

Memory Verse

“And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’
 Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”
 (2 Corinthians 12:9)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
1. Gideon doubted himself, but with the Lord’s power, he was able to become a mighty man of valor and defeat the Midianite army. 2. Understand how Gideon failed to build a lasting faith and allowed himself to become ensnared in sin.	God is all-powerful. He will help us when we rely on Him.	1. Focus on the skills that God has given to us by seeing ourselves from God’s point of view. 2. Learn the actions that we can take to build up our trust in the Lord.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

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Life Application

1. Mighty Man of Valor
2. Building Up Our Trust in God

Memory Verse

Conclusion: Like Gideon, we may feel insignificant, unremarkable, or powerless. But God uses everyone for His good purpose, and we should trust that if He has called us to serve Him, He will also help us do the job properly.

Introduction

This week we'll be learning about Gideon, the next judge after Deborah. But first, do you remember the cycle of sin that we learned about last week? During the period of judges, the Israelites were stuck in a vicious cycle of sin. They would stray from God, who then allowed them to be oppressed by their enemies as punishment, after which the Israelites would repent. God would come to save them, only for them to stray again during times of peace.

The Midianites' Oppression of Israel

The time of Gideon was yet another period during which the Israelites strayed from God's teachings. But the oppression this time was quite severe. Each time the Israelites tried to sow the land for food, the Midianites and the Amalekites would destroy all their crops and animals, forcing them into poverty. The Israelites were so badly oppressed that they lived in caves and dens in the mountains. It was a desperate measure that they were forced to take in order to survive, turning them into a homeless people on the very land that God had promised to them.

A. Gideon Is Called by the Lord

An unconventional hero, timid Gideon was an unusual choice for a leader, as he displayed a lot of doubt when God called him. But despite these characteristics, God called him a "man of valor." Why did He use these words? Let's read about his calling in more detail. First, let's turn to Judges 6:11–27. When God called Gideon, the first thing He commanded him to do was to destroy the altar of Baal. Why do you think this is the first thing that God told Gideon to do? This was a test of Gideon's faith, commitment, and obedience. It is also a reminder that before we serve God, we must first remove idols from our hearts.

Let's continue with Gideon's calling. After this event, the Midianites and the Amalekites began to gather against Israel. In response, "the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon" (Judg 6:34), and he began to gather the Israelite army together to fight the Midianites. But before he did so, Gideon wanted a sign from God. Let's read Judges 6:36–40. Gideon was full of doubt, enough that he wanted a sign of God's presence. It is not wise to test God, but He was patient with Gideon. The Lord graciously acknowledged and confirmed His presence and power in order to develop Gideon's faith. This way, Gideon could learn to trust and rely on God, despite his own fears and worries.

Life Application

1. "Tear down the altar of Baal that your father has"

In order to serve Him, God first wants us to knock down our own Baals, the idols in our lives that pull us away from God. This means that we must be willing to deal with any sin within us, and obey His calling with full submission. If we do so, then God will honor us just as He honored Gideon. Therefore, the first step to serving God is not the work itself. It is tearing down the idols in our lives first. Then, we can fulfill the service that God requires of us. What "Baals" in your life need to be knocked down?

2. From Doubt to Trust

When the Angel of the Lord first approached Gideon, the very first thing he said was, "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" (Judg 6:13). He also

added, “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” (v. 15). Later, Gideon asked for still more signs from God, in the form of dew on the fleece, and then dew around the fleece. His heart was obviously full of doubt, both in the Lord’s power, and in himself.

The Bible teaches us never to test God, except in tithing (Deut 6:16; Mal 3:10). This is because testing God is a sign of unfaithfulness. God wants us to trust Him, not test Him. When we are first called by God, we are normally full of doubt, fear, or even mistrust, making us hesitant to commit ourselves to His work. It is easy to doubt our own skills, or worry about the task that we have been given. This is because we haven’t yet developed a relationship with God. Therefore, when the Lord calls us, after we have removed the idols from our hearts, the next step is to build up our faith, trust, and reliance on God.

