

# Gideon

Judges 6:11-18

SS Lesson for 06/11/2017

**Devotional Scripture:** Ps 83:1-18

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God called Samuel while he was sleep (1 Sam 3:7-10)

God called Matthew while he was collecting taxes (Luke 5:27-28)

God called the widow through Elijah while she was preparing her last meal (1 Kings 17:9-16)

*When God calls, He is always with us (12)*

With us because He is with us wherever we go (Josh 1:9)

With us because He promised He would be (Matt 28:20)

With us because God will never forsake us (Heb 13:5)

With us to protect us (Ps 37:28)

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Objections because of feeling God is slow in His deliverance (Hab 1:2-4)

*Answer is being sent using God's strength (14)*

God's strength through His grace (2 Cor 12:9)

God's strength because His arms are not too short (Num 11:23)

God's strength because He is the one who provides it to His people (Ps 68:35)

God's strength because He is mighty (Ps 93:4)

God's strength because He is the only one who can (Deut 3:24)

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# Introduction

## Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson examines the basic ingredients of the need, call and provision that God gave **Gideon**. The **study's aim** is to understand that God does not require the one receiving His call to be qualified for the task. The **study's application** is to learn to be open to the call of God without equivocating about one's qualifications.

*(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)*

### Key Verse: Judges 6:12

*And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him, and said to him, "The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor!"*

### Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

**6:1a.** The downward cycles of apostasy (**again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD**; cf. 3:7, 12; 4:1) and deliverance continued in the case of Gideon whose judgeship receives the most extensive narration in the Book of Judges (100 verses comprising three chapters). The story of Samson is comparable, consisting of 96 verses in four chapters.

**6:1b-6.** The **seven years** of oppression under **the hands of Midianites** was divine chastening for Israel's idolatry and evil practices. This relatively brief period of oppression was sandwiched in between two 40-year periods of peace (5:31; 8:28). The Midianites were descendants of Abraham and Keturah (Gen. 25:1-2) and were defeated by Israel during the wilderness wanderings (Num. 22:4; 25:16-18). They were a nomadic people who came from near the Gulf of Aqabah and ranged throughout the Arabah and Transjordan, apparently at this time subduing the Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites as they crossed the Jordan into Canaan as far north as the Jezreel Valley (Judges 6:33), and as far south and east as **Gaza** (v. 4), perhaps moving westward across the Jezreel Valley and southward along the coastal plain. The strength of Midianite oppression forced **the Israelites** to hide **themselves** and their produce **in mountain clefts, caves, and strongholds**. However, this was not a continual occupation (like the preceding one of the Canaanites) but a seasonal invasion at harvest time, **whenever the Israelites planted their crops**. The Midianites' major goal was the appropriation of **the crops** for themselves and their animals. But the cumulative effect of these invasions on Israelite agriculture and food cycles was devastating. Midianite allies included the **Amalekites** (from south of Judah; cf. 3:13) **and other eastern peoples**, a general term for the nomads of the Syrian desert, possibly including some Ammonites and Edomites. On these annual predatory invasions, in typical nomadic style, the oppressors **camped on the land** in such numbers and with such devastation that they were compared to **swarms of locusts** (cf. 7:12). The Midianites and their allies traveled on innumerable **camels** (cf. 7:12) whose range of distance and speed (as high as 100 miles per day) made them a formidable long-range military threat. This is the first reference to an organized raid using camels (cf. Gen. 24:10-11). The impoverishment that came to Israel drove her to cry **out to the LORD for help**. This cry does not seem to have been an indication of repentance for sin because they apparently were not aware of the moral cause behind the enemy's oppression until the Lord sent a prophet to point this out (cf. Judges 6:7-10).

**6:7-10.** **The LORD... sent** an unnamed **prophet** (the only prophet mentioned in the book besides the Prophetess Deborah) to remind Israel of her covenant obligations to **the LORD**, who had delivered them from **Egypt** (cf. Ex. 34:10-16; Deut. 7; Judges 3:5-6), **not to worship the gods of the Amorites**. The prophet rebuked them for their continued disobedience (**But you have not listened to Me [God]**). This message is similar to that from the Angel of the Lord at Bokim (cf. 2:1-3).

