

JUDGES 6-9

GIDEON

WORSHIPPING POWER

In chapter 6, the familiar pattern starts over again. After Deborah and Barak's days, the people of Israel do what is evil in God's sight (v1), God allows the Midianites to raid their land to the point where Israel just run and hide (v2) and the people call out to God for help.

But there's an extra element to the pattern this time. God wants to have a chat about what's been going on first.



GIDEON

Read Judges 6:7-10.

1. What has Israel done wrong and why is that such a bad thing? (There are multiple answers here!)

And, again, God raises up a judge for Israel. Enter Gideon. **Read Judges 6:11-24 & 33-40.**

2. Who does Gideon say is responsible for Israel's plight?

3. Why does Gideon doubt his ability to deliver Israel? How would you describe that doubt? Understandable? Wise? Cautious? Cowardly? Lacking faith?

Read Judges 7:1-8.

4. Why is God so concerned about Gideon having too many soldiers? (v2)

Read Judges 7:19-8:3.

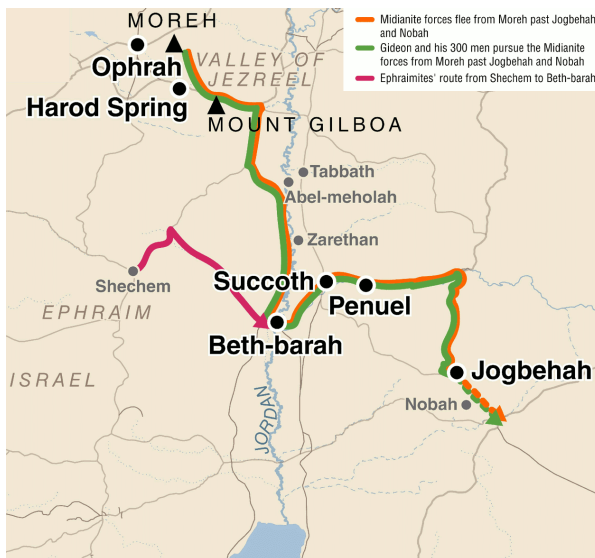
5. What do you make of Gideon's instructions to his men? (7:18,20)

6. What do you make of Ephraim's objections to Gideon and his response? How do they relate to God's earlier concerns about who gets the glory?

Gideon's really coming along! From the scared 'least among his clan' he now more resembles the mighty warrior the angel said that he was. But Gideon's not content with driving Israel's enemies out of the land. He goes much further. His reasons are unclear at first, but later revealed.

Read Judges 8:4-27.

7. Gideon pursues Zebah and Zalmunna way beyond the borders of Israel (see map). What do we discover was Gideon's motivation all along?

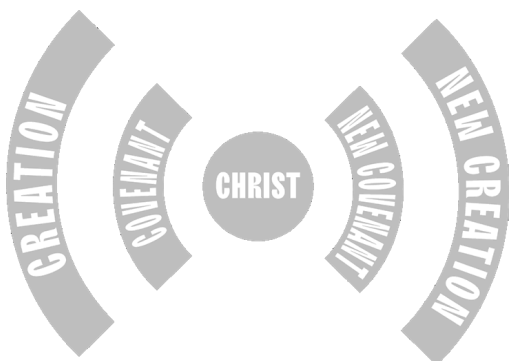


The amount of power Gideon has changes a lot through his life, but his attitude towards human strength seems to stay the same. Even after God wins an impossible victory, handing power over to Gideon, he continues to believe that human power wins, and that the powerful can get away with whatever they want. He believes it when he's weak, and he believes it when he's the king.

Of course, Gideon refused the official title of king. He pretends to recognise God's power. But he sets up an idol in his home town to centralise power there, just like the later kings of Israel. And in 9:1 we meet Gideon's son, whom he named Abimelech. What does that name mean? "My father is king." Abimelech follows in his father's footsteps, making himself king, now not just in practice, also in title. And that sparks a civil war in Israel which is far worse than that against the Midianites!

LIVING GOD'S STORY

Christians don't need to be scared of a lack of power. We know Jesus has won (episode 3) and that one day the whole universe will know it (in episode 5). So if we happen to have power, we won't abuse it for our personal benefit, because we know that God is the greater one who cares for the abused. And we won't



be defensive and fight to keep power, because we know that Jesus has won. This attitude to power is completely counter-cultural. But that makes sense because we believe in the new creation where God wins, no matter what it looks like here and now.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:22-25.

8. What do people in Australia tend to go to for a sense of safety and power? (Career? Sense of humour? Looks? Physical strength? Sporting prowess? Popularity? Knowledge and insight?)

9. Sometimes observing our behaviours can help us perceive what we really believe in practice. What behaviours can you observe in yourself that show where your trust is?

10. What are some practical, realistic actions that could build habits of reliance on the wisdom and power of Jesus?

1 CORINTHIANS 1

²² Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom,²³ but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles,²⁴ but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.²⁵ For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

We all turn to good things at times when we should turn to the ultimate one. It's inherent to fallen humanity. Calvin's observation is that human hearts are 'idol factories'. But be reassured, if you have put your trust in Jesus, that he is greater than all things, and by his power we can put to death the habits of our old self.

Spend some time in prayer for each other that we would never abuse the power that is given to us, and that we would be able to rightly see the idols that still lurk in our hearts, and put them to death.