

August 9, 2026 Trust Session 10 Judges 7:1-8, 19-23

Too Many (Judges 7:1-3) p. 93

As Gideon and his army prepared to attack the Midianites, the Lord told him he had too many troops. God didn't want the Israelites to think they could save themselves by their own might. When Gideon announced to the troops that whoever was afraid could leave, twenty-two thousand men left, and ten thousand remained. Back in chapter six, Gideon was given the name *Jerubbaal* by his father because Gideon tore down the family altar to Baal and the Asherah pole beside it. The angry men of the city wanted to kill Gideon but his father Joash, spoke up for him. *Jerubbaal* means: "let Baal contend with him." Ironically, Gideon contends with Baal. It is important to recall Gideon's inconsistencies. He was of two minds. I can identify with that. His trust in God wavered, but he also obeyed and learned to trust God. Gideon was a warrior but also doubted God's word and required more than one sign before he agreed to lead an army to overthrow the Midianites. Some of us doubt more than others. I thank our loving God that he meets each of our individual, spiritual needs. He makes His presence known to us as we make ourselves available to receive it. Yes, Christians have doubts and fears but we have God's word, the Holy Spirit, and the resurrected Lord Jesus to keep our path unobstructed. Gideon and his troops were camped at the spring of Harod (means stream of trembling), located in the foothills south east of the Sea of Galilee. This location gave Gideon and his army access to fresh water as well as high ground advantage from which they could observe the enemy army. The Midianites army was located below to the north. At this point, Gideon may have had the advantage in terrain and possibly even numbers. Victory was doable, even though the Midianites outnumbered the Israelites four to one.

Vs. 2 It must be made clear that the victory over the Midianites would only be due to God's intervention, not to military might. Israelites demonstrated that they acted independent of God and went their own way. They would be tempted to take credit for winning the day rather than to recognize the Lord's victory. God told Gideon he had too many troops. There must be no room for the Israelites to elevate themselves and say "I saved myself." The Israelites had the tendency to elevate themselves and to abandon God. This was the fundamental problem throughout the book of Judges. It was only when they were in dire straits that the Israelites turned to God. We realized the truth "I cannot save myself" when we asked Jesus to save us and accepted Him as our savior. We enjoy a relationship with God in all circumstances.

Vs. 3 The issue was not the Lord's ability but Israel's misplaced trust and lack of humility. To help the Israelites overcome their problem, God needed to make it obvious that only He could provide the victory. The Israelite army needed a

reduction. God told Gideon to tell the troops that whoever is fearful and trembling should go home. This is straight out of the Old Testament.

Deuteronomy 20:1 *“When you go out to battle against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the Lord your God is with you, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.* God explained that when the Israelites came up against an army that had greater numbers, they were not to be afraid. This lack of fear was tied to the fact that God would go before them in battle. In other words, it would not be their numbers or power that brought victory in battle but rather the presence of God going before them. God gave three reasons why individuals might go home rather than stay and fight. The reasons were: to harvest crops, a betrothed man could go home to marry, and men who were fearful and faint hearted (vs. 6-8). If someone was afraid, they should not stay because they could affect the morale of others. An astonishing twenty-two thousand soldiers left due to fear, and I will go further to say that they did not trust in the Lord, disregarding what God said in the book of Deuteronomy (20:1). Wow! Gideon’s army is cut down to ten thousand.

Still Too Many (Judges 7:4-8) p. 94-95

The Lord proposed a test to reduce the troops even more. He instructed Gideon to lead his remaining troops to the water and to separate those who drank by kneeling down to put their faces in the water from those who used their hands to bring water to their mouths. The three hundred men who lapped water from their hands would compose Gideon's army.

God’s test The Hebrew verb for test refers to the practice of smelting metal, refining metal through extreme heat. In this process, the heated metal liquifies and the impurities in it rise to the top. This layer of impurity is then scraped off. The result is a metal, such as gold or silver, that is absent of the impurities that would cause weakness or reduce its value. In this context, God was going to remove more troops, and while this process would result in a smaller army, the troops that remained would be the bravest and truest of men. The number of soldiers would go down, but the quality of the army would go up. Any man who kneels to drink the water would be part of Gideon’s army. Everyone who laps water with his tongue like a dog would be sent home. It seems likely that the point was whether the men kept themselves in a state of readiness for battle. Those that scooped up water with their hands in order to drink it remained aware of their surroundings and alert. They did not take their eyes off of the horizon and could drop the water and draw their swords with relative ease since they were kneeling. Those who placed their faces close to the water were more vulnerable. Putting one’s face to water may have been more effective in terms of getting a quick drink, but it left the person vulnerable to sudden attack.

After this test, the remaining Israelite army was reduced to three hundred troops having been reduced from thirty-two thousand. Any chance Israel had for a victory based on the size of the army was gone. Victory could only come through divine intervention.