**6:11-12a.** The story of Gideon is introduced not by an affirmation that "God raised up a deliverer named Gideon," but rather by a narration of *how* God raised him up. Gideon's call or commission resulted from a confrontation with **the Angel of the LORD** (who is "the LORD," v. 14; cf. 2:1), who appeared to him as a sojourning stranger and **sat down under the oak in Ophrah**. Since Gideon's father **Joash** was an **Abiezrite** (a clan of Manasseh, Josh. 17:2), this Ophrah was not the place located in Benjamin but rather a northern site possibly near the border of Manasseh in the Jezreel Valley. Possible site identifications are el-Affula (six miles east of Megiddo) or et-Taiyiba (Hapharaim, eight miles northwest of Beth Shan). Gideon's act of **threshing wheat in a winepress** reflected both his fear of discovery by **the Midianites** and the smallness of his harvest. Normally wheat was threshed (the grain separated from the wheat stalks) in an open area on a threshing floor (cf. 1 Chron. 21:20-23) by oxen pulling threshing sledges over the stalks.

**6:12b-13.** The Angel's introductory remark affirmed the Lord's presence with **Gideon** (you is sing.) and described Gideon as a **mighty warrior** ("mighty man of valor"; KJV; the words *gibbôr hāyil* are also applied to Jephthah, 11:1; and to Boaz, Ruth 2:1). Though this description may have been spoken in satire (at this point Gideon was anything but a mighty warrior!), it probably reflected Gideon's potentiality through divine enablement, as well as expressing his notable rank in the community. Gideon's initial response ignored the singular pronoun "you" (Judges 6:12), for he replied, **If the LORD is with us** (pl. pronoun). Gideon questioned the divine promise in view of his people's present circumstances. He correctly concluded, however, that **the LORD had put them into the hand of Midian**.

**6:14.** "The Angel of the LORD" (vv. 11-12) now spoke as **the LORD** and commissioned Gideon to **Go... and save Israel out of Midian's hand**. The words **the strength you have** perhaps assumed the divine presence previously mentioned (v. 12).

**6:15.** **But**, Gideon objected, **My clan is the weakest... and I am the least**. This objection might have stemmed from typical Near-Eastern humility, but perhaps it also reflected a good amount of reality.

**6:16.** God's reassurance reaffirmed His presence with Gideon (**I will be with you**) and the ease with which he would accomplish victory over **the Midianites (as if they were but one man)**.

**6:17-21.** **Gideon** requested a **sign** to confirm the Lord's promise. This request was granted (cf. v. 21). Meanwhile Gideon's uncertainty regarding the exact identity of his supernatural Visitor prompted him to offer typical Near-Eastern hospitality. The word for **offering** or gift (*minhâh*), which he proposed to **set... before** the Visitor, could refer to a freewill offering in Israel's sacrificial system, or it could refer to tribute offered as a present to a king or other superior (cf. 3:15). The large amount of food prepared by Gideon—goat's **meat and broth**, and **bread made from an ephah** (one-half bushel) **of flour**—reflected both his wealth in a destitute time and the typical excessiveness of Near-Eastern hospitality. He no doubt planned to take the leftovers home for his family! But **the Angel of the LORD touched** the food offering **with the tip of His staff** and consumed it by **fire**, thus providing the sign Gideon had requested (6:17; cf. Lev. 9:24; 1 Kings 18:38). Then **the Angel... disappeared**.

**6:22-24.** Gideon's consternation probably reflected his fear of impending death because of seeing the divine presence (cf. Ex. 33:20). When **the LORD** assured **Gideon** he was **not going to die... Gideon built an altar** and named it **the LORD is Peace**.

### Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

Because of Israel's disobedience, the Lord sent the Midianites to oppress His people and judge them for their apostasy. The Midianites came from the land east of the Jordan and southward into the desert regions. For seven years, the Israelites suffered greatly at the hands of the Midianites, who came yearly to raid their land and steal their crops. When the Israelites cried out to the Lord for deliverance, He first sent them a prophet to remind them of their disobedience to the God who had brought them to this land (Judg. 6:7-10). Then the Angel of the Lord appeared to a man named Gideon (vs. 11). Gideon was to be the judge the Lord would use to deliver His people. So important was his role that his call came by way of this Angel. Here, as is often the case in the Old Testament, this title probably refers to the Lord Himself appearing in visible form (cf. 2:1-5). The Lord's words must have been striking to Gideon, who was threshing "wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites" (Judg. 6:11). Like his fellow countrymen, Gideon lived in fear of the armies of Midian as he tried to hide his harvest from them. In spite of the distressing situation for both Gideon and Israel, the Angel declared that the Lord was with him. As Gideon's initial response indicates, the Lord's presence was not in evidence as far as Gideon was concerned. The Lord had not intervened to deliver the people. Gideon made two false assumptions. First, he assumed that the oppression of Israel and the absence of miraculous acts of deliverance meant the Lord had abandoned His people. Second, he seemed to assume Israel was owed the Lord's deliverance in spite of their sin. We need to avoid such thinking ourselves. We cannot expect the Lord's blessing when we fail to follow Him. And even if we are following Him, we have no guarantee our lives will be easy. However, we always can be sure He is present and concerned about us, and He will act in our best interests in His own time and way. The second part of the message must have been equally astonishing to Gideon, for the Angel addressed him as "mighty man of valor." This title spoke of strength and bravery and is often used in the Old Testament to describe great warriors (cf. Josh. 8:3; 2 Kings 5:1; 1 Chron. 12:21). The title hardly seemed to fit Gideon, who was cowering in fear of the Midianites. Gideon even described himself as being poor and "the least in [his] father's house" (Judg. 6:15). Here is an important lesson for all of us. God sees us as capable of great things not because of our abilities but simply because He is with us. Gideon recognized his limitations but not what God could (can) do with a man of faith. It is true that Gideon did not have great faith; but he did have

faith. The Lord nurtured that faith step by step until Gideon was willing to step out and lead just three hundred men to a great victory over a massive Midianite army. The miraculous deliverance Gideon had longed for finally came, and it came through him, a lowly, very imperfect man who simply acted in faith.

## **Lesson Introduction and Background**

### **From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary**

The odds seemed to have been stacked against her, having been born into slavery in Maryland in 1822. As a child, she was often beaten and whipped by various masters. She received a head injury when a slave owner threw a heavy metal weight at another slave and hit her by mistake. The result was a lifelong struggle with epilepsy, dizziness, and pain. Who would not expect such a person to live and die in obscurity? But that was not the case for Harriet Tubman! She escaped from slavery, but risked recapture as she returned to lead numerous missions to rescue approximately 70 enslaved family and friends. Against all odds and led by a strong Christian faith, Harriet Tubman overcame slavery, injury, abuse, and disability. History now knows her as an abolitionist, a humanitarian, and a Union spy who helped guide a raid that freed 700 slaves during the American Civil War. Very few people who live in Western democracies will ever face the challenges of a Harriet Tubman. Even so, we all experience what it's like to have the odds stacked against us at one time or another. Today we will look at a judge of Israel who seemed to have little chance of success—until God stepped in!

This study moves directly to the judge—Gideon, a member of the tribe of Manasseh. The final verse of Judges 5 states that Israel had rest for 40 years after Barak defeated Sisera and the Canaanites. During that time the memory of the previous oppression began to fade. A new generation arose and began to worship other gods. Again God allowed others to oppress Israel—Midianites, Amalekites, etc. (Judges 6:3). The Midianites were descendants of Abraham and Keturah (Genesis 25:2). When Moses fled from Egypt, he settled in Midian and married a daughter of a priest in Midian (Exodus 2:15, 16, 21). The Amalekites had Esau as their progenitor (Genesis 36:10, 16). The Amalekites attacked the Israelites after they left Egypt and as they were approaching Sinai (Exodus 17:8-16). That was the battle when Israel would prevail only when Moses raised his hands. After the battle Moses stated that there would be war against Amalek from generation to generation. These two groups, plus “other eastern peoples” (a general name for eastern groups of Arabs), came against Israel in great numbers. For seven years they came and destroyed the crops and livestock of the Israelites (Judges 6:1, 4). After seven years the Israelites cried to the Lord (Judges 6:7). The Lord sent a prophet to remind Israel of what he had done for them when they came out of Egypt and to rebuke them for their disobedience (vv. 8-10). This condemnation by God's prophet is immediately before the text for today. God then moved to prepare another judge to deliver his penitent people. It had been 47 years since Deborah and Barak, with God's help, subdued the Canaanites: 40 years of peace (Judges 5:31), followed by the 7 years of oppression (6:1). The approximate date for the events of this lesson has been determined to be about 1175 BC.

