

09

JUDGES 6:25-40

OBEDIENCE AND TRUST

opening ILLUSTRATION

Explain to students, "I'm going to read a few statements this morning, and I want you to respond with your fingers as to how confident that thing is true. If you're totally confident in the statement as it pertains to your own life, hold up ten fingers. If you're certain it will *not* happen, hold up only one finger. If you're somewhere in between, hold up the numbers of fingers that are appropriate for your answer; the closer to ten, the more confident you are." Then read the following, providing a few seconds for students to hold up fingers in response: 1) "I will wake up tomorrow." 2) "I will earn an A in all my assignments this week." 3) "I will see a dog in the next forty-eight hours." 4) "I will eat pizza in the next three days." 5) "I will forget something as I leave the house one day this week." To close the illustration say, "There are some things we're confident of; other times, we're simply not sure. In today's passage we'll see how Judge Gideon handled the unknown."

context

Though Gideon was God's judge for the Israelites, that doesn't mean we (or our students!) should emulate him in all things faith-based. In today's passage, Gideon has been given a clear word from the Lord: he will drive out the Midianites (see 6:14). But Gideon is fearful and asks for not one but two signs from God to make sure God's word is trustworthy (see v. 36). Many Christians follow this pattern today, "putting out a fleece" to re-confirm God's word to them. But even Gideon knew he was testing the Lord's patience by asking for confirmation. Believers should daily practice walking in faithful obedience, discerning the voice of God. Strong faith is revealed in quick obedience and trust.

expository OUTLINE

JUDGES 6:25-27 *Before we are ready to fight, we must get rid of sin and idolatry.* Gideon had been called a valiant warrior and had been told that he would defeat the Midianites. But before that battle could begin, first God charged Gideon with the task of getting rid of the idols. Baal and Asherah were deities worshiped in Canaan, and there was an altar set up to them in the midst of God's covenant people, even on the land of Gideon's father! God was specific in His instructions: tear down the idols and offer a sacrifice to God. Gideon and ten of his father's servants did it . . . after it grew dark. Gideon was obedient, but he was still "too afraid of his father's family and the men of the city to do it in the daytime" (v. 27). God's valiant warrior was taking his first steps; they were shaky and fearful, but he was obeying God.

JUDGES 6:28-32 *We are called to show others the one true God.* Let's remember: Gideon was of the tribe of Manasseh, which is part of God's people, the Israelites. So the people who were offended that Gideon took down their idolatrous altar should have been worshiping God alone! Gideon wasn't living among pagans; he was an Israelite. So we can see the spiritual level of this time in Israel: terrible. Not only had they been worshiping idols, but they also wanted to kill Gideon for standing up for the Lord. But Gideon's father, Joash, who was actually the owner of the idol, stood up for his son. This seems to be more than a dad sticking up for his kid; he actually pointed to the power of Baal when he asked "Would you plead Baal's case for him?" (v. 31). Basically what he said was this: "If he's a god, he should stand up for himself." Obviously, Baal is a false god with no power, just like all other so-called gods. So Gideon earned the respect of his town and a new nickname: "Jerubbaal," which means "let Baal contend."

JUDGES 6:33-40 *We can trust that God will provide when He gives us a task.* The Midianites and their allies gathered together, and Gideon gathered an army from the tribes around him. At this point, he seems to have gotten cold feet; instead of going to the battle, he asked God for a sign. And then another sign. Granted, Gideon was afraid—as we've seen several times already—and this was an overwhelming challenge. But God had spoken, and He asked Gideon to believe Him in faith. God is gracious, and He actually confirmed His instruction to Gideon twice. But even Gideon realized he was pushing it and testing God's patience. God speaks clearly and gives the Holy Spirit to us, just as He did to Gideon. He doesn't want us seeking confirmation; He wants us to obey.

group DISCUSSION

The following are suggested discussion questions on each section of verses. They can be used for leading a small group session, or in sermon deliveries that include discussion.

ASK A STUDENT TO READ JUDGES 6:25-27.

- .01** How would you describe Gideon's bravery in this passage? What made him fearful?
- .02** Have you ever known the right thing to do but were afraid to do it? Who did you enlist to help you do that right thing?

ASK A STUDENT TO READ JUDGES 6:28-32.

- .03** Why do you think the people of the community were so mad at Gideon for doing the right thing? When have you been surprised by someone's reaction?
- .04** How did Joash reveal God to his townspeople? What are some ways you've seen God defended among your friends?

ASK A STUDENT TO READ JUDGES 6:33-40.

- .05** If Gideon had been your best friend in this situation, what words of advice would you have given him?
- .06** Notice Gideon's words in verse 36: "as you said." What has God said to us in His word? How well are you obeying Him today?

session CONNECTION

In Mark 11:15-26, we see Jesus's zeal for His Father's house as He drives out the merchants and customers from inside the temple complex. Jesus's authority and righteousness shine through His courage and power; in quoting Isaiah and Jeremiah, He shows respect not only for God but for His temple and law. Though the religious leaders did not approve of His acts, the crowds were astonished. We see a thematically-similar scene in Judges 6:25-40, in which Gideon, God's "valiant warrior" (v. 12), sees a dishonor for the Lord in the Baal altar and Asherah pole. Like Jesus, he wants to stand up for the Lord. But unlike Jesus, Gideon is not confident or brave enough to take a bold stand; he and his servants take down the idols by the cover of night.

application

Remind students of the opening illustration, in which they responded on a scale of one to ten as to their confidence in a given statement. Say, "I don't want you to hold up fingers to the following, but please carefully consider how you might have responded to the following statements: 1) 'I know God is with me.' 2) 'I know God's call for my life.' 3) 'I know that I am saved.'" Share your own honest answers and why you would give them the ratings you did. Point out that, like Gideon, we might sometimes be unsure of spiritual things. Remind students that God is compassionate and loving. He sends His Holy Spirit to lead, guide, and encourage us. Encourage students to seek God daily and rest in His character as they grow in their faith.

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