



Gideon's Great Victory and Judgship Judges 7-8

Introduction

Is it possible to get a lot from a little? Does your success depend on you or on God? Does God use unpopular people to carry out His will? The story of Gideon answers "yes."

Outline of Judges Chapters 7-8

- I. Gideon's Preparation - Judges 7:1-15
- II. Gideon's Success - Judges 7:16-25
- III. Gideon After the Battle - Judges 8:1-21
- IV. Gideon's Judgship - Judges 8:22-35

I. Gideon's Preparation - Judges 7:1-15

Gideon and his army of volunteers camped south of the Midianites. Although Gideon had thirty-two thousand men ready to fight, the Midianites still had more men. The Midianites also had many camels and chariots.

God, however, was not satisfied with the numbers. He said to Gideon, *The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying 'my own hand has saved me.'* God would give the Israelites victory, but in a way that would prove God made it possible. Israel would not be able to claim the glory for themselves. It had to be obvious that God delivered them.

First God made the army smaller by sending home all those that were *fearful and afraid*. Twenty-two thousand left. Still, God said there were too many. In obedience to God, Gideon marched his men to the brook where God would determine who would go and who would stay. Receiving a chance to drink water, some men scooped a handful of water and then lapped it like a dog. Others knelt to drink directly from the brook. God chose the lappers and sent home the kneelers. Perhaps those that lapped the water showed they were more fit because their thirst wasn't overwhelming.

Perhaps it showed that they had the makings of a soldier because they were better prepared for a surprise attack if they were on their feet. Whatever the reason, only three hundred men scooped and lapped the water. These were the men that would conquer the Midianites.

The three hundred men took trumpets and provisions and camped above the enemy. God knew that Gideon needed confidence to give him strength. God knows when we need strength too. We have His word, the Bible, and we need to read it to be strengthened ourselves. God said to Gideon, *Arise, go down near the camp...take your servant, hear what they say, and afterward your hands will be strengthened.*

Gideon overheard a Midianite soldier talking about his dream. The soldier's fear was just what Gideon needed to hear. His enemy was unsure and fearful. Not only had God promised victory, but even the enemy was saying, *God has delivered the whole camp to Gideon* (7:14). Gideon worshiped, returned, and shared the good news with his army, *Arise, for the Lord has delivered the camp of Midian into your hand.*

II. Gideon's Success - Judges 7:16-25

When you have very little or nothing, God's power is that much more noticeable. For instance, you may not recognize God's love for you when your mom comes home with a car full of grocery bags. But a child who is living in poverty and awakes to find bread and butter beside her bed would find it a reason for great celebration. That's how it is with God and man. We don't often see His hand at work when we have so much. But, when we have very little or nothing, we become very aware of how He is working. In the same way, Gideon and his three hundred soldiers had very little to go into battle. Each man was armed with

trumpets and torches inside clay pitchers. Gideon commanded them saying, *Watch me and do likewise. When I blow the trumpet, you blow the trumpets and say, 'The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.'* Now Gideon did not have an actual sword, but he did have the *sword of the Lord*. In Ephesians 6:17, the apostle Paul tells us that the sword of the Spirit is the word of God. Gideon certainly had God's word with him when he went into battle.

Israel had the element of surprise at night. The stillness was interrupted by three hundred and one blaring trumpets. The darkness was lit by the same number of torches encircling the camp. The Midianites awoke to hear the shout echo on all sides, *The sword of the Lord and of Gideon*. They thought they were surrounded and being attacked by a mighty army. In their confusion and fear, they all fled.

The tribes of Asher, Naphtali, and Manasseh chased the fleeing Midianites. Gideon sent word to the tribe of Ephraim to take over the watering places and the Jordan River in order to deprive the Midianites of both water and escape. The Ephraimites did this and recognized two princes of Midian who were fleeing. They went after them, killed them, and delivered their heads to Gideon.