## **Major Theme Analysis**

*(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)*

### **Profile of Gideon**

#### **From the Life Application Notes**

Most of us want to know God's plan for our lives, but we're not always sure how to find it. One common misunderstanding is the idea that God's guidance will come to us out of the blue, that it has nothing to do with what we're doing now. But if we're always looking around for God's next assignment, we run the risk of ruining whatever we're working on right now. Fortunately, the Bible points to a kind of guidance that does not put our current projects in jeopardy. In the Bible's descriptions of how God guided many people, we can see that often God's call came while people were completely immersed in the challenge of the moment. A good example of this kind of guidance is seen in Gideon's life. Gideon had a limited vision, but he was committed to it. His challenge was to obtain food for his family even though hostile invaders were making the growing, gathering, and preparation of the food almost impossible. Gideon was resourceful. He put a winepress to double duty by turning it into a sunken threshing floor. It lacked ventilation to blow the chaff away, but at least it was hidden from the Midianites. Gideon was working in his threshing floor when God sent him a messenger with a challenge. Gideon was surprised by what God told him to do. He did not want to jump into a task for which he was ill prepared. The angel had to overcome three objections before Gideon was convinced: (1) Gideon's feelings of responsibility for his family's welfare, (2) his doubts about the call itself, and (3) his feelings of

inadequacy for the job. Once Gideon was convinced, however, he obeyed with zest, resourcefulness, and speed. He dedicated those personality traits to God, with whom he was now personally acquainted. Gideon had his weak moments and failures, but he was still God's servant. If you can easily see yourself in the Gideon's weakness, can you also see yourself in being willing to serve? Remember Gideon as a man who obeyed God by giving his attention to the task at hand. Then give your full attention to believing God will prepare you for tomorrow when it comes.

*Strengths and accomplishments:*

- Israel's fifth judge. A military strategist who was expert at surprise
- A member of the Hall of Faith in Hebrews 11
- Defeated the Midianite army
- Was offered a hereditary kingship by the men of Israel
- Though slow to be convinced, acted on his convictions

*Weaknesses and mistakes:*

- Feared that his own limitations would prevent God from working
- Collected Midianite gold and made a symbol that became an evil object of worship
- Through a concubine, fathered a son who would bring great grief and tragedy to both Gideon's family and the nation of Israel
- Failed to establish the nation in God's ways; after he died they all went back to idol worship

*Lessons from his life:*

- God calls in the middle of our present obedience. As we are faithful, he gives us more responsibility
- God expands and uses the abilities he has already built into us
- God uses us in spite of our limitations and failures
- Even those who make great spiritual progress can easily fall into sin if they don't consistently follow God

*Vital statistics:*

- Where: Ophrah, Valley of Jezreel, spring of Harod
- Occupations: Farmer, warrior, and judge
- Relatives: Father: Joash. Son: Abimelech
- Contemporaries: Zebah, Zalmunna

*Key verses:*

“ ‘But Lord,’ Gideon asked, ‘how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.’ The LORD answered, ‘I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites together’ ” (Judges 6:15-16). His story is told in Judges 6-8. He is also mentioned in Hebrews 11:32.

## **God's Call (Judges 6:11-12)**

11 Now the Angel of the Lord came and sat under the terebinth tree which was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress, in order to hide it from the Midianites.

12 And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him, and said to him, "The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor!"

### **God can call His people during normal working times (11)**

*God called Peter, James and John while they were fishing (Luke 5:4-8)*

4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." 5 Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets." 6 When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. 7 So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. 8 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!"

