

Called

THOUGH GIDEON CONSIDERED HIMSELF INADEQUATE, GOD CALLED HIM TO DELIVER HIS PEOPLE FROM THE MIDIANITES.

Judges 6:1-4,7-16

1 The Israelites did **what was evil** **A** in the sight of the LORD. So the LORD handed them over to **Midian** **B** seven years, **2** and they **oppressed** **C** Israel. Because of Midian, the Israelites made **hiding places** **D** for themselves in the mountains, caves, and strongholds. **3** Whenever the Israelites planted crops, the Midianites, Amalekites, and the **people of the east** **E** came and attacked them. **4** They encamped against them and destroyed the produce of the land, even as far as Gaza. They left nothing for Israel to eat, as well as no sheep, ox, or donkey. [. . .] **7** When the Israelites **cried out** **F** to him because of Midian, **8** the LORD sent a **prophet** **G** to them. He said to them, “This is what the LORD God of Israel says: ‘I brought you out of Egypt and out of the place of slavery. **9** I rescued you from the power of Egypt and the power of all who oppressed you. I drove them out before you and gave you their land. **10** I said to you: I am the LORD your God. Do not fear the gods of the Amorites whose land you live in. But you did not obey me.’” **11** The **angel of the LORD** **H** came, and he sat under the oak that was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash, the Abiezrite. His son Gideon was threshing wheat **in the winepress** **I** in order to hide it from the Midianites. **12** Then the angel of the LORD appeared to him and said, “The LORD is with you, **valiant warrior.**” **13** Gideon said to him, “Please, my lord, if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened? And where are all his wonders that our ancestors told us about? They said, ‘Hasn’t the LORD brought us out of Egypt?’ But now **the LORD has abandoned us** **J** and handed us over to Midian.” **14** The LORD turned to him and said, “Go in the strength you have and deliver Israel from the grasp of Midian. I am sending you!” **15** He said to him, “Please, Lord, how can I deliver Israel? Look, my family is the weakest in Manasseh, and **I am the youngest** **K** in my father’s family.” **16** “But I will be with you,” the LORD said to him. “You will strike Midian down as if it were one man.”

Exploring Key Words

- A** Several judges had already served across Israel (Judg. 3–4). Yet, the nation generally continued to embrace idolatry and the cycle of sin.
- B** Descendants of Abraham through Keturah (Gen. 25:2). They lived east of the Jordan River to the south of Moab.
- C** Israel’s suffering mirrors what Moses described in Deuteronomy 28:15–57.
- D** The Israelites’ deprivation was matched only by their fear. The Midianites forced them out of their homes and into the hills for shelter.
- E** The Amalekites were descendants of Esau (Gen. 36:12). They and the Midianites joined forces with nomadic tribes from the Arabian desert to steal or destroy everything Israel had.
- F** After suffering seven years of terror and deprivation (v. 1), Israel finally turned to God.
- G** Instead of a judge, God sent a prophet (Heb., *nabi*). Prophets were empowered to share the Lord’s message. This was another message of chastisement for ignoring God.
- H** A special messenger from God. Some believe this was a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus.
- I** Threshing made use of the wind, so doing it in an underground winepress would have made the task much more difficult.
- J** “Man of valor” (ESV); “mighty warrior” (NIV). An odd statement considering what Gideon was doing—and why—at that moment.
- K** Gideon blamed God for Israel’s troubles. His sentiments likely reflected many in Israel.
- L** Like Moses (Ex. 3–4), Gideon had plenty of excuses for not leading God’s people. But the Lord assured him that he would not fight alone: “I will be with you” (v. 16).



NOTES

Oppression (Judg. 6:1-4,7-10)

- Because the Israelites again did what was evil in the Lord's sight, He handed them over to the Midianites for seven years. The enemies invaded the land and destroyed their crops, leaving nothing for them to eat.
- When the Israelites cried out to God, He sent an unnamed prophet to tell them they were suffering because of their disobedience.

