



Called

THOUGH GIDEON CONSIDERED HIMSELF INADEQUATE, GOD CALLED HIM TO DELIVER HIS PEOPLE FROM THE MIDIANITES.

Scripture Passage: Judges 6:1-4,7-16 Memory Verse: Judges 6:16

Some of the most intriguing and exciting accounts in all of the Bible are the “call” accounts. When God had a job that needed to be done, He selected ordinary people and equipped them in extraordinary ways. He supplied the strength and protection they needed to get the job done every single time.

The book of Judges has its fair share of such accounts, including the story of Gideon. From the start, Gideon had his concerns, but his fears could not compare to God’s power and purposes. Even though he was the youngest member of a seemingly insignificant family, God used Gideon to lead and deliver His people from an intimidating enemy at a vulnerable time in their history.

As you prepare for this lesson, contemplate the call God has placed on your life. The enemy may try to convince you that you’re not up for the task. Yet remember, His power is perfected in your weakness, and His grace is sufficient for you (2 Cor. 12:9-10). Ask Him to give the courage you need to live in that truth each day and the wisdom to guide the adults in your Bible study to embrace this reality in their own lives.



Weekly Podcast: Group Leader Training

Scan here to gain insights about this week’s study on Apple podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts, or at goExploreTheBible.com/adults-training.



We often compare ourselves to others. This rarely has a positive result. It either leads to pride because we think we are better than others, or it leads to discouragement because we believe others are better than us. It is especially confounding when God calls a person to serve Him in some capacity when someone else seems better fit to do it. God does this so that when the task is accomplished, God will receive the glory for it. Such was the case with Gideon. (PSG, p. 82)

When have you felt inadequate for a task? Where did you turn for help?



Understand the Context (Judges 3:7–6:40)

The period between Joshua’s death and the establishment of Israel’s monarchy was tumultuous. “Everyone did whatever seemed right to him” (Judg. 17:6; 21:25), which often meant worshipping the false gods of their pagan enemies instead of the one, true God who led them through the wilderness and into the promised land. So, for approximately three hundred years (1350–1050 BC), God’s people experienced a continual cycle of rebellion, retribution, remorse, and restoration. Rather than dominating their enemies, Israelites’ enemies dominated them because of their sin and rebellion.

To fill the leadership void during that period, God raised up a series of judges. While we tend to think of judges in legal contexts, these figures filled political and military capacities. On the surface, they seemed rather ordinary. Yet, they were faithful when God called them, which meant more than their expertise or background. They weren’t perfect. In fact, some of them made serious mistakes along the way. Still, despite those flaws, God used them to deliver His people and bring Him glory.

The first judge was Othniel. The son of Caleb’s brother, he came from the tribe of Judah. Because of his success in battle, Othniel was united with Caleb’s daughter Achsah in marriage (see Josh. 15:17).

Next came the left-handed Ehud, from the tribe of Benjamin. Though often overlooked, his

accomplishments are noteworthy. He served as judge for eighty years, the longest tenure among the twelve. He’s best known for killing King Eglon and defeating the Moabites, which liberated Israel from burdensome taxation (Judg. 3:12–30).

Shamgar succeeded Ehud and is best known for killing six hundred Philistines with a cattle prod (3:31). We know nothing beyond that, as he faded from the scene as quickly as he entered it.

Deborah, the only female judge, followed Shamgar. At a particularly low point in Israel’s history, this “mother in Israel” (Judg. 5:7) provided leadership and instilled hope. With the help of her military commander, Barak, she oversaw the defeat of Sisera and the Canaanites.

Deborah also composed a wonderful song, found in Judges 5. These thirty-one verses began by placing honor for Israel’s victory in its rightful place: “I will sing praise to the LORD God of Israel” (Judg. 5:3). The song goes on to describe Israel’s struggles and victories against a backdrop of God’s justice and intervention. Sadly, the reign of this great woman of faith came to an end, once again putting Israel in a position of great instability. But God was ready to raise up a new, if somewhat reluctant, judge—Gideon.