*God called Samuel while he was sleep (1 Sam 3:7-10)*

7 Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord: The word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. 8 The Lord called Samuel a third time, and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." Then Eli realized that the Lord was calling the boy. 9 So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. 10 The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

*God called Matthew while he was collecting taxes (Luke 5:27-28)*

27 After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him, 28 and Levi got up, left everything and followed him.

*God called the widow through Elijah while she was preparing her last meal (1 Kings 17:9-16)*

9 "Go at once to Zarephath of Sidon and stay there. I have commanded a widow in that place to supply you with food." 10 So he went to Zarephath. When he came to the town gate, a widow was there gathering sticks. He called to her and asked, "Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink?" 11 As she was going to get it, he called, "And bring me, please, a piece of bread." 12 "As surely as the Lord your God lives," she replied, "I don't have any bread — only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it — and die." 13 Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small cake of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. 14 For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the Lord gives rain on the land.'" 15 She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. 16 For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the Lord spoken by Elijah.

## **When God calls, He is always with us (12)**

*With us because He is with us wherever we go (Josh 1:9)*

9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

*With us because He promised He would be (Matt 28:20)*

20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

*With us because God will never forsake us (Heb 13:5)*

5 Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

*With us to protect us (Ps 37:28)*

28 For the Lord loves the just and will not forsake his faithful ones. They will be protected forever, but the offspring of the wicked will be cut off;

*With us to uphold us (Isa 41:10)*

10 So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

## **Objections and Answers (Judges 6:13-16)**

13 Gideon said to Him, "O my lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?' But now the Lord has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites."

14 Then the Lord turned to him and said, "Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?"

15 So he said to Him, "O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house."

16 And the Lord said to him, "Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man."

### **Objection about who it is happening to (13)**

#### *Objections because of feeling wronged (Job 19:4-7)*

4 If it is true that I have gone astray, my error remains my concern alone. 5 If indeed you would exalt yourselves above me and use my humiliation against me, 6 then know that God has wronged me and drawn his net around me. 7 "Though I cry, 'I've been wronged!' I get no response; though I call for help, there is no justice.

#### *Objections because of bitterness (Job 27:2)*

2 "As surely as God lives, who has denied me justice, the Almighty, who has made me taste bitterness of soul,

#### *Objections because of feeling forsaken (Isa 59:9-11)*

9 So justice is far from us, and righteousness does not reach us. We look for light, but all is darkness; for brightness, but we walk in deep shadows. 10 Like the blind we grope along the wall, feeling our way like men without eyes. At midday we stumble as if it were twilight; among the strong, we are like the dead. 11 We all growl like bears; we moan mournfully like doves. We look for justice, but find none; for deliverance, but it is far away.

#### *Objections because of seeing others in better situations (Jer 12:1)*

12 You are always righteous, O Lord, when I bring a case before you. Yet I would speak with you about your justice: Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all the faithless live at ease?

#### *Objections because of feeling God is slow in His deliverance (Hab 1:2-4)*

2 How long, O Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not save? 3 Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds. 4 Therefore the law is paralyzed, and justice never prevails. The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted.

### **Answer is being sent using God's strength (14)**

#### *God's strength through His grace (2 Cor 12:9)*

9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

#### *God's strength because His arms are not too short (Num 11:23)*

23 The Lord answered Moses, "Is the Lord's arm too short? You will now see whether or not what I say will come true for you."

#### *God's strength because He is the one who provides it to His people (Ps 68:35)*

35 You are awesome, O God, in your sanctuary; the God of Israel gives power and strength to his people. Praise be to God!

*God's strength because He is mighty (Ps 93:4)*

4 Mightier than the thunder of the great waters, mightier than the breakers of the sea — the Lord on high is mighty.

*God's strength because He is the only one who can (Deut 3:24)*

24 "O Sovereign Lord, you have begun to show to your servant your greatness and your strong hand. For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do the deeds and mighty works you do?"

*God's strength because God is strong (Ps 62:11-12)*

11 One thing God has spoken, two things have I heard: that you, O God, are strong, 12 and that you, O Lord, are loving. Surely you will reward each person according to what he has done.

### **Objection about weakness (15)**

*Weaknesses that started in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:8-12)*

8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" 10 He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." 11 And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" 12 The man said, "The woman you put here with me — she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

*Weaknesses like what Moses gave that he couldn't talk (Ex 4:10-12)*

10 Moses said to the Lord, "O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue." 11 The Lord said to him, "Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the Lord? 12 Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say."