Commission (Judg. 6:11-14)

- While God sent a prophet to the nation, He met with Gideon in a more personal way. The angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon as he was threshing wheat in a winepress, hiding from the Midianites.
- Gideon questioned why the Israelites were being oppressed, believing that God had abandoned them. He failed to see the impact of Israel's sin.
- Through the angel, the Lord called and commissioned Gideon to deliver His people from the Midianites.

Reassurance (Judg. 6:15-16)

- Gideon reasoned that he couldn't possibly deliver the people, since he was the youngest member of the weakest family in the tribe of Manasseh.
- Despite his excuses to the contrary, the Lord assured Gideon of His presence.

Summary Statements

Though Gideon considered himself inadequate, God called him to deliver His people from the Midianites.

- We can anticipate that when people turn their backs on God, they will experience undesirable consequences.
- We can be encouraged to know that God calls unlikely people to do great things for Him.
- Believers should trust God when being called upon to take a specific action for Him.

Memory Verse

Judges 6:16

Key Doctrine

God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service. (See Judges 14:6; Acts 1:8.)



For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at [goExploreTheBible.com](https://www.goExploreTheBible.com).

ENGAGE

When have you felt inadequate for a task?

Where did you turn for help? (PSG, p. 82)

- We often compare ourselves to others. But this rarely has a positive result. It either leads to pride because we think we are better than others, or it leads to discouragement because we believe others are better than us.
- All of this feels especially confounding when God calls a person to serve Him in some capacity when someone else seems like a better fit. God does this so that when the task is accomplished, He will receive the glory for it. Such was the case with Gideon.

Bonus: What are some words you would use to describe yourself? Why do those words apply?

EXPLORE

OPPRESSION (JUDG. 6:1-4,7-10)

Bonus: How do people respond to desperate situations? How do you respond?

- Once again, the Israelites abandoned the Lord and began worshipping other gods. And as before, the Lord handed them over to their enemies. This time it was the Midianites.
- The Midianites were descendants of Abraham through Keturah. They had been Israel's enemies since Moses led the nation into the region east of the Jordan River (Num. 25:1-18). Like swarming locusts, the Midianites used camels to make decimating, swift strikes on their enemies, leaving little of value behind.
- For seven years, the Israelites existed in constant fear, living in "mountains, caves, and strongholds" because of Midian's lightning strikes. The Midianites were allied with the Amalekites (descendants of Esau) and "people of the east," likely nomads from the Arabian desert region.
- The invaders timed their raids to coincide with Israel's harvest. They would plunder everything they could and lay waste to everything else. Israel's deprivation mirrored Moses's warnings in Deuteronomy 28.
- After seven years, Israel finally cried out to the Lord for help. Rather than a judge who would deliver, He sent them a prophet to rebuke. This unnamed prophet reminded God's people of all that He had done for them—and how they had abandoned His covenant. In His grace, God exposed Israel's sin and the reasons for their suffering, while giving them a chance to repent and be restored.

What outcomes should we anticipate if we live in disobedience to God? (PSG, p. 87)

COMMISSION (JUDG. 6:11-14)

How might our circumstances impact our response to God's calling? (PSG, p. 88)

- Verse 11 introduces Gideon, the judge whose name meant "to mutilate" or "to hack." God found Gideon "threshing wheat in the winepress." The winepress would have been a safer place than a more exposed threshing floor, but it would have made the job more difficult. Apparently, Gideon shared the same fear the rest of the Israelites had.
- The "angel of the LORD" called Gideon a "valiant warrior." This was an amazing statement considering where Gideon was at that moment. But the angel (possible a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus) knew how God would use this timid farmer.
- Hearing the angel's greeting, Gideon's frustrations bubbled over. He demanded to know why God had abandoned His people after doing such great things for their ancestors. The angel simply told Gideon to "go in the strength you have" to rescue Israel from the Midianites.

Bonus: Why do people get frustrated with God? How do you think God feels about that?

REASSURANCE (JUDG. 6:15-16)

Bonus: What is the benefit of tackling hard jobs?