As you read Judges 6:1–16, note how God was in control of everything that happened. (PSG, p. 83)

ENGAGE



PREPARE: Prior to the group time, display **Pack Item 3** (Poster: Key Characters in Joshua, Judges, Ruth), **Pack Item 5** (Map: The Judges of Israel), and **Pack Item 6** (Poster: The Oppressors in Judges).

ASK:

When have you felt inadequate for a task? Where did you turn for help? (PSG, p. 82)

READ:

Direct a volunteer to read the opening paragraph from page 82 of the PSG. Highlight the two dangers of comparing ourselves to others. Encourage adults to share whether they are more likely to see themselves as superior to others or inferior to others. Be prepared to share your own thoughts.

CONTEXT:

Point out **Pack Item 5** (Map: The Judges of Israel) and **Pack Item 6** (Poster: The Oppressors in Judges). Use this information to explain the first several judges in Israel and the enemies they defeated with God's help. Note that today's session focuses on God's call of Gideon.

Judges 6 indicates the Israelites abandoned the Lord again, so the Lord raised up the Midianites, accompanied by the Amalekites and the Qedemites, who oppressed Israel for seven years. As a result, the Israelites were impoverished and cried out to the Lord. . . . After that, the Lord called Gideon to be the next judge to deliver Israel from their oppressors. Gideon's account is the largest section in the book of Judges. (PSG, p. 83)

TRANSITION:

If we asked Gideon how he compared himself to others, he definitely would have fallen on the "inferior" end of the spectrum. But God still called him, and God still used Him.



Group Activity Option

Music

Distribute hymnals and direct the group to turn to "Trust and Obey" (*Baptist Hymnal*, 2008, No. 500). As you play a recording of the song, direct the group to read the lyrics and consider the message of the hymn. Affirm that the hymn is probably familiar to many adults. Ask: **What is the main theme of this hymn? What does it look like to trust and obey? When is it most difficult to trust and obey?** Share that this session focuses on God's call of Gideon and his struggles to trust God completely. Urge adults to reflect on their own calling and the struggles they have believing God can and will use them for His kingdom.

Oppression (Judg. 6:1-4,7-10)

1 The Israelites did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. So the LORD handed them over to Midian seven years, **2** and they oppressed Israel. Because of Midian, the Israelites made hiding places for themselves in the mountains, caves, and strongholds. **3** Whenever the Israelites planted crops, the Midianites, Amalekites, and the people of the east came and attacked them. **4** They encamped against them and destroyed the produce of the land, even as far as Gaza. They left nothing for Israel to eat, as well as no sheep, ox, or donkey. [. . .] **7** When the Israelites cried out to him because of Midian, **8** the LORD sent a prophet to them. He said to them, “This is what the LORD God of Israel says: ‘I brought you out of Egypt and out of the place of slavery. **9** I rescued you from the power of Egypt and the power of all who oppressed you. I drove them out before you and gave you their land. **10** I said to you: I am the LORD your God. Do not fear the gods of the Amorites whose land you live in. But you did not obey me.’”

(vv. 1-2) After Deborah’s death, God’s people again *did what was evil in the sight of the LORD* (Judg. 3:7,12; 4:1). As a result, the forty years of rest they had enjoyed also came to an end (see 5:31). This new round of sin triggered new judgments from the Lord. As a result of the Israelites’ transgressions, God *handed them over to Midian* for a period of *seven years*.

The Midianites actually descended from Abraham through Keturah, whom he had married after Sarah died (Gen. 25:1-6). Eventually, the family of *Midian* settled in “the land of the East” (v. 6). Over time, relations between the Israelites and Midianites soured. Moses led a mighty defeat over the Midianites. But God allowed Midian to oppress His rebellious people and force them to find *hiding places*. Instead of resting in the security of God, the Israelites were seeking security in *mountains, caves, and strongholds*.