*Weaknesses like what Aaron gave about peer pressure (Ex 32:21-24)*

21 He said to Aaron, "What did these people do to you, that you led them into such great sin?" 22 "Do not be angry, my lord," Aaron answered. "You know how prone these people are to evil. 23 They said to me, 'Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him.' 24 So I told them, 'Whoever has any gold jewelry, take it off.' Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!"

*Weaknesses that make one unfit for service (Luke 9:59-62)*

59 He said to another man, "Follow me." But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." 60 Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." 61 Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family." 62 Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

### **Answer is God is with us (16)**

*God with us so that we can stand against life's trials (Josh 1:5)*

5 No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.

*God with us and applying His strength to help (Isa 41:10)*

10 So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

*God with us to teach us to obey His Word (Matt 28:20)*

20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

*God with us by having His Hand enabling our efforts to be successful (Acts 11:21)*

21 The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

### **Security Promised (Judges 6:17-18)**

17 Then he said to Him, "If now I have found favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You who talk with me.

18 Do not depart from here, I pray, until I come to You and bring out my offering and set it before You." And He said, "I will wait until you come back."

### **Security through signs (17)**

*God's gives signs of His faithfulness and compassion by renewing them every day (Lam 3:22-23)*

22 Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. 23 They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

*God is faithful through His sign of the rainbow (Gen 9:13)*

13 I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth.

*God showed His faithfulness through His sign of stopping the sun for a day (Isa 38:7-8)*

7 "This is the Lord's sign to you that the Lord will do what he has promised: 8 I will make the shadow cast by the sun go back the ten steps it has gone down on the stairway of Ahaz." So the sunlight went back the ten steps it had gone down.

*God showed His faithfulness His sign of the Jews worshiping on His mountain (Ex 3:12)*

12 And God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain."

### **Security through God's patience (18)**

*God's patience is manifested in grace, slowness of anger and love abounding (Psalm 103:8)*

8 The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.

*Patience that is tied to God's covenant (Ezekiel 16:60)*

60 Yet I will remember the covenant I made with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you.

*Patience that should lead to our repentance (Romans 2:4)*

4 Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?

*Patience that demonstrates God's justice (Romans 3:25-26)*

25 God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— 26 he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

*Patience because God wants all to repent (2 Peter 3:9)*

9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

## Conclusion and Other Thoughts

### Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

Reading this portion is something like watching a tennis match. Your head turns from one side of the tennis court to the other, and then back, over and over and over again. It is almost a re-run of God's calling of Moses in Exodus 3 and 4. Both Moses and Gideon seem to work hard at finding reasons why God should not choose them as Israel's deliverer. It also reminds me of Exodus 33 and 34, where God promises to be with Moses personally (the "you" is singular, not plural), but Moses wants God's assurance that He will be with His people collectively. I am puzzled why the commentators I have consulted have not called attention to the fact that the "you's" found in verses 12-16 of our text are singular, referring to Gideon alone and not to the Israelites collectively. It is apparent that Gideon finally gets this in verse 15, which prompts him to object even more strongly. With these observations, let us see how this text unfolds.

After the prophet appeared with his divine review and rebuke, the Angel of the LORD appears to Gideon *while he is threshing wheat in a winepress* (verse 11). I should not have to tell you that when one was threshing wheat in those days, it was done in a high place, out in the open, so that the wind would carry away the chaff when the grain was threshed by treading on it and then tossing it into the air. A winepress was no place to thresh wheat! That would be like trying to use a screwdriver to drive a nail. Gideon used the winepress so that he could keep out of sight of the Midianites, who, if they saw him, would come and take his grain. Gideon's actions were indicative of how bad things had become in Israel.

And so the Angel of the LORD appears and sits beneath the oak tree in Ophrah, looking on as Gideon is making the effort to thresh grain out of sight. The Angel then approaches Gideon with these amazing words, "**The Lord is with you, courageous warrior!**" Gideon hardly looked the part of a "**courageous warrior**" at this moment, but I don't believe that the Angel is mocking him. He is assuring Gideon of God's presence and power, which will eventually make him a mighty warrior.

