

Life Lesson 49
Gideon's Battle
Text: Judges 7

Introduction

The Israelites kept going around in the circle: Sin, suffering, supplication, salvation. This time the Midianites had made them miserable, and they called out to God to save them. God sent Gideon to be the next judge to deliver them from the cruel Midianites.

The Story

The sound of the trumpet echoed throughout the land. Gideon blew the war song on the horn. It meant, "Come on guys, let's fight!" He sent messengers to the tribes of Zebulan, Asher and Naphtali to blow the same tune.

The cry went out through the land, "Bring all the men you can find and we'll fight the Midianites."

The people came out in droves -- 32,000 of them! They were ready to get rid of those pesky Midianites once and for all.

But Gideon began having some second thoughts. Sure, 32,000 Israelites came to fight, but the Midianites covered the land like grasshoppers.

If he had really trusted God completely, he wouldn't have been worried, because God said He would deliver them, and God can do anything. Those Midianites were no problem to God.

"Don't get mad at me, Lord," Gideon prayed. "If you are really going to deliver us from the Midianites, give me a sign. I'll put this fleece of wool on the floor and if in the morning the dew is only on the fleece, with none on the ground, I'll know for sure that you will give us a

victory.”

God already told Gideon He would deliver them, but He was patient with Gideon. He did just as Gideon asked. In the morning the fleece was wet while the ground around it was dry. In fact, it was so wet that Gideon squeezed a whole bowlful of water out of it. That surely should have satisfied him.

“Please, don’t get mad, Lord,” Gideon prayed again. “Show me another sign. This time I’ll put out a fleece and if you want me to lead the Israelites in battle, make the fleece dry and the ground all around it wet.”

How silly! God told him to do it, and proved it with a miracle. Still Gideon wanted another sign. God again patiently did as Gideon asked and made the fleece dry while the ground was wet.

At last Gideon agreed to do as God said. He gathered together all the men he could find and they marched close to the place where the Midianites were camped. They were badly outnumbered, but they had 32,000 men. At least they had a chance.

Then God told Gideon something that must have shocked him, something he didn’t want to hear.

“You have too many men with you,” God told Gideon.

Too many! Gideon must have felt like reminding God that they were still outnumbered. They could use twice as many men.

God knew what He was doing. “If you win the battle now, the men will be proud,” God told Gideon. “They will say, ‘We didn’t need God’s help. We defeated those Midianites ourselves. We’re pretty tough, aren’t we?’”

God knew how people are, didn't He? That's just the way people do to this day. God gives some people special talents and abilities. Do they thank Him for it and give Him the glory? No, they say, "I'm really smart," or "I'm really cool."

God wasn't going to let the Israelites get by with that this time. He told Gideon to send home all the people who were scared.

Gideon did it, and 22,000 people went home! Only 10,000 were left. Gideon was in for another surprise.

"You still have too many people," God told him. "Take them down to the water to drink. I'll tell you which ones to take and which ones to leave behind."

Gideon did as God said and brought the men down to drink from the stream. Some of the men cupped their hands and lapped the water from them like a dog does. Others put their face down in the water to drink.

"Take the ones that bring the water in their hands to their mouth and lap with their tongues," God told him. "Leave behind the ones that bend down on their knees to drink."

When Gideon separated the lappers from the gulpers he found he had only 300 men to lead into battle against the horde of Midianites. It just wasn't possible!

That's what God wanted. He wanted it to be clear to His people that He alone could give the victory. Sometimes God puts us in positions that just seem impossible. Why? So that we can see that He did it and He deserves the glory for it.

Gideon didn't ask for another sign, but God knew he needed encouragement.

"I will give you this victory," God told Gideon. "If you are still afraid, go down with Phurah your servant and listen to what the Midianites are saying about you."

Gideon could have said, “That’s okay. If You say You’ll give us the victory, that’s good enough for me.”

But, he didn’t. Instead he took his servant with him and sneaked down the mountainside to the place the Midianites were camped. He stopped to listen when he heard two Midianites talking.

“I had this weird dream,” one soldier told the other. “I dreamed a loaf of barley bread came tumbling down the mountain. It landed on one of our tents and knocked the tent down.”

“I know what that dream means,” the other soldier replied. “That loaf of bread is like Gideon. God is going to deliver us into his hands.”

The Midianites were afraid of them! That was so encouraging to Gideon that he did what he should have done all along. He worshiped God. Then he went back and told his men, “Arise, for God has given you the victory!”

He divided the men into three groups. Each one was armed with a trumpet and a pitcher with a lamp inside it.

“Do just what I do,” Gideon told the men. “When I give the signal, everyone blow your horns and break your lamps and shout.”

He positioned the men around the camp. Just as the guards were changing in the middle of the night he gave the signal.

All around the camp the trumpets blew and light shone from the lamps in the broken pitchers.

“The sword of the Lord and the sword of Gideon!” the Israelites shouted.

The Midianites woke with a start. The noise and sudden light confused them. It looked

like they were surrounded. They drew their swords and began fighting. They thought they were fighting the Israelites, but they were so mixed up that they were killing each other.

They saw they were being defeated and turned to run.

Gideon began to chase them. When the people who had been sent home because they were afraid heard about it, they joined the chase. They ran those Midianites out of the country.

The Israelites won a great victory that day, but it was clear that it was God that had given it to them.

The Life Lesson

When you are up against something that is hard, or maybe downright impossible, remember Gideon. And remember that nothing is too hard for God. It's our part to trust Him and give Him the glory and praise for the victory.

Review Questions

What did Gideon ask God to do so he would know for sure he should fight the Midianites?
Make the fleece (sheep's skin) be wet and the ground around it be dry.

What was the second sign Gideon asked from God?
Make the fleece be dry and the ground around it wet.

What did the Midianite soldier dream?
He dreamed a loaf of bread fell down the mountain and knocked over his tent.

What did his friend think the dream meant?
He said Gideon would come and defeat them.

What surprising thing did God tell Gideon to do?
Send home everyone who was scared.

How many went home scared?
22,000.

Who did God send home next?
The soldiers who bent down and drank from the stream with their heads in the water.

How many men were left to fight the Midianite army?
300

Who won?
God gave the Israelites the victory.