

Judges 7 Study Guide

“The Lord Saves by Weakness, Not by Numbers”

Emphasis: Judges 7:1–8, 19–23

1. Why does God say Gideon’s army is too large? (Judges 7:1–2)

The Lord tells Gideon that the people with him are too many. That is surprising because Midian’s army is enormous. Judges 7:12 says the Midianites, Amalekites, and people of the East were “as numerous as locusts,” and their camels were “without number.”

But God explains the reason:

“Lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me.’”
— Judges 7:2 NKJV

God is not only delivering Israel from Midian. He is also delivering Israel from pride. If Israel wins with a large army, they may think the victory came from their strength.

Everyday Application: Sometimes God reduces what we depend on so we can see who we truly depend on. Weakness can become the place where God receives glory.

2. What does the departure of the fearful soldiers show us? (Judges 7:3)

Gideon announces that whoever is fearful may depart. Twenty-two thousand leave, and ten thousand remain. This follows the instruction in Deuteronomy 20:8, where fearful soldiers were allowed to return home so their fear would not spread to others.

This does not mean God despises fearful people. Gideon himself has struggled with fear (Judges 6:15, 27). But God is showing that this battle will not be won by human confidence, numbers, or pressure. The army must be shaped by God’s purpose.

Everyday Application: Fear is real, but fear cannot be allowed to lead. God may expose fear not to shame us, but to teach us dependence and courage.

3. Why does God reduce the army again from 10,000 to 300? (Judges 7:4–8)

Even after 22,000 leave, the Lord says the army is still too many. The men are tested by how they drink water, and only 300 are chosen. The exact meaning of the water test is debated, but the point is clear because God already told us His reason: Israel must not boast in itself.

The 300 are not presented as a naturally unbeatable elite force. They are too few to explain the victory humanly. God is setting the stage for a deliverance that can only be credited to Him.

Forward Connection to Christ: Jesus often works through what looks small or unimpressive. He compares the kingdom to a mustard seed, small at first but growing beyond expectation (Matthew 13:31–32). He also chooses ordinary men to become His disciples (Matthew 4:18–22).

Everyday Application: God does not need impressive numbers, resources, or status to accomplish His work. Faithfulness matters more than appearance.

4. What does Gideon's reduced army teach about faith and obedience? (Judges 7:7–8)

The Lord says:

“By the three hundred men who lapped I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into your hand.”
— Judges 7:7 NKJV

Gideon must now move forward with a force that looks completely inadequate. This is faith in action. God gives the promise, and Gideon must obey even though the visible resources look insufficient.

This echoes Jericho, where Israel marched by faith before the walls fell (Joshua 6:2–5, 20; Hebrews 11:30). It also echoes the Red Sea, where the Lord fought for Israel when escape looked impossible (Exodus 14:13–14).

Everyday Application: Faith often means obeying God when the numbers do not seem to add up. The question is not, “Do I have enough?” but, “Has God spoken?”

5. Why does God send Gideon into the Midianite camp before the battle? (Judges 7:9–15)

That night, the Lord tells Gideon:

“Arise, go down against the camp, for I have delivered it into your hand.”
— Judges 7:9 NKJV

But God also knows Gideon is still afraid. So He says that if Gideon fears going down, he should take Purah his servant and listen to what the Midianites are saying (Judges 7:10–11). Gideon goes and hears a Midianite soldier describe a dream about a loaf of barley bread striking a tent and causing it to collapse. The dream is interpreted as God delivering Midian into Gideon's hand (Judges 7:13–14).

This is a gracious moment. God does not shame Gideon for fear. He gives him assurance. Gideon's courage is strengthened not by self-talk, but by hearing that God has already gone ahead of him. Before Gideon fights, he worships (Judges 7:15).

This connects back to Gideon's earlier weakness. When the Lord first called him, Gideon asked, “O my Lord, how can I save Israel?” (Judges 6:15). The Lord's answer was, “Surely I will be with you” (Judges 6:16). In Judges 7, God patiently confirms that promise again.

