

Gideon: The Judge That Needed Proof

Judges 6

Introduction

In Gideon's time, the people had given up to their surroundings. They had lived among the pagan gods for so long, that they accepted them. It would take a big change for them to turn away from their idols. Have you given up to your surroundings? What compromises have you made with the world? Are your choices of clothes, music, and words based on a desire to please God or your friends? What about your attitudes toward school or authority? If your attitudes are like the people in the world around you, what makes you different?

Even if you have accepted the sinful activities, attitudes, or actions of your family, friends, or neighbors for years, there is still hope. Have you seen sin happening and kept quiet? Have you tried to talk about it, but nothing changed? Don't be like the people of Israel and just accept things the way they are. If you have a friend that uses the Lord's name in vain, have you asked her not to do that? Does she still do it anyway? You would have a choice to make. You can tell her that you will not spend time with her if she continues, or you can keep quiet and accept it.

If you are in a situation where you need to make a stand for God, look to others who can pray for you and encourage you. The Lord is your strength. Trust Him and you will be helped (Psalm 28:7). Begin to pray and keep your heart and ears open.

Outline of Judges Chapter 6

- I. Cycle Five - Judges 6:1-10
- II. Call of Gideon - Judges 6:11-24
- III. Stand-off with Baal and His Followers
- Judges 6:25-35
- IV. Having Doubt -
Judges 6:36-40

I. Cycle Five - Judges 6:1-10

The Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian. Again, the people turned to things God calls evil. God does not support **destructive** ways. He has made His people in His image and with His characteristics. Worshiping false gods and marrying people who worship false gods is evil, and it destroys character. God is offended by these actions. In response, He removed His protection. When God's protection is no longer present, evil has easy access. In the rain, you will get wet without the protection of an umbrella. God's hand is that umbrella, and when He removes His hand, there is nothing to keep the rain from pouring down on you and soaking you to the bone. In the same way, the pagan nations were like the rain, ready and willing to drench the Israelites with evil pleasure. However, the true purpose of the Israelites being 'drenched' was to discipline and correct God's people.

The Midianites were native desert people. In Scripture, they are also referred to as Ishmaelites. Joseph was sold to Midianites (Genesis 37:28). Moses shepherded among the Midianites and married a Midianite woman (Exodus 3:1). The Midianites had been living beside Israel without threat. But, while Israel was busy acting sinfully, the Midianites were growing stronger in numbers. They began to control the tribe of Manasseh and Israel was unable to fight back. Eventually, the Israelites were so overwhelmed by the Midianites that they hid in caves in the mountains, huddled together in strongholds, and tried to grow whatever food they could to survive. Midianites purposefully raided the Israelites at harvest time to keep them weak and hungry.

After forty years, the people finally cried out to God. Why do you think they waited so long? Did they feel too guilty? Had they forgotten

about God? Today we know, *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness* (1 John 1:9). In response to His people's cries, God sent an unnamed prophet who recited to them the cycle they kept repeating. The verdict was that they had not obeyed God's voice.

II. Call of Gideon - Judges 6:11-24

The Angel of the Lord came and sat under the terebinth (oak) tree. There are many references to the terebinth tree in Scripture. Right before Joshua died, he called all the tribes, elders and judges to come to him in Schechem. There, all the people made a covenant to only follow the Lord their God. Joshua placed a stone as a sign of their covenant under the oak tree by the sanctuary of the Lord saying, *Behold, this stone shall be a witness to us, for it has heard all the words of the Lord which He spoke to us. It shall therefore be a witness to you, lest you deny your God* (Joshua 24:27). The Angel called out to Gideon from under the same type of tree, as if He were the stone Himself, a witness to the fact that the people had not kept their covenant.