III. Gideon After the Battle - Judges 8:1-21

Sometimes, when a battle ends, the fighting continues. The Ephraimites were angry with Gideon for not asking them to fight. But, Gideon did not respond to their anger and chose to compliment them instead. His wise (soft) answer turned away their wrath (see Proverbs 15:1). *God has delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb. And what was I able to do in comparison with you?* In other words, "What did I do compared to you! You caught the two princes!"

Meanwhile, Gideon's exhausted army chased the enemy across the Jordan River. Coming to the town of Succoth, Gideon asked the city leaders to provide food for his men. The

leaders refused. They preferred to play it safe and make sure they helped the winners, not the losers. Gideon promised to return and teach them a lesson in generosity, with thorns and briars.

The city of Penuel also refused to help, making the soldiers more desperate, so Gideon vowed to destroy their tower when he returned.

The two Midianite kings, having lost 120,000 soldiers, were at Karkor with 15,000 survivors. Gideon attacked while the camp felt secure, **pursued**, and captured the two kings.

Returning from battle, Gideon carried out his discipline on the leaders of Succoth beating them with thorns and briars, as he had promised. In Penuel, he had the tower destroyed and the men of the city killed.

When Gideon questioned the kings, Zebai and Zalmunna, he discovered that they had killed his brothers at Mt. Tabor. Gideon instructed his young son, Jether, to kill the kings. It would have been considered a great honor for Jether to kill the enemies of God and Israel, but he did not have the heart for it. In the end, Gideon executed them himself. As a battle trophy, he took the ornaments from the kings' camels. Never again were the Midianites a threat to Israel. Some victories are final.

IV. Gideon's Judgeship - Judges 8:22-35

The people of Israel received Gideon as a deliverer and hero. They spontaneously asked him to be their king and head a **dynasty**. *Rule over us, both you and your son and your grandson also.* Gideon said, *I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you, the Lord shall rule over you.* Gideon's **modesty** and greatness are noteworthy. **Ambition** was not his weakness.

Gideon then asked the Israelites to give him the golden earrings they had taken as plunder from the Ishmaelites (Midianites). A garment was spread out on the ground and 1700

shekels worth of gold was collected. That is approximately 40 pounds of gold or the weight of an average five year old. From these Gideon made an ephod, a vest worn by the high priest when doing his duties for God. We do not know how Gideon intended to use this ephod, but we know that it was displayed in his city, Ophrah, and the people used it as an idol. Sadly, we are told that it became a snare to Gideon and his family also. The Israelites again showed their weakness for idolatry. What are your weaknesses? What can you do to avoid being tempted in those areas?

With the Midianite danger gone, the country was quiet for forty years while Gideon judged Israel. Verse 29 says, *Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and dwelt in his own house.* Jerubbaal was Gideon's nick-name, given by his father after Gideon had torn down the altar of Baal (Judges 6:32).

Gideon produced seventy sons from many wives. He also had a son named Abimelech from a concubine living in Shechem. **Polygamy** was a sign of wealth and power in the East. It is a sad thing to see Gideon succumb to the temptations of the world around him. Great men and women can also make great mistakes. That is why it is very important for you to put your faith in God alone, not your teacher, youth pastor, or even parents. People may disappoint you, but God will always be faithful!

Gideon died in old age and was buried in Ophrah. He is mentioned in the New Testament's Hall of Faith. In fact, he leads

the list of judges (Hebrews 11:32).

After Gideon died, the people strayed again from God and went after Baal. They forgot the Lord their God who had delivered them. They didn't even show kindness to Gideon's family in return for all he had done for them. †

Prayer

Pray that whatever worldly things draw you away from God and cause you to stumble would become less and less desirable. Pray that as you grow in the knowledge of God, you will grow away from the temptations of this world.

Memory Verse

2 Timothy 2:22 *Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*

Vocabulary

pursue - to follow in order to capture; chase

dynasty - series of rulers from the same family or group

modesty - free from vanity; concerned with decent behavior, clothing, speech

ambition - desire for fame, power, or a goal

polygamy - the practice of having several spouses, especially wives, at one time

QUESTIONS FOR JUDGES/RUTH LESSON 7

All questions are based on the New King James Version of the Bible.