Gideon seems to sidestep the fact that God was singling him out from all the rest of the nation and chooses instead to focus on God's dealings with the nation, as though the Angel had said, "The LORD is with Israel, you mighty man of valor." Gideon's response in verse 13 is very revealing. It tells us, for example, that Gideon has been taught about God and His miraculous deeds for Israel in the past. In a sense, Gideon repeats the words of the prophet regarding God's powerful deliverance of the Israelites in the past. But he does so in a way that turns God's words upside-down. The prophet's words were spoken to rebuke the Israelites for disobeying God's command not to worship the Canaanite gods. Gideon uses God's past dealings to rebuke God for forsaking His people, and (it would seem) this also provided Gideon with an excuse to remain on the sidelines, rather than to engage the Canaanites in battle.

God will have none of this, although His words are amazingly gentle and gracious: "Then the Lord himself turned to him and said, "You have the strength. Deliver Israel from the power of the Midianites! Have I not sent you?" (verse 14) Did Gideon protest that God had not delivered Israel from Midianite oppression? Then here is God's promise to be with Gideon, empowering him so that he could deliver his people from their bondage. God commissions Gideon to perform this task – God has sent him.

Suddenly God's use of the singular ("**you**") sinks in. "Now just hold on a minute," Gideon objects, "I am not the man for the job you have in mind." And so Gideon appeals to his insignificance and lack of power and influence due to his status in the family (verse 15). And all this after God has just assured him of His presence and power ("**You have the strength. Deliver Israel from the power of the Midianites.**"), and of His divine commission ("**Have I not sent you?**").

God brushed aside Gideon's "Who am I?" objections, giving him this assurance: "**Ah, but I will be with you! You will strike down the whole Midianite army**" (verse 16). Hearing these words, Gideon requests a sign from God. Listen carefully to what he asks for and how God provides him with the requested sign:

*17 Gideon said to him, "If you really are pleased with me, then give me a sign as proof that it is really you speaking with me. 18 Do not leave this place until I come back with a gift and present it to you." The Lord said, "I will stay here until you come back."*

*19 Gideon went and prepared a young goat, along with unleavened bread made from an ephah of flour. He put the meat in a basket and the broth in a pot. He brought the food to him under the oak tree and presented it to him. 20 God's messenger said to him, "Put the meat and unleavened bread on this rock, and pour out the broth." Gideon did as instructed. 21 The Lord's messenger touched the meat and the unleavened bread with the tip of his staff. Fire flared up from the rock and consumed the meat and unleavened bread. The Lord's messenger then disappeared.*

*22 When Gideon realized that it was the Lord's messenger, he said, "Oh no! Master, Lord! I have seen the Lord's messenger face to face!" 23 The Lord said to him, "You are safe! Do not be afraid! You are not going to die!" 24 Gideon built an altar for the Lord there, and named it "The Lord is on friendly terms with me." To this day it is still there in Ophrah of the Abiezrites (Judges 6:17-24).*

Gideon now grants that God has chosen him to deliver the Israelites. His concern here is not that God will actually give him the victory (such concerns will surface later), but that it is actually the God of Israel who is speaking to him. He asks for confirmation that it is really Israel's God who is speaking to him.

Now this may sound foolish to you and to me. It may sound cowardly (and perhaps there is a bit of that as well). But we need to understand his request in the light of the world in which Gideon lived. From what we have already seen, Gideon was well aware of God's deliverances of Israel in the past. I don't believe that Gideon or many Israelites of that day had totally "subtracted" God from their lives. Their sin was to "add" the worship of heathen deities. I've seen the mindset that leads to such decisions in my own ministry. I once visited an elderly couple who wanted to be baptized. As I inquired about their motivation, they made it clear that they had done almost everything they could think of and they just "didn't want to leave any stone unturned." So, too, the Israelites wanted to cover all their spiritual bases, and so they worshipped God and the Canaanite deities. Now, deity is speaking to him, and he wants to be absolutely certain it is not an embarrassing case of mistaken identity.

