

Trust

GOD PROVIDED VICTORY AND BROUGHT HIMSELF
GLORY THROUGH GIDEON'S ARMY.

Judges 7:1-8,19-23

1 Jerubbaal **A** (that is, Gideon) and all the troops who were with him, got up early and camped beside the **spring of Harod**. **B** The camp of Midian was north of them, below the hill of Moreh, in the valley. **2** The LORD said to Gideon, "You have too many troops for me to hand the Midianites over to them, or else Israel might **elevate themselves** **C** over me and say, 'I saved myself.' **3** Now announce to the troops, 'Whoever is **fearful and trembling** **D** may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.'" So twenty-two thousand of the troops turned back, but ten thousand remained. **4** Then the LORD said to Gideon, "There are **still too many** **E** troops. Take them down to the water, and I will test them for you there. If I say to you, 'This one can go with you,' he can go. But if I say about anyone, 'This one cannot go with you,' he cannot go." **5** So he brought the troops down to the water, and the LORD said to Gideon, "Separate everyone who **laps water with his tongue** **F** like a dog. Do the same with everyone who kneels to drink." **6** The number of those who lapped with their hands to their mouths was three hundred men, and all the rest of the troops knelt to drink water. **7** The LORD said to Gideon, "**I will deliver you** **G** with the three hundred men who lapped and hand the Midianites over to you. But everyone else is to go home." **8** So Gideon sent all the Israelites to their tents but kept the three hundred troops, who took the provisions and their rams' horns. The camp of Midian was below him in the valley. [. . .] **19** Gideon and the hundred men who were with him went to the outpost of the camp at the beginning of the **middle watch** **H** after the sentries had been stationed. They blew their **rams' horns** **I** and broke the pitchers that were in their hands. **20** The three companies blew their rams' horns and shattered their pitchers. They held their torches in their left hands and their rams' horns to blow in their right hands, and they shouted, "A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!" **21** Each Israelite took his position around the camp, and the entire Midianite army began to run, and they cried out as they fled. **22** When Gideon's men blew their three hundred rams' horns, the LORD caused the men in the whole army to **turn on each other** **J** with their swords. They fled to Acacia House in the direction of Zererah as far as the border of Abel-meholah near Tabbath. **23** Then the men of Israel were called from **Naphtali, Asher, and Manasseh**, **K** and they pursued the Midianites.

Exploring Key Words

- A** In Hebrew, the name meant "let the Baal contend." Gideon earned the name when he tore down Baal's altar (Judg. 6:25-32).
- B** In Hebrew, "Harod" relates to "trembling." The Midianite army camped about four miles north near the hill of Moreh.
- C** "Vaunt themselves" (KJV); "boast over me" (ESV); "boast against me" (NIV).
- D** "Trembles with fear" (NIV). God had said fear was a reason soldiers could stay home during a war (Deut. 20:5-9). It would affect overall morale and displayed a lack of faith in God.
- E** Despite losing 22,000 soldiers to fear, God said the remaining 10,000 still needed to be reduced. God's test would whittle the number down to three hundred (vv. 7-8).
- F** Most likely this test focused on vigilance. Soldiers who brought the water to their mouths could stay alert. Those who put their face down to the water could not.
- G** God reduced the army to prove that He would bring victory. This is a common Old Testament theme (Deut. 20:4; 2 Chron. 20:15; Prov. 21:31; Isa. 41:14-16; Jer. 42:11; Zech. 8:13).
- H** Between 10 p.m. and 2 a.m. Only a few sentries guarding the camp's perimeter would be awake.
- I** The Hebrew word is *shophar*. The noise of these trumpets and the crashing jars, along with the torches disoriented the Midianite soldiers.
- J** God used the enemy to destroy itself in chaos, while the Israelites watched.
- K** Possibly the soldiers back at Harod or men called from nearby tribes. Some scholars believe Gideon was violating God's directions by enlisting help beyond the three hundred.