(vv. 3-4) The Midianites, along with *the Amalekites* and other *people of the east*, proved to be an opportunistic foe. They targeted their attacks around Israel’s agricultural calendar. The Bible says *they encamped against* Israel. The Hebrew word for *encamped* implies they pitched their tents on Israel’s soil and laid siege. They focused on Israel’s crops and *destroyed the produce of the land*. Their path of destruction *left nothing for Israel to eat*.

In verses 5-6, the writer of Judges compared Israel’s enemies to a swarm of locusts, bringing to mind the eighth plague of God against the Egyptians (Ex. 10:3-20). Throughout Scripture, locusts serve as symbols of God’s power and judgment. In this case, the “locusts” afflicted the people of God, not their enemies.

Each attack from Midian and its allies left the Israelites destitute and in poverty. As the cycle continued to unfold, they did what came naturally during times of distress. They turned to the Lord for help and deliverance.

(vv. 7-10) When *the Israelites cried* to God, He responded by sending an unnamed *prophet*. Similar to John the Baptist, this prophet served as a forerunner to prepare the people for the next leader the Lord would send.

His message began with a reminder of past deliverance, specifically how God rescued them *out of Egypt and out of the place of slavery*. The One who delivered them from the mighty Egyptians could—and would—deliver them from the Midianites.

Throughout the Bible, God offers examples of how He protects and provides for those who turn to Him. The children of Israel knew the stories from the nation’s past and how God had driven out their enemies and *gave you their land*. Now, they faced their own moment of truth: Trust God or continue suffering the consequences of sin.

The prophet’s message did not overlook the present disobedience because God was not overlooking that disobedience. Although He warned them not to *fear the gods* of their pagan enemies, they *did not obey* Him.

It wasn’t that the enemy was so strong, but that God’s people were so disobedient. While obedience continues to be an unpopular subject today, even in Christian circles, it is an absolute necessity in maintaining a thriving relationship with the Lord.

EXPLORE Judges 6:1-4,7-10



APPLICATION POINT: We can anticipate that when people turn their backs on God, they will experience undesirable consequences.

READ:

Invite a volunteer to read aloud Judges 6:1-4,7-10 as the group listens for why God let Midian oppress Israel.

DISPLAY:

Direct attention again to **Pack Item 5** (Map: *The Judges of Israel*) and show the location of events taking place in Judges 6.

RECAP:

Explain the identity of the Midianites and what they did to the Israelites in these verses:

The Midianites were descendants of Abraham by his concubine, Keturah. They had been enemies of Israel since the time they opposed Israel when Moses led the nation into the region east of the Jordan in preparation to enter Canaan (Num. 25:1-18). Like swarming locusts, the Midianites often made decimating, swift strikes on their enemies using camels over long distances. They would leave little of value behind them and get away before any counterstrike could be made. The effects of the Midianite raids on Israel were devastating. For seven years, the Israelites existed in constant fear as they resorted to living in the mountains, caves, and strongholds because of the terrifying lightning strikes of the Midianites that could happen at any moment. (PSG, pp. 84-85)



ASK:

Was God's judgment through the Midianites too harsh? Why or why not?

DISCUSS:

Allow adults to share responses. Remind them of the cycle of sin in Judges and that God's discipline always focuses on bringing people back to Him. Note that God heard the people's cries and sent a prophet to remind Israel of who they should be following and to rebuke them for not serving Him.

ASK:

What outcomes should we anticipate if we live in disobedience to God? (PSG, p. 87)

TRANSITION:

Even as His prophet was delivering a message of rebuke, God was at work. After the Israelites cried out to Him, He prepared an unlikely judge to deliver them from their powerful enemies.

