

Don't Judge Me, Lead Me: The Book of Judges

Judges 6:11-24

A Gideon Story (Part 1)

The story of Gideon begins with understanding the man himself:

Gideon, Israel's fifth judge, was a skilled military strategist, famous for his use of surprise tactics. His faith earned him a place in the Hall of Faith, as noted in Hebrews 11. Leading the Israelites to victory over the Midianites, Gideon was even offered a hereditary kingship, a distinction he humbly declined. Though he initially struggled with self-doubt and fear, his courage grew as he acted in faith. Yet Gideon's faith wasn't without fault; after victory, he collected Midianite gold to create an idol, leading Israel back into idolatry. Additionally, through a concubine, he fathered a son whose actions later brought sorrow to Israel. Despite these failures, Gideon's resilience in moments of intense pressure marked him as a man of God. His story, found in Judges 6-8, exemplifies how God can use humble beginnings for great purposes. Though Gideon's leadership brought peace to Israel, his inability to establish the nation fully in God's ways led to its relapse into idolatry after his death.

Beloved, God's presence enables us to accomplish what we could never do alone. Gideon might have seen himself as weak and insignificant, but God saw someone with potential—a man who, even with wavering faith, would act when divinely empowered. My prayer for each of us is that, like Gideon, we respond to God's call in faith, trusting in His amazing grace to sustain us.

When fear and doubt unite, they form a formidable enemy to our faith. Gideon faced these twin challenges head-on. From the moment he received his divine assignment to deliver Israel, he wrestled with fear and uncertainty. Like Gideon, many of us struggle with feelings of inadequacy. Yet, God understands our frailties—His grace covers us even when we falter. Today, we'll explore how God's grace worked in the life of Gideon. Consider for a moment: where do your fear and doubt come from? Could it be something deeper than just our fallen nature? Look at Genesis 3:1:

"Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God really say, "You must not eat from any tree in the garden?"'" (NIV)

Our adversary, Satan, is committed to sowing doubt in our minds. Keep this in mind as we journey through Judges 6:11-24.

"The angel of the LORD came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites." (Judges 6:11 NIV)

Last week, we saw how God used the Midianites as a rod of discipline against Israel. The Midianites prepared for devastating invasions, leaving no place of safety for the Israelites. In this passage, we find Gideon hiding, threshing wheat in a winepress to protect his family's survival.

"When the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon, he said, 'The LORD is with you, mighty warrior.'" (Judges 6:12 NIV)

When God speaks, a response of faith is the only one that pleases Him: *"Without faith it is impossible to please God"* (Hebrews 11:6 NIV). Yet Gideon's reply shows hesitation and doubt.

"Pardon me, my lord," Gideon replied, "but if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all His wonders that our ancestors told us about? But now the LORD has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian." (Judges 6:13 NIV)

Before judging Gideon for doubting, we must consider how often people blame God when life turns difficult. Do we forget to thank Him for His blessings but quickly question Him in trials? We must align our hearts with God before we can recognize His hand at work.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God" (Matthew 5:8). Ask God to examine your heart today (Psalm 139:23-24) and give thanks for His provision and protection.

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: When have you blamed God for a difficult situation? How did it affect your faith?

"The LORD turned to him and said, 'Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?'" (Judges 6:14 NIV)

God's command was clear, but Gideon remained overwhelmed by doubt.

"Pardon me, my lord," Gideon replied, "but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family. I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive." (Judges 6:15-16 NIV)

This promise reflected God's power, not Gideon's. Still, Gideon sought further confirmation, asking for a sign.

Despite the angel's clear message, Gideon hesitated. Instead of acting in faith, he sought additional proof—a plea for assurance, not a sign of strong faith. Yet even in his uncertainty, Gideon demonstrated a cautious willingness to move forward, seeking to ensure he was acting in God's will.

"Please do not go away until I bring my offering." (Judges 6:18 NIV)

God's patience is evident here. Gideon delayed the divine moment by asking for a sign, and the LORD graciously waited. This shows how God meets us where we are, giving us time to grow in faith.

***QUESTION FOR MEDITATION:** How does God's patience with Gideon reflect His patience with you?

In verses 19-24, Gideon prepares a substantial offering, which the angel touches with his staff, causing fire to miraculously consume it. This act confirmed God's presence and His call. The consuming fire—representing divine approval—mirrored other moments in Scripture where God revealed His power through fire (e.g., Moses and the burning bush, Elijah on Mount Carmel). Gideon's fears were replaced by reverent awe.

"But the LORD said to him, 'Peace! Do not be afraid. You are not going to die.' So Gideon built an altar to the LORD there and called it The LORD Is Peace." (Judges 6:23-24 NIV)

God's peace calmed Gideon's fear, allowing him to embrace his divine commission. The altar Gideon built symbolized his acknowledgment of God's faithfulness, and the name **Jehovah Shalom** became a memorial to God's peace in the midst of doubt.

***QUESTION FOR MEDITATION:** Have you ever experienced a moment when God's presence was undeniable? How did it impact your walk with Him?

***STUDY POINT:** Knowing that Gideon's faith grew stronger after he recognized God's presence, find and list six instances in the Old Testament where God revealed Himself undeniably. Reflect on how you might have responded to each revelation. As you do this, remember that God still seeks to reveal Himself to you today in memorable ways.

In this passage, we see that God patiently guides us through doubt, offering peace and strength to fulfill His purposes. Gideon's story is a powerful reminder that God commissions us, even when we feel uncertain or inadequate. His grace is sufficient, just as it was for Gideon.

~ Reverend Darren McClelland