

# UNLIKELY HEROES

## Judges Part 5: How God Used Gideon

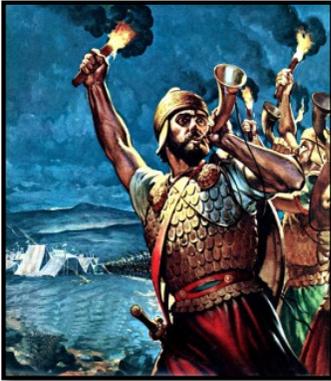
Mike Taylor

www.TaylorNotes.info

### WARM-UP QUESTION

Has there ever been a time in your life when you struggled to believe God? Did you find that your faith was not as strong as you thought it was? Reflect back in that situation as you read about another person who struggled to believe God...his name was Gideon.

### Gideon (Judges 6--8)



This account reveals Gideon's personal struggle to believe God. He, like many of us, doubted his own abilities and even put God to the test--not once but three times. Gideon measured his ability to serve God by looking at his own strength. Initially his fear was greater than his faith.

In this narrative, Gideon is introduced threshing grain in a winepress, a pit in the ground, so the marauding Midianites did not see him. The angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon and said, "The LORD is with you, mighty warrior." (Judges 6:12, NIV)

Gideon then prepared a meal for the angel.

The angel touched the meat and unleavened bread with his staff, and the rock they were sitting on spewed fire, consuming the offering. Then Gideon put out a fleece, a piece of sheep skin with the wool still attached, asking God

to cover the fleece with dew overnight, but leave the ground around it dry. God did so. Finally, Gideon asked God to dampen the ground overnight with dew but leave the fleece dry. God did that as well.

God was patient with Gideon because he had chosen him to defeat the Midianites, who had impoverished the land of Israel with their constant raids. Gideon gathered a huge army from the surrounding tribes, but God reduced their number from 10,000 to only 300. There would be no doubt that victory was from the Lord, not from the army's might.

That night, Gideon gave each man a trumpet and a torch concealed inside a pottery jar. At his signal, they blew their trumpets, broke the jars to reveal the torches, and shouted: "A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!" (Judges 7:20, NIV)

God caused the enemy to panic and turn on each other.

Gideon called out reinforcements and they pursued the raiders, destroying them. When the people wanted to make Gideon their king, he refused, but took gold from them and made an ephod, a sacred vestment, probably to commemorate the victory. Unfortunately, the people worshipped it as an idol.

Later in life, Gideon took many wives and fathered 70 sons. His son Abimelech, born to a concubine, rebelled and murdered all 70 of his half-brothers. Abimelech died in battle, ending his short, wicked reign.

#### Gideon's Accomplishments:

He served as a judge over his people. He destroyed an altar to the pagan god Baal, earning the name Jerub-Baal, meaning *contender with Baal*. Gideon united the Israelites against their common enemies and through God's power, defeated them, and is listed in the Faith Hall of Fame in Hebrews 11.

#### Gideon's Strengths:

Even though Gideon was slow to believe, once convinced of God's power, he was a loyal follower who obeyed the Lord's instructions. He was a natural leader of men.

#### Gideon's Weaknesses:

In the beginning, Gideon's faith was weak and needed proof from God. He showed great doubt toward the Rescuer of Israel. Gideon made an ephod from Midianite gold, which became an idol to his people. He also took a foreigner for a concubine, fathering a son who turned evil.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND FURTHER STUDY

1. What assurances did the angel of the Lord give to Gideon about facing the enemy (6:12, 21-22)? How did Gideon respond (6:13, 15, 17)?
2. What additional help did God give to Gideon for defeating the Midianites (6:34)?
3. What method did Gideon use to reassure himself of God's revealed will (6:36-40)? Do you feel that this is a good way to know God's will? Explain your answer. (See also Deut. 6:16; Psa. 78:18, 41, 56; Matt. 4:7).
4. Give some examples of how we might put out "fleece" today as a means of knowing God's will.
5. Read Judges 7:1-8. Why did God reduce Gideon's army from 10,000 down to 300? How could this apply to you personally?
6. Describe a situation in your own life where God worked through your limitations in such a way that it was clearly God who did it.

## BRIDGING THE GAP

- ✓ Your ability to be used by God does not depend on \_\_\_\_\_.
- ✓ Your \_\_\_\_\_ resources will not \_\_\_\_\_ God's power (Gideon's army of 300).
- ✓ Putting out \_\_\_\_\_ to test God's revealed will reveals a lack of faith.