The Angel called to Gideon, *The Lord is with you, you mighty man of **valor***. Now, Gideon was threshing wheat in a hidden place because he feared the Midianites taking what little wheat he had. From his response to the Angel, he must have been thinking about how hard life was for his people. Why did he have to hide? Where was the God his ancestors had spoken about, who had delivered His people? Gideon heard, *The Lord is with you*, but he responded, *if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us?* He was thinking of himself as part of his people. The Lord, however, set Gideon apart from his people. He chose to work through Gideon and says *Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man* (6:16). In that moment, the Angel of the Lord said something that stopped Gideon in his tracks. This visitor had claimed to be the Lord God of Israel when He said *I will be with you!*

Gideon thought that God had abandoned them. Have you ever felt alone in times of trouble. Have you doubted God? God's message to you today is the same as it was to Gideon, *The Lord is with you.*

There is another time in Scripture, when a man doubted that an angel's words were true. However, the outcome was very different. Zechariah was told his wife would have a baby, but he questioned the angel. He was struck **mute** until his son was born because of his doubt (Luke 1:11-20). Note the difference between Gideon and Zechariah. One was a **devout** priest of the Lord and instantly recognized his visitor was supernatural. The other was a young man, *the least* in his father's house, who had grown up surrounded by pagan worship. The Angel of the Lord tolerated Gideon's response because He knew Gideon's heart as He knows the hearts of all men (1 Chronicles 28:9). What an important lesson this is to us! Today, many approach God as if He were a buddy. They fail to show God the respect He is due. We do not need to fear God with dread and horror. We do, however, need to fear Him with awe and respect. He is a friend to us, yes, but He is and always will be God, above all else.

Gideon asked his next question using the same language his ancestor Abraham had used when he saw the Lord at the terebinth trees of Mamre (Genesis 18:1-3). He said, *If now I have found favor in your sight...do not depart from here, I pray, until I come to you...* Gideon presented an offering, it went up in a flame, the Angel disappeared, and Gideon was terrified. For the first time, he realized he was dealing with the Almighty God, the God of Israel, and he built an altar to the Lord.

III. Stand-off with Baal and His Followers - Judges 6:25-35

Later the same day, the Lord told Gideon to tear down his father's altar to Baal and the wooden image beside it. The image beside Baal was also known as an Asherah pole, and it

represented one of the pagan goddesses. This one was most likely Ashtoreth, the goddess of war and fertility. However, being a false and **impotent** god, she had not provided food for them nor success in war.

We often look to impotent gods. Some examples are how we look (appearance), how many friends we have (popularity), how many people follow us on a social network like facebook (fame), and on and on. At first, these “idols” seem to bring us happiness in life, but they are worthless in the spiritual life.

Gideon was afraid of how his family and neighbors would react, but he obeyed God anyway. He knew the people would try to stop him if he did this during the day, so he waited until night to carry out God’s instructions. In the morning, as he expected, the people were furious. Even though Gideon had destroyed his father’s idols and killed his bull, Joash protected his son. Perhaps Joash knew in his heart that Gideon was right. He held his neighbors back by telling them to let Baal defend himself, and he gave his son a nick name, Jerubbaal, which means “let Baal plead against him, because his altar has been torn down.” In other words, they were calling him the one that went up against Baal. Since Gideon was alive and doing well, his nick name was meant to mock (make fun of) Baal.

Next, we read that Israel’s enemies joined together to invade the land. They crossed the Jordan and encamped in the Valley of Jezreel, about 25 miles from Ophrah. *The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon* and an army of 32,000 Israelites followed Gideon when he *blew the trumpet*.

IV. Having Doubt - Judges 6:36-40

On the eve of Gideon’s attack, he asked God for another proof that God would save Israel by his hand. God gave the proof for which Gideon asked, leaving the fleece wet with the ground around it dry. Gideon asked for a second proof and that God would not be angry

with him. This time he asked for the fleece to stay dry and all the surrounding ground to be wet. Again, God gave Gideon the proof for which he asked.

