



Ridgedale Baptist Church

JUDGES • THE COWARDLY LION • JUDGES 6:11-16 • 6/26/2022

MAIN POINT

Despite Israel's unfaithfulness and Gideon's initial fear, God called and encouraged Gideon to deliver His people. God's patience and persistence with Gideon illustrates His patience and persistence with Israel (and us).

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Are you a type of person who is comfortable with risk? Explain.

Are there certain areas of life in which you are more comfortable with risk than others?

What about spiritually? Do you think God has ever asked you to do anything risky?

It's easy to get frustrated, scared, or apprehensive when we think God is asking us to do something that seems impossible. And He often does just that. When God appeared to Gideon and called him to be Israel's deliverer, Gideon had his doubts. He doubted whether it was truly God who was calling him, and he doubted whether he had really heard God's instructions correctly. One cannot be too hard on Gideon for his doubts; after all, what God was calling Gideon to do was risky and dangerous, and Gideon was not by nature a man dripping with courage. Nevertheless, once Gideon's doubts were dealt with, he was bold in obeying the Lord even though he did not know what the outcome would be.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JUDGES 6:11-13.

These verses set the stage for God to call forth Gideon to lead the Israelite people. What was the spiritual climate of Israel like before Gideon came on the scene?

Being three weeks into this series now, what patterns are emerging? What conclusions can we draw about this time in Israel's history?

Judges 6 opens with yet another Israelite relapse into Baal worship. This time the Lord handed the people over to be oppressed by several groups of semi-nomadic peoples. The oppression included elements of the classic conflict between nomadic herders and sedentary farmers. The result was that the Israelites lost their crops, sinking them into poverty. They cried out to God for help. God then reminded His people through a prophet of the correlation between their weakness before enemies and their disobedience to Him (see 6:7-10). At the same time, however, God also was preparing to call forth another deliverer to help them.

Where is Gideon when the Angel of the Lord finds him? What does this tell us about Gideon?

The angel's statement confuses Gideon. How does Gideon see his circumstances differently than the Angel? What different feelings was Gideon dealing with in this moment?

The first thing we are told about Gideon's demeanor is that he was afraid (v. 11). While the Midianites were attacking Israel, Gideon was hiding behind a wine vat. As we have seen through this series so far, God punished Israel for their own good and out of His love for them. Gideon simply did not see it this way. He felt that the God who pulled His people out of Egypt through great leaders like Moses had abandoned them. Gideon was looking for Moses, but God was calling Gideon to be the Moses of His people.

Despite Gideon's visible fear, the Lord addressed him as "mighty warrior." How was the Lord's estimation of Gideon quite different than Gideon's estimation of himself?

Gideon evoked the name of Moses as a great leader of Israel. If you are familiar with Moses, what parallels are there between Gideon's and Moses' callings?

Clearly, Gideon was a fearful man. Yet the point of God's calling was not who Gideon was, but in who God could make him. Interestingly, Gideon invoked Moses as a great deliverer of Israel. Yet when God called Moses (in the land of Midian no less), Moses questioned God's choice. Moses was timid and fearful (Ex. 3:11). What we are meant to see through the examples of these weak men is the power of God through the faith of His servants. God's power is made perfect in human weakness (2 Cor. 12:9). From Moses, to Gideon, to the upper room after the resurrection,

the Bible is filled with God's calling coming into contact with human weakness and shining through it. God is bigger than our fear.

Where in your life and walk with the Lord do you identify with Moses and Gideon? Has the Lord ever asked you to do something that left you feeling under-qualified and overwhelmed? What are these experiences meant to teach us about God?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JUDGES 6:14-16.

How did the Angel of the Lord shift Gideon's focus away from himself?

The Lord addressed Gideon not in terms of who he was, but in terms of what the grace of God could make of him. Gideon needed to stop focusing on how terrible the Midianites were and on how small he was. Instead, he needed to have confidence that God could save again. More than that, he needed to have faith that God could use him to deliver the Israelites.

What excuses did Gideon give God to make his case that God had called the wrong man? What was God's response to these excuses?

How can focusing on our family lineage or personal background hinder our walk with the Lord? How can our weaknesses emphasize God's provision, strength, and glory?