Commission (Judg. 6:11-14)

11 The angel of the LORD came, and he sat under the oak that was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash, the Abiezrite. His son Gideon was threshing wheat in the winepress in order to hide it from the Midianites. **12** Then the angel of the LORD appeared to him and said, “The LORD is with you, valiant warrior.” **13** Gideon said to him, “Please, my lord, if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened? And where are all his wonders that our ancestors told us about? They said, ‘Hasn’t the LORD brought us out of Egypt?’ But now the LORD has abandoned us and handed us over to Midian.” **14** The LORD turned to him and said, “Go in the strength you have and deliver Israel from the grasp of Midian. I am sending you!”

(v. 11) Following the appearance of the unnamed prophet, **the angel of the LORD** returned (2:1-6; 5:23). This time, **the angel sat under the oak that was in Ophrah**. This village of Manasseh was located about halfway between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, approximately forty miles southwest of the Sea of Galilee.

The angel appeared to **Gideon**, who was **threshing wheat in the winepress**. This shows just how desperate the situation had become in Israel. Normally, **threshing** grain was done outdoors on a high spot so the wind could blow away the chaff. But to **hide** this wheat from the Midianites, Gideon was working below ground in a sunken winepress—a less than ideal spot.

It’s worth noting that Gideon was making the best of a bad situation, rather than being curled up in despair. It’s been said that when it comes to God’s call, He prefers a moving target. Moses was tending sheep, as was David. Elijah found Elisha plowing in the field. The first disciples were fishermen. Even Saul was on the road to Damascus, though his motives were misguided.

(v. 12) As if a heavenly being was not shocking enough, the angel’s message surprised Gideon. The message had two parts. First, the angel said that **the LORD is with you**. In his current state of desperation, standing in a winepress, it was hard for Gideon to believe that God was with him. Likewise, seeing what Midian was doing to Israel, it would have been easier to think that God had forsaken His people.

Second, the angel called Gideon a **valiant warrior**. Again, Gideon was hiding from the enemy. Instead of being a man of war, he was a man of the soil. As his response will indicate, Gideon had trouble embracing any part of the angel’s greeting. Yet, God saw something in Gideon that Gideon had not yet seen in himself.

(vv. 13-14) Gideon demonstrated honesty and transparency in response: **Why has all this happened?** He could not reconcile the idea that God was with him and the other Israelites because of the suffering around him. Of course, God already had identified the root cause of the problem, but Gideon wasn’t seeing that in the moment. He had heard about the **wonders** in Egypt and the wilderness, but now he just felt **abandoned** by God and oppressed by Midian.

Even God’s most faithful servants have their moments of doubt. Like David, they wonder how long God is going to wait before He moves on behalf of His people (Ps. 13:1). Gideon was living in the middle of one of those moments.

In time, he would learn to trust God and the power of His Spirit. He would discover that he could **go in the strength** of God, which is beyond anything humans can imagine. But that would come later in the journey. In the winepress, he was just at the beginning, and things looked dark and discouraging.

The angel’s specific command was to **deliver Israel from the grasp of Midian**. If Gideon wondered “how long,” God answered “right now.” He was going to resolve the very problem Gideon had identified. What’s more, He was going to use Gideon to do it: **I am sending you!** God was sending a new judge to deliver His people.

Key Doctrine

God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service. (See Judges 14:6; Acts 1:8.)



READ:

APPLICATION POINT: We can be encouraged to know that God calls unlikely people to do great things for Him.

Call for a volunteer to read aloud Judges 6:11-14, directing the group to listen for how Gideon responded to the angel.

DISCUSS:

Encourage adults to share what they know about Gideon. Refer to **Pack Item 3** (Poster: Key Characters in Joshua, Judges, Ruth) to provide more information.

ASK:

How have you typically responded to God's call in your life?