Do not be afraid to go to God with your doubts. Having doubts does not mean you are not a believer. Jesus said if you have faith even as tiny as a mustard seed (which is about the size of a flea!), you can move mountains (Matthew 17:20). A father brought his son to Jesus for healing and Jesus said, *all things are possible to him who believes*. The father cried out to Jesus with tears saying, *Lord, I believe; help my unbelief* (Mark 9:22, 23). We all face doubts. Will you cry out to the Lord when you are feeling doubt? The world will continue to lure you away from your God with its false idols. Your deliverer, Jesus, is only

Prayer

God, please protect me from the temptations of false gods. Help me to keep my eyes on You and to trust in You above all else.

Memory Verse

1 John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

Vocabulary

destructive - designed or tending to hurt or destroy; harmful; damaging

valor - personal bravery in the face of danger

mute - silent; unable to speak

devout - devoted to religion or religious duties

impotent - lacking in power or strength

QUESTIONS FOR JUDGES/RUTH LESSON 6

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

DAY ONE: Read all notes and references.

1. What impressed you most about Gideon?

2. ♥(Heart Question) From what you have learned in this lesson, what action might God want you to take?

DAY TWO: Read Judges 7:1-15.

3. a. Why did God say Gideon's army was too large?

- b. What was the first test that sent many men home?

- c. How many went home and how many were left?

4. a. What was the second and final test?

- b. ? (Thought Question) What was the purpose of this test? What do you think it proved?

- c. How many were left after this test?

- d. What did God promise to do with the remaining men?

5. a. What was God's promise to Gideon in verse 9?

- b. How did God encourage Gideon?

- c. How did Gideon respond to God's encouragement?

6. How has God encouraged you this week? How have you responded?

DAY THREE: Read Judges 7:16-25.

7. a. What weapons did Gideon provide for his army? Mark the correct answer below.
- Swords, shields and helmets
 - Trumpets, pitchers, and torches
 - Rifles, sweatbands, and torches
 - Spears, slingshots, and trumpets

b. What did Gideon instruct his men to do with their weapons?

c. What else were they to do? Give verse: _____

d. What was the result?

8. a. Which tribes went to help Gideon fight the Midianites?

b. Which tribe was given a special task? What was it? How successful were they in carrying it out?

DAY FOUR: Read Judges 8:1-21.

9. a. How are verses 1-3 an illustration of Proverbs 15:1?

b. What different kind of answer did Gideon give to the two cities mentioned in verses 5 and 8?

c. What did Gideon do to each of the cities?

10. a. Name the two kings Gideon was chasing.

b. What was the result of Gideon's pursuit? Give verse. _____

11. The following statements are about Gideon and the two kings of Midian. Circle T (true) for the statements which are true and correct the statements which are false.

a. T or F Gideon questioned the two kings about the men they had killed at Tabor.

b. T or F Gideon found out that the two kings had killed his mother.

c. T or F Gideon commanded his eldest son to kill the kings.

- d. T or F Gideon's son, Jether, did not have a sword.
- e. T or F Gideon took the crescent ornaments from the king's necks.

DAY FIVE: Read Judges 8:22-35.

12. a. What did the people of Israel want Gideon to do after the victory?

- b. How did Gideon respond?

13. a. What did Gideon ask the people of Israel to do?

- b. What did Gideon do with what he was given?

- c. Was the result good or bad? Explain.

14. a. How long did Gideon judge Israel?

- b. What happened after Gideon died?

15. Give one way you would like to be like Gideon.

VOCABULARY FOR JUDGES/RUTH LESSON 6

*"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. **mute** silent loud speechless

2. **impotent** powerless weak fierce

3. **valor** braveness courage fear

DAY FOUR: Match the word to its meaning.

