

Lesson 71

TEXT Judges 6:36-40; 7:1-8

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES Psalms 23:1-6; 37:1-17

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to give Biblical proof that if we put our trust completely in God, He will reinforce our courage to face any circumstance.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour. — Judges 6:12

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. — Deuteronomy 31:6

ANSWER TITLE: **On the Way to Victory**
SEARCH TITLE: **Gideon**

Reference Information

Israel had once again forsaken God and was being terrorized by the Midianite robbers (Judges 6:1-5). As before, the people “cried unto the LORD” (Judges 6:6). The Midianites were descendants of Midian, a son of Abraham and his second wife Keturah (Genesis 25:2). They are described as true Arabs and possessed cattle, flocks, and camels. They lived by plunder.

Gideon means “destroyer.” Another name for him was Jerubbaal: “Let Baal plead against him” (Judges 6:32). He was the youngest son of Joash, an undistinguished family from the tribe of Manasseh (Judges 6:15). They lived at Ophrah, a town probably west of Jordan. He was the fifth judge of Israel following Deborah, and thought to be the greatest judge. He judged Israel for forty years and the people wanted to make him their

king which he refused, saying, “I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the LORD shall rule over you” (Judges 8:22,23). It is thought that when the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, he was a grown man with sons. At this time the nomadic Midianites along with the Amalekites were oppressing the Israelites and had been doing so for seven years. The Midianites and Amalekites robbed Israel of everything, thus the reason Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites. He judged Israel about 1222-1182 B.C.

The well of Harod was a spring near Mount Gilboa on the eastern side of the plain of Esdraelon. It is in the same vicinity where King “Saul leaned upon his spear” (2 Samuel 1:6).

(continued on page 30)

YOUR OPENER

Gideon

RESPONSES

1. There were 32,000 men in the original army. God told Gideon to tell those who were fearful and afraid, to return home. As a result, 22,000 men departed from the army. This proclamation was according to the Law of Moses (Deuteronomy 20:8). Discuss with the class that fear, terror, and faintheartedness are as contagious in the ranks of Christian soldiers as they are in any other walk of life. God will remove them. Continue the discussion to include the other reason for God dismissing these men of Gideon's army—that they might be prevented from taking credit unto themselves for the victory that God would give. Men who do not have the moral courage to face the enemy in combat would have no scruples in claiming the victory to themselves after the combat was successfully ended. God wanted the honor of this battle reserved for Himself.

2. Though there were only 10,000 men remaining, God told Gideon there were still too many. After God put the soldiers through another test there remained 300 men. Ask the class if this is the way they would have gone about winning the battle. Most will answer in the negative. Develop the thought with class participation that God's ways are not man's ways. He often works in an opposite way from what man would think or expect. See Isaiah 55:8,9 as a reinforcing Scripture.

3. The test was on how the men drank water when they came to the brook. Of the 10,000 men, there were 9,700 who knelt to drink directly from the brook. The enemy was virtually before Israel's army, yet these soldiers could seemingly forget everything else for the moment to take their refreshment. That was not so with the 300 men who scooped water with their hands, putting it to their mouth. This signified their awareness of the situation that confronted them. Before them was a chance for deliverance, and they were eager to be about God's business. There was no time to drink leisurely. They were keeping their thoughts and eyes upon the action that would soon engage them. Discuss with your class how it did not appear to be a great thing that marked the separation between the band of 300 men who were chosen and the 9,700 men who were rejected. It does not always take a great misconduct to separate a person from God's choice

TEXT: Judges 6:36-40; 7:1-8

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES: Psalms 23:1-6; 37:1-17

KEY VERSE: Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. — Deuteronomy 31:6

There are vast armies of religious people in the world today, and all claim to be a part of God's army. What a wonderful thing if every professing soldier of Christ were of the stamp of Gideon's band! The sad truth remains that the ratio between the true soldier who is willing and ready to venture all that he has for the cause of Christ and those who are fearful and afraid, or those who want to take the glory and credit to themselves, or those who would rather take their ease than face the enemy, is still the same as it was in Gideon's day. One out of a hundred passed the exacting test that God put them through. What a startling thought!

1. How many men were in Gideon's original army? How many returned from Mount Gilead, and for what reason?

2. Why were not all the remaining men allowed to go to the battle? How many men did Gideon eventually take with him into the camp of Midian?

3. What was the final test that brought Gideon's army down to such a small number? What did the test signify?

13

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

4. What lessons can be learned from the fact that God chose so few men to fight the battle?

5. Define *trust*. Find a Scripture which uses the word.

6. Could there be such a thing as trusting "halfway"? Explain your answer.

7. We probably will not be called upon to take our stand before an angry king, to slay a giant, or be thrown into a den of lions. But we will meet circumstances in our daily lives where it will require courage to take a stand for Christ. Read Matthew 24:12; James 5:14,15; and 1 Peter 5:8; then write the dangers to a Christian from which God promises deliverance.

8. What are some ways we can increase our courage?

band. "The little foxes . . . spoil the vines" (Song of Solomon 2:15).