- Gideon's fear accentuated his sense of inadequacy. How could he deliver Israel? He was the youngest child in one of Manasseh's most obscure families. From his point of view, he did not have the credentials or the ability to deliver Israel.
- However, Gideon did have the promise of God's presence: "I will be with you." With God's help, an overwhelming enemy would be cut down to size.

How does the assurance of God's presence negate our excuse of inadequacy? (PSG, p. 89)

CHALLENGE

As a group, discuss ways to encourage one another to do great things for God.

How can believers be encouraged by the truth that God calls unlikely people to do great things for Him? (PSG, p. 90)

Challenge individuals to reflect on what it means to trust God.

How can doubting God be turned into trusting God? (PSG, p. 90)

FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week's study.

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 89)

Do a word study to gain a better understanding of a passage.

Scripture is full of “calling” experiences where God selected servants to carry out kingdom work. Study the following passages: Genesis 12:1-4; Exodus 3-4; 1 Kings 19:19-21; Isaiah 6:1-9; Jeremiah 1; Jonah 1; Luke 1:26-38; Mark 1:16-20; and Acts 9:1-9. Identify similarities and differences. Note the particular ways each person was called and how they responded. Examine your own calling from God. ***Have you experienced a specific call from Him? How have you responded?***

Instruct adults to complete the Bible Skill activity on page 89 of the PSG. After a few minutes, allow them to share what they found. Discuss the questions at the end of the activity. Challenge adults to talk with God about His calling on their lives.

OBJECT LESSON: FLOWERPOTS

Prior to the session, find two small clay flowerpots: one that is new and one that is cracked. Also, secure some potting soil and a small plant.

During the session, put the new pot inside a pie pan and pour water into it. Do the same for the cracked pot. Say: *Some of you may feel like this cracked pot. Your flaws and mistakes keep you from being used by God.* Fill the broken pot with soil and a small plant. Pour some more water into the pot. Say: *Sometimes the things we consider flaws and mistakes are the things God uses for His glory.*

Encourage volunteers to share times when God used something they considered a weakness to make a difference in their lives or the life of someone else. Affirm that Gideon knew exactly how they felt. Remind them that God’s opinion matters more than anything we think about ourselves. Challenge adults to allow God to use them, despite their brokenness and their feelings of inferiority.

DIG DEEPER

GOD AND GIDEON

A closer look at the episode that begins in Judges 6:16 helps us to understand more about the Lord’s presence in Gideon’s life. The account also enables believers to appreciate the value of worshiping Him.

The Lord made Himself known to the nation through a prophet, but He appeared to Gideon in a more personal way. He revealed Himself through an angel who actually spoke to Gideon. The conversation focused on God’s call for Gideon to liberate the Israelites from their oppressors. In response, Gideon displayed apprehension, telling the Lord that he did not measure up to the criteria of a successful military leader. When he looked at himself, Gideon fell far short of the “valiant warrior” that God saw.

The presence of the Lord made all the difference to Gideon. Granted, he still struggled with his weaknesses. Only toward the end of the story did he see himself as a leader who could defeat Israel’s enemies. But, each step of the way, the Lord assured him with the promise of His presence.

In time, Gideon proved that the presence of the Lord was more than enough to earn the victory. In fact, his concerns about himself faded as his eagerness to worship the Lord took hold of him. He didn’t want the Lord to leave him.

While the Lord waited, Gideon rushed to prepare food as an offering. When he returned, he offered it, and the Lord accepted it. Fire gushed from the stone on which the food had been placed, consuming the food in its flames (Judg. 6:19-21). Worshiping the Lord that day gave Gideon the confirmation that he needed to move forward, albeit hesitantly, in his call.

Spending time with God had a lasting effect on Gideon. He showed it in the way that he followed the Lord’s instruction about destroying his father’s altars. He lived up to the meaning of his name—cutter—by cutting them down. Then he built an altar to the Lord. From there, he continued to serve God faithfully.