B. Three Hundred Men

Let’s read Judges 7:1–8. As if to enhance Gideon’s doubts and fears, the Lord ordered him to reduce the number of his army by over 30,000, until he was only left with a mere 300 men. Meanwhile, the Bible describes the Midianite army “as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the seashore in multitude” (Judg 7:12). Can you imagine the difference in number? But the Lord wanted to make sure the Israelites didn’t claim glory for a victory that belonged to God, and God alone. He wanted them to remember His power. This is especially apparent in the way He defeated the enemy army. Let’s read on to verses 9–22.

When the Midianite army heard the blowing horns, the smashing of the jars, and saw the sudden flare of torches, they turned on each other before fleeing in defeat. Because of God’s power, the Israelites didn’t have to lift a finger to fight! All they had to do was obey Gideon’s orders and stand firm with courage and faith. God did all of the rest for them.

Life Application

1. Relying on God’s Power

Let’s read 2 Corinthians 12:9–10. “And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” Why did Paul “take pleasure” when sick or in distress? When we are faced with problems beyond our control, we have no choice but to rely on God. In much the same way, the Lord forced Gideon to rely on Him by reducing his army to a mere 300 men.

When we are smart, talented, or rich, we tend to forget God and rely on ourselves. But when we try to use our own resources to solve our problems, we realize our limitations very quickly. We can only control certain elements of our lives, and there is only so much knowledge and wisdom that we can gain on our own. On the other hand, the Lord is all-powerful, and His wisdom and understanding are limitless. With this in mind, we need to learn to trust in God’s power, not our own.

2. “Go in this might of yours...Have I not sent you?”

When God first called Gideon, Gideon’s immediate response was to question God’s presence and ask for signs (Judg 6:13, 15, 17). Gideon wasn’t sure if God was truly with him, and he definitely thought that he wasn’t able to do the job. On the other hand, let’s look at God’s

words. He told Gideon, “The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!” (v. 12). He continued, “Go in this might of yours [...]. Have I not sent you?” (v. 14). “Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man” (v. 16). God knew Gideon could do the work, because God Himself had sent him; He would give Gideon the power to do what he needed to do.

When we feel that our skills are inadequate, it can be easy to put off serving the Lord. We don’t want to be put on the schedule for piano playing until we’ve practiced some more, for example, or we think we don’t have enough knowledge or confidence to help evangelize. Excuses are easy to come up with, and even easier to use when we’re reluctant to serve God. Perhaps we don’t want to help because “we don’t know how.” But the Lord told Gideon, “Go in this might of yours [...]. Have I not sent you?” This means that whatever strength Gideon had was enough. God would handle the rest. The same is true for us! If we are able to serve God, then all we need to do is the best that we can do with the strength that we already have. As long as we rely on Him, God will handle the rest.

C. Gideon Is Ensnared

Let’s read Judges 8:22–28. The Israelites wanted to honor Gideon as their king for delivering them from Midian. But Gideon, recognizing that it was God who gave them victory, declined the offer. He understood that the Lord was their rightful sovereign. However, even after saying this, Gideon allowed himself to be led astray when he asked for each man to give the earrings that they had plundered. Whatever his intentions for making an ephod from all this gold, it became a snare to him and his family.

Although Gideon’s refusal to become king seemed to show his obedience to God’s will, his actions speak otherwise. Aside from leading the Israelites into idolatry with the ephod, the Bible also records that he had seventy offspring by “many wives” (Judg 8:30). He even named one of his sons Abimelech, which means “My Father is King.” The Lord had patiently built up Gideon’s trust in Him, but it is apparent that Gideon did not have a true or lasting faith.

Life Application

1. A Steadfast Faith

Peter wrote, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet 5:8). As we learned from Gideon, serving God or having a close experience with Him does not guarantee a lasting faith. When Gideon was first called, the Lord commanded him to destroy the altar to Baal. Gideon certainly did as he was commanded physically, but he hadn’t done so spiritually. As a result, he failed this particular test of his faith. To avoid this same mistake, we need to constantly build up our faith, so that it remains strong against any temptations we may face.

