

A STUDY OF JUDGES & RUTH

VALIANT WARRIOR

When God called Gideon as the next judge of Israel, an angel said to him, “*The LORD is with you, O mighty man of valor*” (6:12). Ironically, the angel spoke to the “valiant warrior” (NASB) who was threshing wheat in a winepress. He hid in a giant hole in fear of God’s enemies, the Midianites.

The first thing the “mighty man” did was to destroy the altars of Baal and Asherah. However, he did it at night *because he was too afraid of his family and the men of the town* (6:27). Although the townspeople wanted to kill him. Gideon’s dad stated wisely, “If Baal is a god, let him contend for himself” and Gideon was renamed Jerubbaal (6:31–32).

God doesn’t call people for what they are, he calls them for who they will be. His demand is always based on his character and his promise.

JUDGES 7 (SELECTED)

²The Lord said to Gideon, “The people with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand, lest Israel boast over me, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me.’” ³Now therefore proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, ‘Whoever is fearful and trembling, let him return home and hurry away from Mount Gilead.’” Then 22,000 of the people returned, and 10,000 remained.

⁴And the Lord said to Gideon, “The people are still too many. Take them down to the water, and I will test them for you there, and anyone of whom I say to you, ‘This one shall go with you,’ shall go with you, and anyone of whom I say to you, ‘This one shall not go with you,’ shall not go.” ⁵So he brought the people down to the water. And the Lord said to Gideon, “Every one who laps the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set by himself. Likewise, every one who kneels down to drink.” ⁶And the number of those who lapped, putting their hands to their mouths, was 300 men, but all the rest of the people knelt down to drink water. ⁷And the Lord said to Gideon, “With the 300 men who lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hand, and let all the others go every man to his home.” ⁸So the people took provisions in their hands, and their trumpets. And he sent all the rest of Israel every man to his tent, but retained the 300 men. And the camp of Midian was below him in the valley.

²² When they blew the 300 trumpets [and smashed jars], the Lord set every man’s sword against his comrade and against all the army.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

It's one things to discuss the fact that God can do impossible things and overcome overwhelming circumstances. It's an entirely different thing to walk through uncertainty, doubt, and fear. It's easy for us to criticize Gideon for hiding, acting in darkness, or generally remaining fearful until the end. However, we've never had to deal with an invading multitude that raided our home for seven years. Scan the QR code to worship the God who can, and the One you can trust even if he doesn't.



DISCUSSION

What's your favorite sports movie?

ICEBREAKER

1. Why did God tell Gideon to reduce the size of his army? (2)

2. How many men did Gideon start with? (3) How many did he end with? (7)

3. What did Gideon’s soldiers take into battle? (8)

4. Does the description of Gideon’s soldiers in verse 8 seem odd? (Is something missing?)

5. Based on the results of verse 22, how did God's army of 300 work out better than Gideon's army of 32,000? (i.e. Who fought who in verse 22?)

6. Has God ever given you an unexpected victory? What is something he's done that surprised you?

OBSERVATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

Are you currently depending on God for something impossible? If not, why not? Your prayer life should reflect God's ability, not your own. Need help, talk to your Coach today!

A STUDY OF JUDGES & RUTH

STUDY NOTES

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

We all love a Cinderella sports story! One of the greatest all-time upsets came in the 1980 Olympics when the US Olympic hockey team defeated the highly-favored Soviet Union. This impossible moment at the height of the Cold War led to one of the greatest broadcasting moments of all time when Al Michaels famously shouted, “Do you believe in miracles? Yes!”

As improbable as a US victory against the Soviet Union may have been, a miracle it was not. Instead, in our passage today, we see an *actual* miracle turn an impossible mission possible.

GODLY LEADERS MUST PREPARE FOR CHALLENGES

As we mentioned in the introduction, Gideon had a major victory in tearing down the Baal altar and Asherah pole—though in the cover of darkness. Despite his stuttering start, a win is a win. He then called together an army of 32,000 troops to face the Midianite scourge who, for seven consecutive years, had invaded Israel and took all of their crops. The Midianites and their allies rallied nearby and Gideon courageously assembled an army to meet the threat. But, the Lord had other plans.

The Lord said to Gideon, “The people with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand.” Wait, what? The Navy SEAL’s and other special forces talk about overwhelming force and violence of action—speed, surprise, and aggression. The goal is to minimize losses on your side by never giving the enemy a chance. But look at *why* the Lord made such a statement, ***“lest Israel boast over me, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me.’”***

From a human perspective, we strategically take every advantage we can get. God has provided us with a mind and with opportunities, why not use both? However, we often need reminders that, like in Week 2, courageous faith depends on understanding that ***“When I’m standing on the mountain, I didn’t get there on my own! When I’m walking through the valley, I know I am not alone!”*** In other words, God is in charge and we depend on him in every circumstance.

The Lord weeded out those who were ***fearful and trembling*** and ***22,000 people*** packed up and left. Verse 12 described the *Midianites* horde ***like locusts in abundance*** and ***sand on the seashore***. With massively outnumbered ***10,000*** remaining... ***the Lord said to Gideon, “The people are still too many.”*** Gideon must have thought, “you’ve got

to be kidding me.” Then, taking the 10,000 ***down to the water***, we read one of the oddest commands in all of Scripture. ***“Every one who laps the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set by himself. Likewise, every one who kneels down to drink.”*** Then the Lord commanded, ***“With the 300 men who lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hand.”***

Some have speculated that the “lappers” were vigilant, keeping their eyes on the horizon as they drank. Whereas the “kneelers” took a more relaxed position, careless of the peril. Since the “lappers” were compared to dogs in the description of lapping, I doubt this could be interpreted as a strategic act. Dogs weren’t as favored as they are today. It was a negative comparison. These were not 300 battle-hardened Spartans at Thermopylae. These were men who thought the best way to take a drink of water was to get all the way down on their bellies to lap up a stream.

CHALLENGES CAN BE MET THROUGH GOD’S STRENGTH

The army of 300 lappers readied themselves for battle by taking ***provisions in their hands, and their trumpets***. Reading this, you might question whether “trumpet” is the name of some ancient weapon you’re not aware of. Nope, it was a horn. They were going to fight an invading army with food and horns. God’s plan seemed as crazy as using only 300 lappers.

Let’s face it, odds are high we’ll never face anything like this, but that doesn’t mean we will never face impossible situations. It certainly doesn’t mean that we won’t need the Lord’s strength. God calls people to do all sorts of crazy things like a family selling everything and moving to a new country as missionaries to reach people that don’t know Christ—that’s crazy. Like the thousands of martyrs who trade their lives rather than deny Christ—that’s crazy. Like the high school student that focused more on transforming his school for Christ than popularity or fitting in—that’s crazy.

Do you know what else is crazy? It’s crazy how God works the impossible for his glory. An army of 32,000 couldn’t sneak up on the Midianites in the dark, but 300 can. In an instant, the Israelites smashed jars, revealed torches, and blew trumpets. ***When they blew the 300 trumpets*** [and smashed jars], ***the Lord set every man’s sword against his comrade and against all the army***. Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War* says, “The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting.” God did that. The Midianites destroyed themselves, fighting with one another in the darkness and confusion. Mission impossible? Not for God.