RECAP:

Use Judges 6:11 in the Leader Guide (p. 104) to explain the winepress. Summarize this content from pages 87-88 of the PSG:

“Gideon did not appear to be a valiant warrior. He was hiding like everyone else just hoping to survive. . . . Upon hearing the messenger’s greeting, Gideon’s frustrations with God rose to the surface. He asked, ‘If the Lord is with me, then why has He allowed all of these terrible things to happen to us? And if the Lord is so mighty, then where are all the wondrous things we have heard from our forefathers that He is capable of doing? How could the Lord bring us out of Egypt and then turn around and abandon us to the hateful Midianites?’ Gideon’s facts were correct, but his conclusion was wrong. He blamed God for the perilous situation when it was Israel that was responsible for it.”

ASK:

How might our circumstances impact our response to God’s calling? (PSG, p. 88)

TRANSITION:

God promised Gideon His strength in fulfilling this assignment, but he was still skeptical. As Gideon interacted with the angel, the full awareness of what was being asked of him set in.



Group Activity Option

Verbal

As background to the calling of Gideon, examine the lives of earlier judges. Enlist three adults to research and present two- or three-minute overviews of Othniel (Judg. 3:7-11), Ehud and Shamgar (Judg. 3:12-31), and Deborah (Judg. 4-5). Instruct them to identify what the Israelites did, who oppressed them, and what the judge did to deliver them. During the session, call for each of the enlisted adults to share.

Reassurance (Judg. 6:15-16)

15 He said to him, “Please, Lord, how can I deliver Israel? Look, my family is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father’s family.” **16** “But I will be with you,” the LORD said to him. “You will strike Midian down as if it were one man.”

(v. 15) Even in the wake of this supernatural call, Gideon had his doubts. Even his address to the angel—**Please, Lord**—carries a hint of cynicism in Hebrew. That was followed quickly by a question that expressed his ongoing feelings of inadequacy: **How can I deliver Israel?**

To reinforce the point, Gideon presented what he thought were valid objections to God’s plan. For starters, he stated that his family was **the weakest in Manasseh**. In other words, his clan had no social standing or influence within the larger tribe.

While this first contention could have been a matter of opinion, Gideon’s second point could not be argued: He was **the youngest in my father’s family**. In a household suffering from a general lack of position or prestige, Gideon ranked at the end of the family tree. In his mind, he already had two strikes against him before the game even began.

Gideon’s response mirrors Moses in Exodus 3–4. Both felt inferior and made excuses, begging God to look for someone else to lead. Jeremiah (Jer. 1:6) and David also come to mind when listing Bible heroes whose age or family standing could have been a concern. But God has shown that He can and will use the “weak” of this world to make a powerful impact for His kingdom. Working mightily through humble vessels, He alone deserves the glory.

(v. 16) Gideon had offered God two reasons for why he was not the right man for this job. In response, the Lord gave Gideon two airtight reasons why he could pull off something that seemed impossible.

First, the Lord countered Gideon’s doubts with an expression of comfort: **I will be with you**. What sweeter words of assurance could Gideon have heard than to know that the God who called him also would guide him every step of the way (Judg. 6:34).

Reflecting back on Moses’s call, the Lord responded by affirming His presence with him as well (Ex. 3:12). Centuries later, Jesus told His

disciples not to worry because the Holy Spirit would tell them how to respond to difficult situations (Luke 12:11-12). He also assured them that He would always be there for them, both then and forever (Matt. 28:20).

Second, God emphasized the mission would be accomplished. Instead of softening His stance, the Lord refused to stray from the primary task: **You will strike Midian down as if it were one man**. In this, God hinted that Gideon would not be fighting a defensive battle. With the Lord’s help, he would be the aggressor, going on the offensive against a powerful foe.

Although this might sound like hyperbole, God was emphasizing what He is able to do through a faithful, humble servant committed and submitted to Him. This is a common theme throughout the book of Judges and all of God’s Word. The Lord would fulfill His purposes through Gideon, provided Gideon answered the call and was willing to be used. It’s been said that God doesn’t focus on ability, but on availability.

