

## Study 3 Judges chapters 6-7 From Doubt to Faith

The story of Gideon is most known for Gideon's request for a sign. He puts out a fleece twice asking God to confirm what God had already told Gideon to do. From the account of Gideon in Judges chapters 6 to 8 we see Gideon grow from a man hiding in a winepress to becoming a Judge who rescues Israel from the Midianites and leads Israel for 40 years. Judges 6 begins with the words, "Again the Israelites did evil ..." This reveals a common cycle we see repeated again and again in Judges. God's people mix their worship of God and the worship of the Canaanite gods (this is what "do evil" means). God allows Israel to be oppressed by their enemies so that they return to Him. The people cry out to God for deliverance and God sends them a deliverer/judge. The people then follow God over the lifetime of the judge but then the people once again turn away from God, doing as they please, and the cycle occurs once again.

Read Judges 6:1-17; 33-40; 7:1-4; 8-15

The Midianites raided Israel, taking whatever they wanted and destroying everything else. As a result, the people of Israel were forced to hide in caves. The people struggled just to feed themselves.

1. After reading Judges 6:1-17 what do we learn about Gideon?
2. If it was up to you, would you have chosen Gideon to rescue Israel from her enemies? Why or why not?
3. Compare God's words with those of Gideon in 6:7-15. How do they differ?
4. Throughout the Bible we read about the Holy Spirit coming upon people to enable them to do the things God asks them to do (see 6:34). When the Spirit came upon Gideon he was transformed from a man hiding in a winepress to a leader preparing an army for battle.
  - a) What do you think it looks like for the Spirit of the Lord to come upon a person? Think about other examples in Scripture when the Spirit came upon people.
  - b) When we become a Christian, we are given the Holy Spirit (John 14:15-17; Romans 8:1-9). All Christians experience God the Holy Spirit. Try to recall a time when you know God's Spirit empowered you in a special way. What did you feel? How did you know it was the Holy Spirit at work in and through you?
5. Two times Gideon lays out a fleece overnight to confirm God's guidance. Do you think this laying out of a fleece was necessary? Why or why not?
6. Why do you think God told Gideon to dismiss so many of his soldiers and only fight the Midianites with 300 men?
7. Why do you think God arranged a "divine meeting" for Gideon so that he would overhear two Midianite guards talking (7:9-15)? How does this "divine meeting" differ

from Gideon's demand for signs when he put out the wool fleeces? Do you think we can put out fleeces to God today? Why or why not?

Gideon is transformed through his encounters with God. He learns to trust God, to discern God's voice and discern God's guidance.

If time permits, share with the Group how God is helping you to trust Him more and more.

Notes:

Question 3: Before sending Israel a deliverer, God sends them a prophet (vs. 8). God wants His people to understand WHY they are being oppressed by the Midianites. God assures them that He is with His people. He is for His people. He has delivered His people in the past. But they have not listened to Him (vs. 10). Gideon in 6:13 is convinced that God is not with His people. But God has not abandoned His people, instead they have abandoned Him. God calls Gideon to be the answer to Gideons own prayers for deliverance. God enables Gideon to rescue Israel. At first Gideon is unwilling to believe that God will deliver Israel and rightly sees himself as a poor choice for a deliverer (vs. 15). How often do we only see our own inabilities rather than see what God is able to do?

Question 4:

The Bible contains numerous verses that describe the Spirit coming upon individuals, often in the context of divine empowerment or transformation:

- Exodus 31:3: Bezalel is empowered with wisdom, knowledge and craftsmanship.
- Numbers 11:17: Moses and 70 elders are given wisdom to make judgements.
- Judges 14:19: Samson is given strength to overpower a lion
- 1 Samuel 10:6 Saul is enabled to prophesy and is transformed
- Acts 2:1-4 the disciples are filled with the Spirit and are enabled to speak in tongues as a sign. Following this they are emboldened to proclaim the Gospel.

Question 5 & 7: Even though the story of Gideon is most famous for Gideon's account of laying out fleeces, God did not ask Gideon to do this. God already met Gideon in the person of an angel (6:11-14) and gave him a sign (6:17). We must be careful not to test God (Satan tempted Jesus to test the Father by throwing himself off a high building and demand God the Father catch him (Luke 4:12)). But asking God to confirm what we sense He is saying to us is not necessarily wrong. Sometimes God answers our demand for more "signs", while at other times He expects us to obey Him without the need for signs at all; especially if His Word already clearly tells us what His will is for us.

God knew Gideon was fearful of attacking the Midianite army (7:9-10). Therefore, He arranged a divine encounter. God had already confirmed with Gideon what He wanted Gideon to do (Judges 6:11-14). God assured Gideon that He was with Him. But Gideon questioned God's goodness: "If the Lord is with us" "Where are all his wonders" "the Lord has abandoned us". Through this story we see Gideon grow in his trust of God.