod, like a memorial to himself.
  - And we see the dangers of that right away – the people start to worship it.

**As humans beings we are so sensory driven.**

- We will always default to worshipping what we can put our hand on, what we can feel and touch, versus an invisible God.
  - And so it is no wonder the people start to worship this memorial to Gideon and start to fall away from the Lord.

**It doesn't get any better because in verse 30 we find out he has many wives, so many that he has 70 sons.**

- And it is obviously a lust problem because on top of that he has concubines who are just women you take of in order to use them physically.
  - And he has a son with one of these concubines that Gideon names "Abimelech."
  - **"Abimelech" means "My Father is King."**

**Now wait a second, in verse 23 Gideon is saying, "I will not rule over you and my sons will not rule over you."**

- But now he is naming his kids, my father is king.
  - What is happening?
  - What is happening, is Gideon is not finishing well?

**Listen to me – we will always finish weak unless we are determined to finish well.**

- We look at Paul the Apostle saying that I have finished well and have run my race.
  - But please don't think that is going to happen by default in your life – it won't happen by default.
  - In fact the opposite will happen by default.
- You have to determine to finish well – you have to make choices to run your race to completion.
  - We need to be like Caleb, who late in life is still willing to take on the giants, because He knows it will be good for him to have to keep trusting the Lord for big things.

**I don't plan on retiring – now don't misunderstanding me, I am not saying that at your job you should feel the same way.**

- If I worked construction, I would be trying to retire already.
  - But when it comes to serving the Lord – none of better plan on retiring.

**Now I'm sure things will change as I get older, I don't plan on teaching, Sunday and Wednesday, Bible colleges classes, equip classes, chapels, whoever's camps, covering other church services and working on my own masters degree forever – maybe I shouldn't do all that now.**

- But I know my heart – I need to stay busy for the Kingdom of God – let the Lord speak to your heart so we learn from Gideon and finish well.