Just how did Gideon expect God to give him a sign as he offered a sacrifice? What was he expecting? I would call your attention to two other events recorded in the Old Testament, the first in Judges 13 and the second in 1 Kings 18. In Judges 13, the Angel of the LORD appeared to Manoah's wife, the woman who was soon to become Samson's mother:

*15 Manoah said to the Lord's messenger, "Please stay here awhile, so we can prepare a young goat for you to eat." 16 The Lord's messenger said to Manoah, "If I stay, I will not eat your food. But if you want to make a burnt sacrifice to the Lord, you should offer it." (He said this because Manoah did not know that he was the Lord's messenger.) 17 Manoah said to the Lord's messenger, "Tell us your name, so we can honor you when your announcement comes true." 18 The Lord's messenger said to him, "You should not ask me my name, because you cannot comprehend it." 19 Manoah took a young goat and a grain offering and offered them on a rock to the Lord. The Lord's messenger did an amazing thing as Manoah and his wife watched. 20 As the flame went up from the altar toward the sky, the Lord's messenger went up in it while Manoah and his wife watched. They fell facedown to the ground. 21 The Lord's messenger did not appear again to Manoah and his wife. After all this happened Manoah realized that the visitor had been the Lord's messenger. 22 Manoah said to his wife, "We will certainly die, because we have seen a supernatural being!" 23 But his wife said to him, "If the Lord wanted to kill us, he would not have accepted the burnt offering and the grain offering from us. He would not have shown us all these things, or have spoken to us like this just now" (Judges 13:17-23).*

Manoah also wanted to be certain as to the identity of the Angel of the LORD who had appeared to them, and so he asked the Angel to wait while they prepared a young goat as an offering, just as Gideon did. He asked the Angel for His name, but was not given the answer. Then when the offering was made **"to the LORD,"** the Angel miraculously ascended into the sky in the flames. They knew for certain that this was the Angel of the LORD; this was the God of Israel who had appeared to them.

I will simply remind you of the second case, which is described in 1 Kings 18. Elijah challenged the false prophets and their gods to a contest on Mount Carmel. Let them offer a sacrifice to their god, Baal, and he would then offer a sacrifice to the God of Israel. The God/god who consumed the offering with fire would prove to be the one true God. The prophets of Baal sacrificed to their god according to their prescribed rituals, and nothing happened (other than the prophets abusing themselves to get their god's attention). But when Elijah offered the (drenched) sacrifice to the God of Israel, He responded by consuming the entire sacrifice – bull, wood, rocks, and water – with fire! God had proven Himself to be God, God alone, by His response to Elijah's offering.

I am convinced that Gideon believed that if it was the God of Israel who was speaking to him, He would do something miraculous when he offered a sacrifice in a way that was consistent with the Old Testament Law. He believed that if God was present in the worship of His people, He would make His presence known. And so he asked the Angel to wait as he prepared for this sacrificial offering. And Gideon was right! The Angel reached out with His staff and touched the sacrificial meal and fire sprang forth from the rock, consuming the sacrifice entirely. Now Gideon can proclaim this Angel to be the Sovereign God, the God of Israel. And knowing that this was God caused him to wonder how he could still be alive, since he had seen God face-to-face. Personally,

I cannot fault Gideon for seeking this confirmation of God's identity. Gideon then built an altar to the LORD and called it "**The LORD is Peace.**" That peace was the reason he was still alive.

*(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/7-first-things-first-judges-61-35>)*

### ***Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary***

Gideon was called by God for a special task, and the man went to work to deliver his people. God had Gideon employ an unusual strategy (see Judges 7:16-25), and the sword of the Lord won a great victory. If God were to tell you that he had special plans for you, how would you respond? Perhaps your excuses sound like some of these: I'm too weak; I'm tired; I don't know what to say; I can't do it alone; Everyone is against me; Nobody cares about me; This world is changing so fast; Satan is making my life miserable; I just feel lost; I can't do anything right! Like Gideon, we may be tempted to answer a perceived call from God with excuses. But each of these excuses and more are answered in promises God gives to those who trust him. When God calls, he also provides the resources for us to answer.

### ***Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary***

1. God will reveal Himself to us in the midst of hardship (Judg. 6:11-12)
2. Even when it seems that God has forsaken us, He has a plan for deliverance (vss. 13-14)
3. When we are sent by God, we can go with confidence
4. God's will is not limited by our financial status or social class (vs. 15)
5. God will reassure us that He is with us (vss. 16-17)
6. God is long-suffering and will allow us to prepare for duty in His service (vs. 18)