TALKING POINTS

NOTES

Too Many (Judg. 7:1-3)

- As Gideon and his army prepared to attack the Midianites, the Lord told him he had too many troops. God didn't want the Israelites to think they could save themselves by their own might.
- When Gideon told the troops that whoever was afraid could leave, twenty-two thousand men went home and only ten thousand remained.

Still Too Many (Judg. 7:4-8)

- The Lord ordered a test to reduce the troops even more. He instructed Gideon to lead his remaining troops to the water and to separate those who drank by kneeling down to put their faces in the water from those who used their hands to bring water to their mouths.
- The three hundred men who lapped water from their hands would compose Gideon's army.

Just Right (Judg. 7:19-23)

- Gideon's army defeated the Midianites with only rams' horns, jars, torches, and shouting. In the noise and chaos, the Midianites started killing one another as the Israelites watched.
- After the battle, men from the tribes of Naphtali, Asher, and Manasseh joined the pursuit of the Midianites. Still, God made it clear that He was the One who brought the victory to Israel.

Summary Statements

God provided victory and brought Himself glory through Gideon's army.

- Believers dishonor God when they seek the glory that belongs to Him alone.
- Believers need to trust that God's way of doing things is always best.
- Believers should pray for God to do what only He can do.

Memory Verse

Judges 7:2

Key Doctrine

God the Father

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. (See Psalm 47:8; Job 42:2.)



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

ENGAGE

Why do stories of people rising from humble circumstances to achieve success resonate so strongly with us? (PSG, p. 91)

- A “Cinderella story” refers to someone who has come from obscurity to surprisingly gain significant recognition or success.
- Most people enjoy a good Cinderella story. Someone like Abraham Lincoln, who came from a humble background to become president, is an example of a Cinderella story.
- In the Bible, God often used unlikely people to do extraordinary things so He would receive the glory.

Bonus: What is your favorite “Cinderella story,” either real or fictional? Why?

EXPLORE

TOO MANY (JUDG. 7:1-3)

Bonus: How often does fear determine your decisions? Why is that dangerous?

- In Judges 7:1, the writer referred to Gideon as Jerubbaal. This name meant “Baal contends” and refers to Gideon destroying an altar to Baal in Judges 6:25-32.
- Later, Gideon enlisted an army of thirty-two thousand men and camped at the spring of Harod. This was about five miles south of the Midianite camp at the hill of Moreh.
- Despite being outnumbered four to one by Midian, God said Israel’s army was too big. He knew that if He gave the Israelites the victory with thirty-two thousand troops, they would boast about their own power and abilities. They would steal the credit that only God deserved.
- So, God told Gideon to release any man who was “fearful and trembling.” When he did, Gideon saw twenty-two thousand of his thirty-two thousand men walk away. With only ten thousand, Israel was now outnumbered twelve to one.

In what ways might we try to do God’s work by our might and for our glory? (PSG, p. 94)

STILL TOO MANY (JUDG. 7:4-8)

Bonus: What makes it hard to believe that God always has our best interests in mind?

- God wasn’t done downsizing Gideon’s army. He was going to leave no doubt as to who was bringing the deliverance to His people.
- To whittle the numbers down further, God told Gideon to “test” the remaining men based on how they drank water. The three hundred who scooped up the water in their hands and brought it to their mouths could stay. The ninety-seven hundred who put their faces into the water were sent back to the camp.

- Some scholars suggest this was a test of vigilance. The main thing to remember, though, is that God reduced the army to demonstrate His power and glory.

When have you had to trust God despite not understanding what He was doing or asking? (PSG, p. 96)

JUST RIGHT (JUDG. 7:19-23)

Bonus: What is something only God can do in your life right now? What keeps you from trusting Him with that?