Vs. 7 The Lord said to Gideon “I will deliver you with...” Precious words from God! Hear Him speak words to you. The Lord said to me/you “I will deliver you with _____.” Fill in the blank. The Lord will deliver us! The Hebrew word for deliver means multiple things. It means save, deliver, help or to be victorious. In the case of the Israelites, God would quite literally save the Israelites from the oppression of the Midianites by delivering them through victorious battle. The victory would belong to God, Gideon, and the three hundred men, in that order. Be excited! What battles do you face? Go with God.

Vs. 8 The remaining three hundred troops took provisions. They prepared for the march to battle. I ask myself if I am prepared for the daily battle. The Israelite soldiers took rams’ horns with them. What special equipment do I need to bring along (Scripture card, track, song, prayer)? The rams’ horn is to be used later but it can’t be used if it isn’t taken with. The Midian camp remains in a somewhat vulnerable position, perhaps out of overconfidence. They were not prepared for the attack to come. Let us not be unprepared.

God knows our fears and doubts (Judges 7:9-12) read in Bible

God strengthens us through our doubt. He gives us ways to tell us He is with us: people, His word, circumstances, and experience past and present.

God knew Gideon was afraid and gave him an opportunity to strengthen and trust Him more. After seeing such a vast army (vs. 12), defeating it with just 300 troops would bring all the more glory to God. Apparently, Gideon did have some trepidation about the forthcoming battle because he took God up on the spying suggestion. If we let God encourage us He will.

Glory to God (Judges 7:13-15) read in Bible

The Midianite’s dream revealed the future outcome of the battle. What Gideon overheard in the enemy camp encouraged him greatly: the Midianites were already scared. God gave the Midianites and Amalekites ominous dreams to undermine their courage.

Just Right (Judges 7:19-23) p. 96-97

Earlier, Gideon had divided the three hundred men into three groups so they surrounded the enemy camp on three sides (vs.16). Gideon’s three hundred men made their attack in “*the middle watch after the sentries had been stationed.*”

The middle of the night was approximately from 10:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m. This means that most of the Midianite soldiers would have been asleep and startled awake in panic when the loud attack began. The obvious tactic was to make as much noise as possible. The sound of crashing and horns blowing on three sides, and echoing off of the surrounding hills would have been terrifying. The

Israelites lit their torches and held them aloft as they blew their horns. Imagine not just experiencing the onslaught of sound, but being surrounded by bright lights and flame. In the dark, and as your eyes adjust to the sudden lights, there would be no telling how many enemies you had before you. The weakened morale of the Midianite army could not bear up under the pressure. As a result of the terrifying sounds and light, the Midianite army began to run toward the Jordan River. Gideon and his men followed God's plan faithfully. Their battle cry kept the proper priority: *"A sword for the Lord and for Gideon."* The Israelites may not have even carried swords.

Vs. 22 The Lord caused the men in the whole army to turn on each other with their swords. I suspect that since it wasn't just Midianites in the camp, there may have been some confusion with the Amalekites. Combined with the elements of noise, light in the middle of the night, confusion, no leadership or direction, the army was just swinging swords aimlessly. So they ran.

Did Gideon overdo it? Other men from the tribes of Naphtali, Asher, and Manasseh were called to help pursue the fleeing Midianites. The territories of these tribes were located around the area of battle. Now that the enemy was on the run, other men were allowed to participate in the final victory. Some scholars consider Gideon's call to these tribes was a failure on Gideon's part. When Gideon called on the tribes surrounding the area of battle to help in conquest, he was forgetting the whole point of God's reduction of the number of troops. The Bible does not relay that Gideon sought the advice from God before calling on the other troops. The reinforcement troops probably were the troops that God had dismissed earlier for being fearful or lapping water like dogs. Gideon in his rising confidence, showed the typical spiritual independence that characterized the Israelites when things were going well. After the battle with the Midianites, God is silent for the rest of Gideon's story. Gideon's arrogance and excessive pride caused him to wander away from God's requirements for the nation of Israel. He was successful in overthrowing the power of the Midianites because of God's power and action. He acknowledged that God was the leader of Israel but his life was characterized by a focus on himself. There is no record of him seeking God again nor of God speaking to him. As soon as Gideon died, his legacy quickly crumbled with the Israelites turning away from God and ceasing to honor Gideon or his descendants. He failed to change Israel's downward trajectory. Gideon's son, Abimelech, continued this downward spiral. He used his connection to the town to convince the people of Shechem to help make him king. To prevent any challenges to his claim, he killed 70 of his half-siblings in cold blood. Abimelech's kingship did not last, and he was killed in battle by a woman who dropped an upper millstone on his head and crushed his skull. The Israelites again practiced illicit worship of other deities, and as in the past God

turned the Israelites over to the peoples and the false gods they worshiped. Back and forth, to God and from God.

All glory belongs to God. His way of doing things is always the best.