

You're *Sure* You're Sure?

Taken From Judges 3—7

Foundation

Start your time today by thanking God for who He is. Thank Him that He isn't limited in His power or ability. Thank Him that He knows you well and chooses you anyway. God can be fully trusted, for He always keeps His word.



Have you ever doubted God's ability to work in or through you?

Panic filled the air. The Midianites were everywhere! Once again they came at harvest time, stealing the Israelites' possessions and completely destroying their land and crops. They brutally killed sheep, cattle, and donkeys, leaving the Israelites with nothing. Once again, as at other times in the past, the Israelites were being crushed by their enemies. Once again God's people cried out first to their pagan idols, who couldn't help them, and then to the living God. And once again God answered their plea for help and raised someone up to deliver them and redirect them back to Him.

Gideon looked over his shoulder to make sure no Midianites—or anyone else for that matter—would see him. He quickly threw his grain down into a winepress and began working it. Under normal conditions, he would have an abundance of grain to thresh in a large open area—but these weren't normal conditions. Because of

the Midianites, grain was scarce, and any threshing had to be done in secret to keep it from the invaders.

“The LORD has not abandoned you, mighty warrior,” a voice said as Gideon’s head jerked up in fear. To Gideon’s relief, it wasn’t the taunting voice of a Midianite, but the voice of a stranger sitting under an oak tree watching him.

“But sir,” Gideon sighed, briefly stopping his work to reply, “If God has not abandoned us, then why is all this happening?” As of yet, Gideon hadn’t realized that he was talking to the angel of the Lord. He continued working while talking to the stranger. “Where are all the miracles and wonders we heard our fathers talk about?” he asked. “God has abandoned us and given us into the hands of our enemies!”

Gideon stopped to look up and see the effect of his words on the stranger. He wasn’t prepared for the response he got.

“Using the strength you have, go and save Israel from the Midianites,” the angel of the Lord instructed. “I am sending you!”

Perhaps I didn’t hear correctly or this stranger doesn’t know me very well, Gideon thought. He looked at the angel doubtfully and commented, “How in the world can I save Israel when I’m the smallest in my family, and my clan is the weakest in the tribe of Manasseh?”

Gideon knew his words were true. He certainly was a coward if ever there was one, preferring to run from trouble rather than fight it.

“I will go with you,” came the reply, “and you will destroy the Midianites as easily as if you were fighting only one man.”

Threshing was the process of removing the outside coating of the grain to get at the more useful kernel inside.

Although reluctant, Gideon was the fourth “judge” God raised up to help Israel. The others were Othniel (who saved the Israelites from the Mesopotamians), Ehud (who delivered them from the Moabites), and Deborah (who directed the defeat of the Canaanites).

All of a sudden Gideon began to suspect that the man speaking to him might be the Lord, but he needed to know for sure. He asked the angel for a sign and begged him to wait while he gathered supplies to bring as an offering. The angel agreed.

When Gideon returned, the angel instructed, “Place the meat and unleavened bread on this rock and pour out the broth.” Gideon did as he was told. Then taking the staff he was holding, the angel touched the tip of it to the offering, and fire came out of the rock and consumed the meat and bread. After this, the angel of the Lord disappeared, and Gideon stood there terrified.

That same night the Lord spoke to Gideon and gave him a test. He was to tear down the family altar to the false god Baal and build a proper one to the Lord. He was also to take his father’s choice bull (which had been dedicated to Baal) and offer it up to God instead. Gideon did just as God commanded, though he did the work during the night for fear of being discovered. He also took ten servants with him, since he knew that his family altar was large and he would need help.

Some time later, Gideon heard that the Midianites had joined forces with others and were returning to attack, so he prayed to the Lord, “You said You would save Israel from the Midianites by my hand, Lord. If this is true and You intend to do as You promised ...”—Gideon hesitated a moment, then grabbed a piece of fleece that had been recently shaved from a sheep—“then give me a sign. See, I will place this piece of wool on the ground. If there is dew on it in the morning but no dew on the ground, I’ll know that what You promised will come to pass.”

The next morning Gideon found the fleece soaked but the ground dry. Still fearful in his heart, he asked God for yet another sign. “Don’t be angry with me, Lord,” he pleaded, “but if I am to do what You say, make the fleece dry and the ground wet!”

Just like the first time, God met Gideon’s conditions—waiting for Gideon to finally obey.

Footwork

Look up Judges 6:14-16 in your Bible. What do these verses say? Chapter 7 contains the rest of the story as well as the famous battle Gideon waged against the Midianites. At the beginning of this chapter, God reduces Gideon's army from thirty-two thousand men down to three hundred men so the Israelites would understand it was God who fought for them. Then in verses 8-11, God tells Gideon to do one more thing. What was it? What do you learn about Gideon's character from verses 10-11?



Like Gideon, we pretend to seek God's will when in reality we doubt Him. Constantly looking for signs only shows our lack of faith in God's character and his ability to guide and provide for us as He promised. It also focuses our attention on the wrong thing and can easily get us away from God's Word. Signs don't make us better believers; they make us weaker ones. Even though you may be tempted to chase after them, don't!