

Gideon - The Reluctant Hero

Lesson 02 of the series "Heroes"

1. When the Israelites began to worship other gods the Lord allowed them to be overrun by other nations.

"The Israelites did evil in the LORD's sight. So the LORD handed them over to the Midianites for seven years. The Midianites were so cruel that the Israelites made hiding places for themselves in the mountains, caves, and strongholds... These enemy hordes, coming with their livestock and tents, were as thick as locusts; they arrived on droves of camels too numerous to count. And they stayed until the land was stripped bare. So Israel was reduced to starvation by the Midianites. Then the Israelites cried out to the LORD for help." Judges 6:1-7 (NLT)

Life Application: God helps those who cry out to him for help.

"Then call on me when you are in trouble, and I will rescue you, and you will give me glory." Psalm 50:15 (NLT)

"God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it." Ephesians 2:8-9 (NLT)

2. God called Gideon, a very unlikely hero to rescue his people.

Gideon son of Joash was threshing wheat at the bottom of a winepress to hide the grain from the Midianites. The angel of the LORD appeared to him and said, "Mighty hero, the LORD is with you!" "Sir," Gideon replied, "if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? And where are all the miracles our ancestors told us about? Didn't they say, 'The LORD brought us up out of Egypt'? But now the LORD has abandoned us and handed us over to the Midianites." Then the LORD turned to him and said, "Go with the strength you have, and rescue Israel from the Midianites. I am sending you!" "But Lord," Gideon replied, "How can I rescue Israel? My clan is the weakest in the whole tribe of Manasseh, and I am the least in my entire family!" The LORD said to him, "I will be with you. And you will destroy the Midianites as if you were fighting against one man."

Judges 6:11-16 (NLT)

Life Application: God chooses to use unlikely people as his representatives.

"For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength... God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things--and the things that are not--to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him." 1 Corinthians 1:25-29 (NIV)

Life Application: We don't need to be afraid when God asks us to do hard things because God is with us.

"And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Matthew 28:20 (NLT)

3. Gideon didn't have much confidence in God's promises.

Then Gideon said to God, "If you are truly going to use me to rescue Israel as you promised, prove it to me in this way. I will put a wool fleece on the threshing floor tonight. If the fleece is wet with dew in the morning but the ground is dry, then I will know that you are going to help me rescue Israel as you promised." And that is just what happened. When Gideon got up early the next morning, he squeezed the fleece and wrung out a whole bowlful of water. Then Gideon said to God, "Please don't be angry with me, but let me make one more request. Let me use the fleece for one more test. This time let the fleece remain dry while the ground around it is wet with dew." So that night God did as Gideon asked. The fleece was dry in the morning, but the ground was covered with dew. Judges 6:36-40 (NLT)

Life Application: In order to have confidence in God we need to know His will, His ways, and His promises as revealed in His Word.

"All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NLT)

4. God enabled Gideon to miraculously defeat a vast army with only 300 men.

The LORD said to Gideon, "You have too many warriors with you. If I let all of you fight the Midianites, the Israelites will boast to me that they saved themselves by their own strength. Therefore, tell the people, 'Whoever is timid or afraid may leave this mountain and go home.'" So 22,000 of them went home, leaving only 10,000 who were willing to fight. But the LORD told Gideon, "There are still too many! Bring them down to the spring, and I will test them to determine who will go with you and who will not." ...The LORD told Gideon, "With these 300 men I will rescue you and give you victory over the Midianites. Send all the others home."

Note: God gave Gideon one final confidence booster. That night the LORD said, “Get up! Go down into the Midianite camp, for I have given you victory over them! But if you are afraid to attack, go down to the camp...” Gideon crept up just as a man was telling his companion about a dream. The man said, “I had this dream, and in my dream a loaf of barley bread came tumbling down into the Midianite camp. It hit a tent, turned it over, and knocked it flat! His companion answered, “Your dream can mean only one thing—God has given Gideon son of Joash, the Israelite, victory over Midian and all its allies!” When Gideon heard the dream and its interpretation, he bowed in worship before the LORD. Then he returned to the Israelite camp and shouted, “Get up! For the LORD has given you victory over the Midianite hordes!” Judges 7:9-15 (NLT)

“He divided the 300 men into three groups and gave each man a ram’s horn and a clay jar with a torch in it. Then he said to them, “Keep your eyes on me. When I come to the edge of the camp, do just as I do. As soon as I and those with me blow the rams’ horns, blow your horns, too, all around the entire camp, and shout, ‘For the LORD and for Gideon!’” It was just after midnight, after the changing of the guard... Suddenly, they blew the rams’ horns and broke their clay jars... They held the blazing torches in their left hands and the horns in their right hands, and they all shouted, “A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!” Each man stood at his position around the camp and watched as all the Midianites rushed around in a panic, shouting as they ran to escape. When the 300 Israelites blew their rams’ horns, the LORD caused the warriors in the camp to fight against each other with their swords.” Judges 7:16-22 (NLT)

Life Application: We need to trust God’s strength not our own.

“Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.” Psalm 20:7 (NIV)

“My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.” So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. 2 Corinthians 12:9 (NLT)

Connect Group Questions

1. What stood out to you from this past Sunday's message?
2. Read Judges 6:11-16. When God calls Gideon does he seem like a hero to you? Why do you think God called him a hero even when he was hiding?
3. Read 1 Corinthians 1:25-29. Why does God choose to use people who would seem to be foolish choices in order to carry out His work? How does this passage make you feel?
4. Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and Hebrews 4:12. How does studying God's Word help us know His will, His ways, His promises? Share one thing God has recently revealed to you from His Word.
5. What do the following Scriptures teach us about not being afraid?
 - Deuteronomy 31:6
 - Isaiah 41:10
 - Psalm 23:4, 46:1
 - Joshua 1:9
 - 2 Timothy 1:7
6. Read Judges 6:36-40. Why did Gideon keep asking for signs to confirm that God was going to deliver Israel as He had promised? Have you ever hesitated in doing something you knew God was prompting you to do? Why? What happened? Why do we often ask for reassurance even if we already have clear direction on the right course of action?
7. Spend some time as a group discussing any difficult challenges faced by members of your group. Then spend some time in prayer asking God to give you victory over problems and grace to deal with hard circumstances. Why did Paul say God's grace was all he needed? Why does God's power work best in weakness? (see 2 Corinthians 12:9)