- Gideon divided his men into three groups of one hundred. He equipped each man with a rams’ horn (known as a *shophar*) in one hand and an empty pitcher with a torch inside of it in the other hand.
- During the third watch (between 10 p.m. and 2 a.m.), Gideon’s men blew their trumpets, smashed their pitchers, held up their torches, and screamed.
- The confused Midianites thought they were surrounded by a massive army and fell into chaos. In the ensuing bedlam, the Lord caused all of the Midianites to begin attacking each other with their swords.
- As the enemy fled, Gideon called upon men from Naphtali, Asher, and Manasseh to pursue the fleeing Midianites. It is not clear if God had given Gideon His blessing to call these new men. It is possible that Gideon called these men into service despite God’s directions to use only three hundred.

How should knowing that God acts in unpredictable ways impact how we live? (PSG, p. 98)

CHALLENGE

As a group, discuss what it looks like to do God’s work by one’s own might and for one’s own glory.

What results from such an approach? (PSG, p. 99)

Challenge individuals to examine their lives and to identify areas where they are struggling to trust God.

Why is it sometimes difficult to trust that God’s ways of doing things are always best? (PSG, p. 99)

FURTHER DISCUSSION



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

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 98)

Respond emotionally to a passage from Scripture.

Gideon had his doubts when God said He would deliver Israel through him. He also may have wondered why God so drastically reduced his army. Prayerfully consider times when you had questions about what God was doing. ***How do you tend to respond when God doesn't make sense in your life? What can you do to trust Him more fully?***

Write "PREDICT" on the board as an acrostic. Encourage adults to share words related to predicting using the letters in the word. Record their responses. Point out that we like knowing the path of our lives, but God often sends us in unpredictable directions. Direct adults to complete the Bible Skill activity on page 98 of the PSG. After a few minutes, talk about how they respond when God doesn't make sense. Remind them that trust is vital in our relationship with Him.

OBJECT LESSON: FLASHLIGHT

Prior to class, secure a small flashlight. During the session, turn on the flashlight while the lights are still on in the room. Ask: ***Does this seem like a significant source of light right now? Why?*** Discuss responses.

Enlist a volunteer to turn off the lights. Turn on the flashlight and note how a small light can illuminate an entire room. Encourage adults to share how even a little light makes them feel after being in the dark.

Explain that Gideon had three hundred men equipped with torches. Share this from page 97 of the PSG: *In a normal nighttime military maneuver, only someone at the front of a company would have been carrying a lit torch. Gideon's three hundred men appeared to be three hundred companies surrounding the Midianites.*

Discuss what that might have looked like and felt like when all those men broke their jars and shouted at the top of their lungs. Affirm that God can always be trusted to help His people.

DIG DEEPER

THE "WEAPONS" OF WAR

The tools used by Gideon's army glorified the Lord because they were not impressive weapons of war. Under the Lord's leadership, Gideon and his three hundred troops attacked the massive Midianite army with everyday items, like torches and clay pitchers.

Each soldier also carried a ram's horn trumpet, known as a *shophar*. The *shophar* produced no more than two or three notes, but the Israelites associated it with worshiping God. For example, a *shophar* announced the return of Moses from Mount Sinai and caused the Israelites to tremble (Ex. 19:16-19). In the wilderness, priests sounded the trumpet on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 25:9), at the beginning of the new moon festivals (Ps. 81:3) and during the Year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:10).

The Israelites also used rams' horn trumpets in other pivotal situations. In times of war, they blew a *shophar* as they engaged in battle. When Joshua led the Israelites to march around Jericho, he directed each of them to blow a ram's horn (Josh. 6:4). As noted, the

trumpets played a critical role in the battle between Gideon's troops and the much larger Midianite army (Judg. 7:19-23). And the Israelites heard it when they celebrated the rule of King Solomon (1 Kings 1:34). They also blew the ram's horn when they declared Jehu as king (2 Kings 9:13).

After the Babylonian exile, Nehemiah ordered the people to be vigilant against their enemies as they rebuilt the wall around Jerusalem. The signal for trouble that would bring the people running involved blowing a ram's horn trumpet (Neh. 4:18-20).

God used the sensory onslaught of blaring trumpets, shattering pitchers, flaming torches, and screaming soldiers to confuse and terrify the Midianites. God still takes pleasure in using simple things (and common people) to accomplish His purposes.