Where do we see God's patience and persistence in His response to Gideon? How have you met the character of God this way in your own life?

Twice in verses 14 and 16, God reaffirmed His call and purpose in Gideon's life despite Gideon's protests. Gideon was only looking at himself. Of course Gideon, in his own power, did not have the skills necessary to defeat the people standing against Israel. But the Book of Judges shows us the power of God to overcome the deepest human problems. The biggest problem the people of Israel faced was not the people of the land, but their sin-sick hearts. Their sin led them away from God and into more sin; looking to God and seeing God work through appointed deliverers was the way out. Gideon's example shows us the power of God to work even through the most imperfect servants.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What are the reasons you have, at times, doubted God's purpose in your life like Gideon? What is God able to do in His power to overcome your weakness? What promises has He given you in Scripture?

When you find yourself timid and fearful, how can this group be an encouragement to you to trust God? Is anyone dealing with fear and timidity right now?

Being open and honest about our struggles is a great way to help others see God working in our lives. What non-believing friend might be willing to hear your story of struggles and the perseverance of faith?

PRAYER

Praise God for His ability to work in our lives despite our weakness. Ask that your own weakness would not lead you to fear, but to trust in God who will deliver you from fear.

COMMENTARY

| JUDGES 6:11-16

6:11-12. Confrontation. The scene shifts to one apparently insignificant member of that nation who was tucked away from harm, hiding his wheat... from the Midianites. He was attempting the almost impossible task of threshing the grain in a partially enclosed winepress. Ordinarily, threshing was done on hilltops so the mixture of chaff and grain could be tossed into the air, allowing the wind to scatter the husks while the grain fell straight down and gathered into a mound. The oppression of the Midianites reduced Israel to such pathetic activities.

It is to this unlikely young man that the angel of the Lord came. His name was Gideon (“one who cuts down” in an agricultural context; Block renders the name “hacker” or “hewer”), and he was the son of Joash the Abiezrite. The greeting that the angel of the Lord gave him was startling: The Lord is with you, mighty warrior. Gideon’s present circumstances (and undoubtedly his appearance!) did not evoke an image anything close to what a “mighty warrior” would project. Since Gideon did not react to the title, it is likely that he did not take the introduction seriously.

6:13. Complaint. Gideon probably did not discern anything supernatural in this being’s demeanor or appearance. He certainly did not respond in awe, but he brought up the age-old theological complaint about the problem of evil: If God is all-powerful and all-good, why does he allow evil to exist, especially against his chosen people? Two points are significant here.

First, Gideon regarded Israel’s bondage to be entirely God’s fault, with no thought given to the role Israel played in bringing judgment upon herself. Second, Gideon had not listened carefully to the angels’ address that the Lord was with him (“you” is singular) and responded with the complaint, If the Lord is with us (pl.), why has all this happened to us (pl.)?

Further, Gideon asked where the age of miracles had gone: Where are all his wonders that our fathers told us about? Entirely unaware of what was to come, Gideon backed himself into a difficult theological corner. To him it certainly did seem that the Lord had abandoned them, but, as he would discover, it is awkward to argue with God about miracles!

6:14. Charge. Rather than engage in theological dispute about the ways of God, the angel, whom we now understand to be the Lord, commissioned Gideon to go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. The rationale was not, of course, that Gideon's strength in itself was adequate to the task; Gideon's strength was to be found in the Lord who declared, Am I not sending you?

6:15. Complaint. After hearing this startling statement, Gideon backed away from his righteous indignation and began to make excuses why he should not get involved: My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family. While the second statement may be true (Gideon being the youngest son), the first statement could hardly be taken seriously, not when—during a time of oppression—Gideon himself was master of ten servants (v. 27), and Joash his father sponsored a Baal worship site for the community (vv. 25-26).

6:16. Commitment. Again the Lord promised his presence with Gideon (I will be with you) and renewed his commission with a promise of overwhelming victory (you will strike down all the Midianites together). Gideon was using the wrong criterion; God has never been limited to social status or human resources, or the lack thereof. Simply put, there is power in God's presence (Matt. 28:20). The effectiveness of the Lord's deliverance does not depend upon the ability of the human deliverer.