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JUDGES 7

TAKE A STAND!

opening ILLUSTRATION

Open your time together by saying, "I'm going to start today's lesson by reading a simple story. I want you listening intently, because I want you listening for a particular letter." Assign the letter "S" to half the room; assign the letter "T" to the other half. Say, "When you hear a word begin with the letter I've assigned to you, stand up. If you hear a word that begins with that letter again, sit down." Inform students that the goal is for everyone to listen carefully, thus ending up either sitting or standing as a group at the end. Read the following, somewhat quickly: "Stanley stood and touched his temple. Should he traverse the still stream? Or was the temperature too scorching? Scared and timid, he stooped and toppled straight into the tepid water." Look up at the students; there's a slim chance they're all unified in sitting or standing. Read it a few times more, getting slower each time. Say, "In today's passage, Gideon is going to struggle in finding the courage to stand. Maybe you can relate."

context

In Judges 7:9 and 15, we see God command Gideon to "get up" (CSB). This phrase, sometimes translated "Arise" or "Rise up" is a rich Hebrew verb that appears over six hundred times in the Old Testament. Its root meaning, "to stand up," also carries with it an attitude: to become powerful, come on the scene, be hostile, to establish, to be proven, or to carry out. In the book of Judges alone, it appears thirty-eight times. In some instances, it's telling us that God "raised up" a particular judge (see 2:16,18; 3:9). In others, it's a reporting that someone stood against an enemy (see 4:9, 5:12). In today's passage, God is telling a judge to stand up and take a stand.

expository OUTLINE

JUDGES 7:1-8 *When God directs the battle, He alone gets the glory.* Evidently, Gideon's nickname from Judges 6 stuck; he's identified by it in this week's passage. After making his stand against idolatry in his home town, now God is calling Gideon to lead the army against their enemies. According to verse 3, Gideon had approximately thirty-two thousand troops, while the enemy troops were much more immense (as you'll see in verse 12 in just a moment). This number put the Israelites at a distinct disadvantage, but God wanted there to be no question as to who would win the battle; thirty-two thousand was still too many. So God first sent home everyone who was admittedly afraid; twenty-two thousand left. (And we might actually be surprised that Gideon was not with them!) That left ten thousand; still too many! So He next instructed Gideon to take them down to the water, and God chose to keep only three hundred men after they drank. The way they drank didn't determine their ability or faith; it was simply a way to pare down the troops!

JUDGES 7:9-14 *God will strengthen our faith so we will trust Him.* God had already assured Gideon of the victory, but God also knew Gideon's tendency. Obviously, taking an army of three hundred men to fight against uncountable fighters and camels was overwhelming, so our merciful God sent one more reassurance to Gideon. He and his trusted servant, Purah, snuck into the enemy camp and secretly listened to the fighters: one of them had a prophetic dream about their defeat at the hands of the Israelites, and his friend interpreted it correctly! Both the dream and the interpretation had come from God, but Gideon had yet one more confirmation: Purah spoke the truth that God had guaranteed the victory. When we are afraid, God is with us. When we doubt, He sends us confirmation. When we feel alone, He sends encouragement from a friend. What an amazing, awesome, loving God!

JUDGES 7:15-23 *God brings about great victory, even with the craziest-sounding plans.* Gideon's immediate response to God's affirmation was worship; he walked back to the camp with total confidence in God. Then he encouraged his men to be confident as well. When most troop leaders envisioned a battle during the time of Gideon, they saw shields, swords, and spears. But that wasn't the battle plan God had; His plan required a horn and a torch. They went in the middle of the night to the enemy camp, and under the cover and stillness of the dark, they blew rams' horns and broke the pitchers holding torches. The enemy, bombarded with noise and light in the middle of sleeping, fled and turned on each other! Only the Lord could have come up with such a crazy plan that worked. God alone was the leader of this army and He alone got the glory for the victory.

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 7:1-8.

- .01** Notice God's words to Gideon in verse 2; how would you say this in your own words?
- .02** In what situations are you tempted to be confident in yourself rather than the Lord? How does this passage warn you to be humble and submissive?

ASK A STUDENT TO READ JUDGES 7:9-14.

- .03** How might you describe Gideon's emotional and spiritual state in this passage? How would you describe God based on this passage?
- .04** Who does God use to encourage you in your faith? What are you doing to develop that relationship?

ASK A STUDENT TO READ JUDGES 9:15-23.

- .05** Note the words in verse: "Watch me . . . do what I do . . . do as I do." Gideon was inviting his men to truly see his faith in God. Whose faith is visible to you? How are you watching them?
- .06** What other crazy battle plans from the Bible do you remember? (Example: the battle of Jericho in Joshua 6.) How does this give you faith in God when your life seems to take crazy twists and turns?

session CONNECTION

In Judges 7, we see God calling Gideon to prepare for the upcoming battle in a variety of ways: gathering his troops, learning to listen to the voice of God, living out faith that God was the one doing the actual fighting, trusting God's plan, and being willing to step out in faith. We've seen the fearfulness of Gideon, and we know he's still fearful here (see Judg. 7:10); God provided him with reassurance and confidence. We see similarities in this week's passage from Mark 13:24-37: in it, Jesus instructed His disciples (and us!) to be ready, aware, and alert; watching the heavens and signs of the times that Jesus was returning. In Judges and Mark, we see the warning: be ready to live according to God's instructions and also be ready for the return of Jesus.

application

Remind students of the opening illustration, in which they stood or sat depending on a letter sound they'd been assigned. Say something like, "I'll admit: that was tricky. But God also calls us to listen to Him, and sometimes He tells us to get up and go." Invite students to open their Bibles to the book of Acts and read aloud 8:26, 9:6, 9:11, 10:20, 12:7, and 22:16. Each of these verses contain the words "Get up" (CSB) or something equivalent. Say, "As we walk through life as Christians, there will come times when we know that God is calling us to get up and do something for His glory. It happened in Gideon's life, it happened in the early church, and it happens with believers today." Encourage students to spend time every day seeking God's voice and listening to His call.

At
some point,
God will call each
of His followers to get
up and do something for
His glory.