4. God does not need great multitudes to do His work. Ask the class how many men God used to deliver the Children of Israel from Egypt. How many men did it take to slay the giant Goliath? How many men did Jesus choose to be His Apostles, and what was their commission? The discussion should bring out that when people put their trust completely in God, He can and will bring about His desired result. It should not matter to the people involved, the method that God uses to work out His will. Without doubt, God would use more people in His harvest fields if there were more who would yield completely to His will.

5. Among the definitions of the word *trust* are: "assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something"; "to place confidence"; "to depend." The word is found in the Supplemental Scriptures: Psalm 37:3,5 as well as Psalm 118:8; Proverbs 3:5; 29:25; Isaiah 26:4; 1 Timothy 4:10, etc. These are just a few Scriptures that emphasize trust. After discussing the definition of the word, share with the class the meaning of some of the Scriptures the students have found, and possibly discuss situations in the life where trust in God was put to the test. Gideon trusted God completely, and he found that God reinforced his courage to perform what seemed to be an impossible assignment.

6. There is no such thing as trusting "halfway," especially when it comes to trusting God and His Word. A person might debate as to whether he trusts another person fully or not. A decision of full trust might be put off for a period of time, but eventually the decision is made one way or the other. The point should be emphasized that when it comes to the promises of God, "conditional" trust is no trust at all.

7. Abounding iniquity, diseases and sicknesses, and a roaring adversary, the devil, are mentioned in these verses. Ask the students to express a successful remedy for each problem. Have the class mention other problems (some of which they may have faced personally) in which trust in God has brought the courage to stand until the victory has been given.

YOUR WRAP-UP

8. Take time to receive and discuss the students' answers. Further discussion could include the fact that as Gideon obeyed God in each step that He commanded, Gideon received more confidence and courage to go forward. God-given victory in a test or trial will give greater courage to face the next trial, but a person needs to be willing and obedient to do or face whatever God allows. Condemnation for sin will rob a person of spiritual courage (1 John 3:20,21). Close the lesson by asking the students when the disciples felt the most courageous. Was it not when Jesus Christ was close to them? We have His promise today: "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you" (James 4:8).

Reference Information (continued from page 27)

Mount Gilead is a mountainous region bounded on the west by the Jordan, on the east by the Arabian plateau, and on the south by Moab and Ammon. It is called "Mount Gilead," or "the land of Gilead," and sometimes "Gilead." The elevation is 2000 to 3000 feet. The country was noted for its balm, a pale yellow fragrant gum or resin taken from the trees. One reference book states this balm was worth twice its weight in silver.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

How many men were in Gideon's army originally? Why did God want only a few men to fight the battle?

Name one trait about Gideon you admire, and tell why?

If we are trusting God in our daily lives, how should we react to the outcome?

What is courage?

Why do you suppose God didn't want any who were "fearful and afraid" in Gideon's army? How may one overcome fear?

In the natural it might have appeared foolish to go to battle with just 300 men. Why was it not for Gideon?

What do you suppose were the feelings of the men chosen to fight the Midianites? Why do you think they were not afraid?

Do you think God tests people's faith today by asking them to do something that in the eyes of some would appear foolish? Explain.

Are there any circumstances where it might be better not to follow God's leading if doing so would seem unwise? Explain.

THINGS TO DO

The word "fleece" has common usage in our church. But do your students visualize the right thing when they hear the word? Take something to class which could show what a fleece was like: car seat covers that look like lamb's wool, or fleecy-looking car-wash mitts. Then you can show why Gideon made his test twice. It is remotely possible that the fleece could have collected water and the land felt dry. But the fleece could never have been dry while lying on wet ground.

Material needed: Two blindfolds. Blindfold a volunteer, pointing out that now the blindfolded person needs someone to lead or guide him. Choose a leader but blindfold him also. This illustrates that the leader must see to lead just as Gideon looked to God for guidance when fighting the enemy. Also bring out the we MUST trust only God to lead us through life.

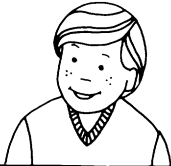
Material needed: A glove. Use this to illustrate that Gideon was just like this empty glove until the angel of the Lord visited him. After that he was full of the spirit and could be used of God.

Material needed: A penny and a dollar—to illustrate that it is God who makes us important, not what we do ourselves. Gideon was like the penny, small but willing to trust and to be used of God. Though small, God can use us.

Answers for ANSWER

Gideon's Courage

We don't have to be afraid when God is on our side! God was on Gideon's side and he wasn't afraid. Using Judges 7:1-15, learn about Gideon as you do this acrostic puzzle. The letters at the beginning of the phrases should match the letters given in the boxes.



Q

M What the people of Midian are called (verse 1)

I Jerubbaal was also known as ... (verse 1)

G The mountain mentioned in verse three

H Gideon's servant (verse 10)

T A place of shelter (verse 8)

Y A cake of _____ tumbled into the tent of the enemy (verse 13)

M A Midianite interpreted this (verse 15)

A Another name for Gideon (verse 1)

N Three hundred _____ lapped the water (verse 7)

O Small animal in story (verse 5)

F Some men were fearful or ... (verse 3)

V Another word for food (verse 8)

A The enemy was like this insect (verse 12)

L Large animal in story (verse 12)

O Gideon's father (verse 14)

R Gideon told the men, "_____ for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian." (verse 15)