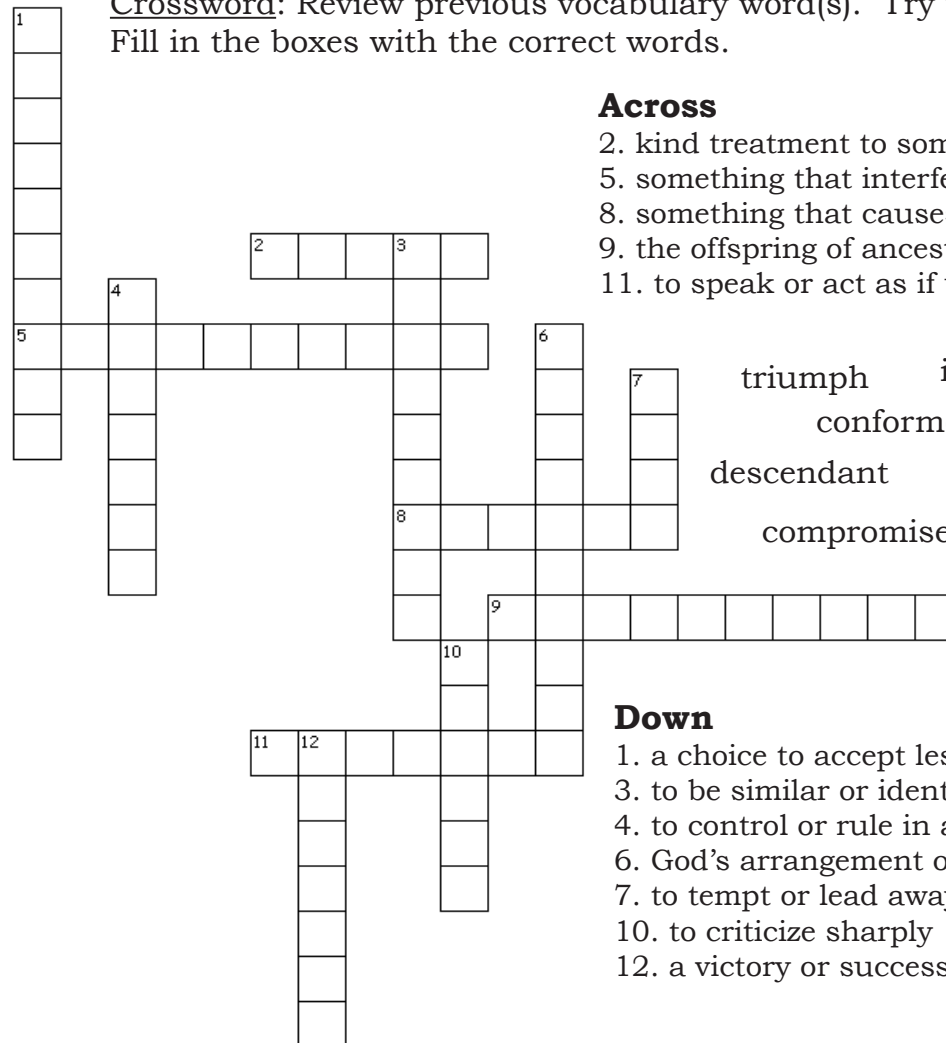
<u>Word</u>	<u>Definition</u>
mute	designed or tending to hurt or destroy; harmful; damaging
valor	silent; unable to speak
devout	lacking in power or strength
destructive	personal bravery in the face of danger
impotent	devoted to religion or religious duties

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

Crossword: Review previous vocabulary word(s). Try to work from memory.
Fill in the boxes with the correct words.

Across

2. kind treatment to someone who has no right to it
5. something that interferes with movement or progress
8. something that causes someone to do something
9. the offspring of ancestors
11. to speak or act as if unsure



- triumph impediment lure
conformed mercy motive
descendant rebuke stumble
compromise oppress providence

Down

1. a choice to accept less than you want to have peace
3. to be similar or identical; to act in agreement
4. to control or rule in a cruel way
6. God's arrangement of everything that happens
7. to tempt or lead away by offering some type of pleasure
10. to criticize sharply
12. a victory or success