DAY ONE: Read all notes and references.

1. What was helpful to you in studying the life of Gideon?

2. How did God's encouragement of Gideon encourage you?

DAY TWO: Read Judges 9:1-6 and re-read 8:30-31.

3. a. What harmful effect did Gideon's polygamy have on his family after he died?

- b. How can the relationship between parents affect children today?

4. Who escaped being killed? How?

5. a. What did Abimelech want that his father had refused? See Judges 8:22 for help.

- b. Name something that you have wanted very much but did not get.

- c. What kept you from doing whatever it took to get what you wanted?

DAY THREE: Read Judges 9:7-21.

6. Read Jotham's story in Judges 9:7-15 to answer the following questions.

- a. Name the plants which the trees asked to rule over them.

- b. Which plant represents Abimelech?

- c. ? (Thought Question) What do you think is the point of the story?

7. Do you think this story applies today? If so, in what way?

DAY FOUR: Read Judges 9:22-41.

8. a. How long did Abimelech reign over Israel?

b. Fill in the blanks about the problems Abimelech faced during his reign.

God sent _____ between Abimelech and the men of Shechem.

_____, the son of Ebed, tried to overthrow Abimelech.

- c. What did Gaal and his brothers do with the men of Schechem?

9. a. Give the name of the man who sided with Abimelech and what was his job title?

b. What three things did he do to help Abimelech?

10. What is your opinion of the men of Shechem?

Gaal?

Zebul?

DAY FIVE: Read Judges 9:42-56 and re-read Judges 9:16-21.

11. Circle T next to the statements which are true and give the verse where you found it.
Circle F next to the statements which are false and correct each one.

- a. T or F vs. _____ Abimelech and his army attacked and killed the people of Shechem.
b. T or F vs. _____ Abimelech sowed the city with salt.
c. T or F vs. _____ Abimelech burned 1,000 people to death in the tower of Shechem.
d. T or F vs. _____ Abimelech burned 1,000 more people in the tower of Thebez.
e. T or F vs. _____ Abimelech lived happily ever after.
f. ? (Thought Question) Why do you think Abimelech sowed the city with salt?

12. How did God repay the wickedness of Abimelech (verse 56)?

13. What was the “curse of Jotham” that came upon the men of Shechem?

VOCABULARY FOR JUDGES/RUTH LESSON 7

***"The more words you know, the more clearly and powerfully you will think...
and the more ideas you will invite into your mind."***

— Wilfred Funk

DAY ONE: Write the definition of each vocabulary word.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

DAY TWO: Write three sentences using three different vocabulary words from this lesson.

1.

2.

3.

DAY THREE: Circle the word's synonym(s). (Synonym is a word/phrase that means the same thing.)

- | | | | | | | | |
|----|-----------------|-------|----------|-------|----------|-------|-----------|
| 1. | pursue | | chase | | follow | | hide |
| 2. | modesty | | discreet | | humility | | chastity |
| 3. | ambition | | laziness | | desire | | unconcern |

DAY FOUR: Match the word to its meaning.

<u>Word</u>	<u>Definition</u>
pursue	series of rulers from the same family or group
modesty	the practice of having several spouses, especially wives at one time
dynasty	
polygamy	free from vanity; concerned with decent behavior, clothing and speech
ambition	desire for fame, power, or a goal

DAY FIVE: Review previous vocabulary words. Try to work from memory.

Fill in the Blank: Review previous vocabulary word(s). Try to work from memory.
Fill in the blanks with the correct word from the Word Bank.

- _____ - kind treatment to someone who has no right to it
- _____ - God's arrangement of everything that happens
- _____ - the offspring of ancestors
- _____ - something that interferes with movement or progress
- _____ - to speak or act as if unsure
- _____ - to criticize sharply
- _____ - a victory or success
- _____ - to tempt or lead away by offering some type of pleasure
- _____ - something that causes someone to do something
- _____ - to control or rule in a cruel way

mercy

impediment

providence

descendant

rebuke

triumph

lure

stumble

motive

oppress