

Old Testament Stories

“Gideon’s Victory”

Judges 7

- ☞ What would you like to praise God for today?
- ☞ Pray for God’s guidance as you study

1. What camping experience tested your ingenuity or your survival skills?



2. Read 7:12. How is the size of the Midianite forces described?

Why did God want to reduce the size of Gideon’s army?

What two ways did God use to reduce Gideon’s army?

1. _____

2. _____

3. Let’s do some math. Gideon began with 32,000 men. Subtract the # _____ who left because they were afraid. Now subtract the # _____ who failed the drinking test. How many men (# _____) did Gideon have to face the Midianite forces?

Practically speaking, what were the odds of Gideon having victory in the coming battle?

A. easy victory B. equal opponents C. not a chance

4. What was God trying to teach Gideon through these experiences?

God’s victory is obviously important to Israel, but why was it also critical to Gideon and God’s future role for him?

5. Why did Gideon take his servant Purah down to the enemies’ camp? 7:9-12

6. What did Gideon and Purah overhear in the enemy camp visit? 7:13

How did Gideon’s mood change after hearing the dream and its interpretation (7:14-15)

7. What does this incident tell us about God? About his ways of using non-Israeli, even “secular” means of communicating his will?

Night battles were rarely fought in those days. On the rare occasions when night battles were fought, about one man in a thousand was given the task of carrying a torch so the others could see to fight. Also, one man in a thousand was given a trumpet and blew it in battle. When Gideon's men broke their jars and blew their trumpets, the effect was stunning. Suddenly the darkness would have burst forth with bright light. The sound of the breaking jars and trumpet blasts would echo through the valley along with the shouts of Gideon's army. Sleeping soldiers were awakened from their sleep only to see what must have seemed like an ambush by an army of at least 300,000 men. They thought a thousand attackers represented each torch they saw. They may already have been afraid of such an attack even before it was launched. Quickly they grabbed their swords and began cutting at anything that moved in the shadows.

---excerpt from History makers of the Old Testament by Elmer Towns

8. Besides, God, what did Gideon's battle plan have going for it? What elements of the plan led to its success? What would the horn blowing contribute? 7:17-25

What was the result of the battle? 7:22-25 and 8:10-11.

9. In what way is Gideon's experience similar to Paul's experience of God's grace made perfect in human weakness? Read 2 Cor. 12:7-10.

10. In your life, when has God used one of your weaknesses or failures to help someone else?

Are you prompted to see a personal weakness differently because of this story?

11. Christians are "at war" against Satan and his allies. Read Ephesians 5:10-18. List the "armor" pieces God has given believers and what they stand for.

12. Where are you feeling outnumbered or needing immediate intervention from God?

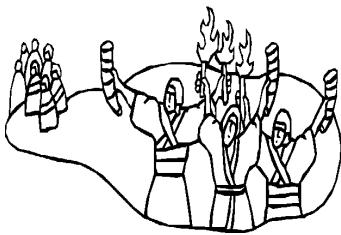
How can the armor of God help empower you to confront your circumstances in God's strength?

Prayer: For one another

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DID YOU KNOW?

The Bible is unashamedly honest about its history and principle players. The story of Gideon is just one such example.

"When Gideon returned to his home in Israel, the men were ready to make him king. But after having killed the two kings of Midian, he may have realized being king was not always all it was made out to be. He did, however, have a request. He asked for all the gold earrings that had been collected as spoils of war. The men agreed, and when the earrings were weighed, Gideon has 17,000 shekels of gold, or about six pounds of gold. '*Then Gideon made it into an ephod and set it up in his city, Ophrah. And all Israel played the harlot with it there. It became a snare to Gideon and to his house*' (v. 27).

One of the common themes in pagan worship is that of immoral sexual practices. During the forty years of quietness which followed Gideon's victory, Gideon acquired an undisclosed number of wives, and had a concubine he kept in Shechem. But Gideon's sin was not without its consequences. '*And so it was, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the Children of Israel again played the harlot with the Baals, and made Baal-Berith their god. Thus the Children of Israel did not remember the Lord their God, who had delivered them from the hands of all their enemies on every side; nor did they show kindness to the house of Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) in accordance with the good he had done for Israel*' (vv. 33-35).

The sin of Gideon was also directly responsible for the destruction of his family in the next generation. The son he had fathered by a concubine conspired to kill legitimate sons of Gideon. Only the youngest of the seventy sons of Gideon was able to escape with his life. The son of the concubine, Abimelech, convinced the men of Shechem to make him Israel's first king. The name Abimelech means "my father is king" and was actually a dynastic title of the Philistines. A part of Israel was having a king like the nations around them. But Jotham, the son of Gideon, warned of trouble ahead." You can read the rest of the story for yourself in Judges 9.

---excerpt from History Makers of the Old Testament, Elmer Towns

Gideon is mentioned again in Hebrews 11:32 for his kingdom conquering faith. Two thoughts come to mind as we consider the dark side of Gideon's life.

First, you are never too strong to fall. Galatians 6:1 reminds us to restore wayward Christians gently, remembering that we too are vulnerable.^{Gideon's Victory, page 5} Remember that "pride comes before a fall". Perhaps this was what happened to Gideon. He felt invincible after the battle. He'd never been seen as brave, or a leader before. No doubt the praise was intoxicating. All these centuries later, we aren't that different. Watch out for the deception of self reliance over God reliance.

Second, God remembered Gideon for his moment of faith. I'm so glad we serve a forgiving God. While others may remember our failings, He loves us enough to forgive and restore. When our life's history is finished, Christians will find it is the stories of His grace, not our failures, that are written on its pages.