God won’t call us into service without equipping us for the task. The key is not what we are capable of doing for Him, but what He is able to do through us.

Bible Skill

Do a word study to gain a better understanding of a passage.

Scripture is full of “calling” experiences where God selected servants to carry out kingdom work. Study the following passages: Genesis 12:1-4; Exodus 3–4; 1 Kings 19:19-21; Isaiah 6:1-9; Jeremiah 1; Jonah 1; Luke 1:26-38; Mark 1:16-20; and Acts 9:1-9. Identify similarities and differences. Note the particular ways each person was called and how they responded. Examine your own calling from God. **Have you experienced a specific call from Him? How have you responded?**



READ:

APPLICATION POINT: Believers should trust God when being called upon to take a specific action for Him.

Call for the group to read silently Judges 6:15-16 and to mark phrases that explain why Gideon could fulfill God's plan.

HIGHLIGHT:

Write on the board *I will be with you*. Discuss what that meant for Gideon. Discuss what that means for believers today.

RECAP:

Discuss the differences between Gideon's feelings of inadequacy and the presence of the Lord. Share this truth:

From Gideon's point of view, he did not have the credentials or the ability to deliver Israel. However, the Lord supplied Gideon everything he needed to accomplish God's will, saying, "But I will be with you." The Lord's presence was everything Gideon would need to strike down the entire host of Midianites as if they were but one man. (PSG, p. 89)

ASK:

How does the assurance of God's presence negate our excuse of inadequacy? (PSG, p. 89)

MEMORIZE:

Complete the statement written on the board to show the first half of Judges 6:16: "But I will be with you," the LORD said to him." Distribute index cards and pens and lead the group to write the verse on the card. Encourage them to put it on their bathroom mirror and review it each day.

PRAYER:

Lead the group to pray, thanking God that He is always with them and that He empowers them to accomplish the things He calls them to do.

Group Activity Option

Object Lesson: Flowerpots

Prior to the session, find two small clay flowerpots: one that is new and one that is cracked. Also, secure some potting soil and a small plant. During the session, put the new pot inside a pie pan and pour water into it. Do the same for the cracked pot. Say: *Some of you may feel like this cracked pot. Your flaws and mistakes keep you from being used by God.* Fill the broken pot with soil and a small plant. Pour some more water into the pot. Say: *Sometimes the things we consider flaws and mistakes are the things God uses for His glory.* Challenge adults to allow God to use them, despite their brokenness and feelings of inferiority.

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE:

Review these points from Apply the Text on page 90 of the *Personal Study Guide*:

- *We can anticipate that when people turn their backs on God, they will experience undesirable consequences.*
- *We can be encouraged to know that God calls unlikely people to do great things for Him.*
- *Believers should trust God when being called upon to take a specific action for Him.*

REVIEW:

Call for a few volunteers to share which statement resonates most deeply with them. Challenge the group to identify experiences with both undesirable consequences as well as experiences of God doing great things through them.

DISCUSS:

Guide the group to discuss the first question set on page 90 of the PSG. Lead a brief discussion on how believers can point one another toward the truth that God will use them and empower them for His glory.

REFLECT:

Give adults a few minutes to read and reflect on the second question set on page 90 of the PSG. Suggest they write down one or two reasons trusting God is hard for them in the margins of their PSG. Encourage them to pray through those issues during the week ahead.

PRAY:

Close in prayer, asking God to empower the group to trust Him when He calls them to do something.

AFTER THE SESSION

Reinforce the session by sending a text or email to the group with the message: “I am with you,” says the Lord.” Remind them that this is part of the memory verse for this session. Encourage them to continue reflecting on this verse and memorizing it during the week. Challenge the group to be on the lookout for situations where God is working around them and through them this week.

LEADER BLOG



Discover helpful tips for using and getting the most from your Adult Explore the Bible resources at **goExploreTheBible.com/blog**.

EXPLORE  THE BIBLE.