2. Remembering the Lord

Let’s read Deuteronomy 8:11–17. One of the dangers to our faith is simply forgetting what God has given us. In this passage, Moses warned the Israelites not to forget who freed them from slavery, fed them in the wilderness, and gave them all that they had. Our hearts are often full of pride, so it is easy for us to believe that we earned everything that we have on our own. But these kinds of thoughts are both untrue and dangerous for our faith. Gideon and the Israelites forgot that it was God who gave them victory over the Midianites, and as a result, fell back into idolatry (Judg 8:27, 34). We must learn from their mistakes, and spend time with God each and every day, to remember how He constantly blesses and protects us.

Check for Understanding

- 1. Why did God command Gideon to destroy the altar of Baal before anything else?** This was a test of Gideon's faith, commitment, and obedience. It is also a reminder that before we serve God, we must first remove idols from our hearts.
- 2. What sign did Gideon ask of God before going to battle? What does this show us about Gideon's heart?** He asked the Lord to first make the dew fall only upon the fleece the first night, then on the ground around the fleece the second night. This request shows us that Gideon's heart was full of doubt.
- 3. What is the first thing we need to do when called by God?** In order to serve Him, God first wants us to knock down our own Baals, the idols in our lives that pull us away from God.
- 4. Why is it important not to test God?** Because testing God is a sign of unfaithfulness. God wants us to trust Him, not test Him.
- 5. What did God mean by telling Gideon, "Go in this might of yours [...]. Have I not sent you"?** God was saying that the strength that Gideon had was enough. God would provide the rest.
- 6. According to Deuteronomy 8:11–17, what is one of the dangers to our faith? How can we avoid this danger?** One of the dangers is simply forgetting what God has given us. We can avoid this by spending time with God each and every day, to remember how He constantly blesses and protects us.

Life Application

1. Mighty Man of Valor

When God first called Gideon, He called him a "mighty man of valor." This is actually a very strange name to use. It was normal to thresh wheat outside, so that the wind could blow away the chaff. But the Bible notes how Gideon was threshing wheat in his cellar in order to try and hide from his enemies. This seems neither mighty nor valiant! From Gideon's responses, we can see that he also didn't consider himself a mighty warrior. Yet this was the title the Angel bestowed on him. Gideon later lived up to the title when he faced the Midianite army with a mere 300 men at his side. What kind of teaching can we learn from this?

Learn to see ourselves from God's point of view

When we lack confidence, it is easy to believe that we cannot do this or that job. But if the Lord calls us to serve Him in some way, we should learn to see ourselves from God's point of view. Let's read Ephesians 2:10 together. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." We may always feel dissatisfied with things that we cannot change about ourselves – perhaps we wish we were a bit taller, a bit shorter, or maybe even born into a different family – but we should remember that the Lord made us the way we are for His purpose.

How do you see yourself? Do you look at yourself in the mirror and see only your different flaws? It is easy to have high expectations of ourselves, but too often these expectations are based entirely on human standards. We are supposed to be smarter, sociable, or richer in order to be elevated and accepted. But the Lord sees us otherwise. He wants us to focus on what He has given us, such as our kindness, our optimism, or our ability to be a good listener. Maybe we are good at seeing when others are struggling in their faith or are good at helping in particular areas in the church.

Whatever skills God has given us, it is easy to forget them or even overlook them entirely when we focus on our perceived flaws. It is also easy to compare ourselves to human standards instead of looking at

ourselves from God's point of view.

Activity: What God Sees in Me

Preparation

Prepare bookmark-sized pieces of paper for each student in your class. You may also choose to prepare supplies such as a hole punch, ribbon, and colored pencils or markers for them to decorate the bookmarks with. If you'd like stiffer bookmarks, you may want to use cardstock, or sandwich a piece of construction paper between two pieces of slightly smaller blank paper.