Forward Connection to Christ: Jesus also strengthens fearful followers before sending them. After His resurrection, He comes to the disciples while they are gathered in fear and

says, “Peace to you!” before sending them out (John 20:19–21). He does not deny their fear; He meets them with His presence and peace.

Everyday Application: God knows the difference between fear that refuses obedience and fear that needs strengthening. Gideon still feels fear, but he keeps moving toward obedience. When God calls us to something hard, He often gives encouragement along the way—not so we can avoid obedience, but so we can step into it with renewed trust.

6. Why are the trumpets, pitchers, torches, and shout so unusual? (Judges 7:19–20)

Gideon’s men do not begin with swords drawn in a normal military attack. They blow trumpets, break pitchers, hold torches, and cry, “The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!” The method is strange, but that is part of the point. The victory will not be explained by ordinary military tactics.

This reminds us of Jericho, where the walls fell after marching, trumpet blasts, and a shout (Joshua 6:20). In both stories, God uses unusual means so His power is unmistakable.

Forward Connection to Christ: God’s greatest victory also came through what looked like weakness. The cross looked like defeat, but through it Christ triumphed over sin and death (John 19:30; Colossians 2:14–15).

Everyday Application: God’s methods may not match our instincts. We often want visible strength, but God may call us to obedient weakness so His power is seen.

7. How does God actually defeat Midian? (Judges 7:21–22)

The 300 stand around the camp, and the Lord throws Midian into confusion. The enemy turns on itself. The victory comes through divine intervention, not Israel’s superior force.

This happens elsewhere in Scripture. At the Red Sea, the Lord troubled the Egyptian army (Exodus 14:24–25). Later, the Philistines also turned their swords against one another in confusion (1 Samuel 14:20). God is able to defeat enemies without depending on normal human means.

Forward Connection to Christ: In the Gospels, Jesus shows authority over powers greater than human ability. The wind and sea obey Him (Mark 4:39–41), demons obey Him (Mark 1:27), and even death yields to His voice (John 11:43–44).

Everyday Application: God can work in ways we cannot engineer. Our responsibility is faithfulness; the outcome belongs to Him.

8. Why does the victory expand beyond the 300? (Judges 7:23)

After Midian flees, men from Naphtali, Asher, and Manasseh gather and pursue them. The 300 are central to the initial victory, but others are drawn into the larger work.

This shows both sides of God’s work. He reduces the army so Israel cannot boast, but He still involves His people in the victory. God is the Deliverer, but His people are called to respond.

Forward Connection to Christ: Jesus begins with a small group of disciples, but the mission expands outward. He tells them to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18–20), and Acts 1:8 describes the witness spreading from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth.

Everyday Application: God may begin a work through a few faithful people, but that obedience can invite others into the mission. Do not despise small beginnings.

Quick Summary of Judges 6:17–40

After Gideon is called, he asks for a sign to confirm that the Lord is speaking to him. He prepares an offering, and the Angel of the Lord touches it with the staff, causing fire to rise from the rock and consume it (Judges 6:17–21). Gideon realizes he has seen the Angel of the Lord, but the Lord reassures him with peace, and Gideon builds an altar called **The-LORD-Is-Peace** (Judges 6:22–24).

Then God gives Gideon his first assignment: tear down his father's altar to Baal and cut down the wooden image beside it. Gideon obeys, but he does it at night because he fears his father's household and the men of the city (Judges 6:25–27). His obedience is real, even though his courage is still growing.

When the men of the city demand Gideon's death, his father Joash defends him by saying that if Baal is truly a god, Baal can plead for himself (Judges 6:28–32). Gideon is then called Jerubbaal, meaning, "Let Baal plead against him."

After that, the Spirit of the Lord comes upon Gideon, and he gathers men for battle (Judges 6:33–35). Still uncertain, Gideon asks for the sign of the fleece: first that the fleece be wet while the ground is dry, then that the fleece be dry while the ground is wet (Judges 6:36–40). God patiently confirms His word.

Summary: Judges 6:17–40 shows Gideon moving from fear toward faith. God patiently confirms His call, confronts idolatry in Gideon's own household, and prepares him to lead. Gideon is not fearless, but he begins to obey — and God keeps meeting him with patience and power.