Instructions

1. *Give each student a bookmark and have them write their name near the top of one side. (If you'd like them to hole-punch the top for a ribbon, make sure they don't write too close to the edge.)*
2. *Have the students pass their bookmarks clockwise around the class. For each that they receive, have them write down one godly quality or characteristic that they admire or have seen in the student whose name is written on the bookmark. Are they good at listening? Patient with the little children? Maybe they are good at cleaning or at spreading joy. If they are unsure, have them think of the fruit of the Spirit for ideas.*
3. *If you only have a few students in the class, then you may want to pass the bookmarks around two or three times. Otherwise, once may be enough.*
4. *Once everyone has written at least once on each bookmark, have the students write down Ephesians 2:10 on the other side of their own bookmark.*
5. *After this, they may decorate their bookmarks as they wish.*

2. Building Up Our Trust in God

From Gideon's story, we can see that he repeatedly had doubts about God's presence and power. He questioned God's decision in choosing him, asked for signs of God's presence, and went to spy on the Midianites because he was afraid. He was unable to bring himself to trust in God. This is because he lacked a close relationship with Him.

Do you trust your family? Your friends? How about your RE classmates, or your brethren in church? The people you trust are those you've spent a lot of time with. They are the people you have learned about, gotten to know deeply, and eventually grown to rely on. But how do we develop this trust with God? It's hard to do when we can't see Him or talk directly to Him as we would our friends and family. Let's see what the Bible says about trusting the Lord.

For each of the following verses, underline or write down what action is necessary for us to trust in God. Then briefly explain each action in your own words.

6. Ps 9:10 – "And those who know Your name will put their trust in You; for You, LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You."
Know God's name by studying His word and understanding His character.
7. Ps 62:8 – "Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us. Selah."
Give our problems to God by telling Him everything in prayer.
8. Prov 3:5–6 – "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."

Follow God's commands and live out His word in our daily lives.

9. Jer 17:7 – “Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, and whose hope is the LORD.”
Have hope in God's salvation.
10. Rom 8:28 – “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”
Grow in our love for God.
11. Rom 15:13 – “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”
Be filled with the Holy Spirit so that we can be empowered by God's help.

Memory Verse

“And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”
(2 Corinthians 12:9)

Meaning

While most wouldn't enjoy feeling weak, Paul rejoices in his weaknesses because during his time of weakness, he remembers and relies more on the Lord. Therefore, he can experience more of the Lord's grace. When we call on the Lord in our weakness, He will give us strength, and we can trust that He will help us. Only by trusting in God can we become strong because He is all-powerful. However, as humans, we tend to forget God in times of prosperity, so we should dedicate time daily to God so that we grow closer to Him and learn to rely on His grace and strength.

Conclusion

Like Gideon, we may feel insignificant, unremarkable, or powerless. But God uses everyone for His good purpose, and we should trust that if He has called us to serve Him, He will also help us do the job properly. All we need to do is serve to the best of our ability, and trust fully in His power and strength. We need to remember that God isn't looking for a perfect servant. All He wants is for us to knock down the Baals in our lives, trust His guidance, and maintain a steadfast faith. Then, we will be able to become mighty warriors of God, full of valor and able to defeat even the greatest armies through God's power!

Lesson 3 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. Why would Paul rather “boast” of his infirmities?
Because when he is weak, he remembers and relies more on the Lord. In turn, he is able to experience more of God’s grace.
2. “For we are His _____, _____ in Christ Jesus for _____
_____, which God _____ beforehand that we should _____ in
them.” (Ephesians 2:10)
workmanship, created, good works, prepared, walk
3. What was the first thing God commanded Gideon to do? What does this teach us?
He commanded Gideon to tear down the altar of Baal. This teaches us that in order to serve Him, God first wants us to knock down our own Baals, the idols in our lives that pull us away from God.
4. Why did God reduce the Israelite army to only 300 men?
The Lord wanted to make sure the Israelites didn’t claim glory for a victory that belonged to God, and God alone.
5. What did Gideon’s request for the plunder tell us about his faith?
Although he gave the correct answer in refusing kingship, it is apparent that he did not have a true or lasting faith.
6. Have you ever questioned God’s presence or power in the past? Why?
Personal answers.