

# Underdogs

## “Gideon: Runt of the Litter”

Judges 6

### Small Group Plan

Who would have picked Gideon as a leader? Certainly not Gideon. He didn't see himself as the frontrunner, the groundbreaker or the trailblazer. He saw himself as the least member of the weakest clan. But, in spite of his doubts and perhaps because of his doubts, God used him, the people rallied around him and he led Israel to one of the most unusual victories of all time.

#### **OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...**

- How and where does “self doubt” begin?
- Is it really “self” doubt, or “God” doubt? What’s the difference?

#### **LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...**

### **GIDEON’S FEAR — GOD’S FAITHFULNESS**

#### **“Does God Really Care?”**

Judges 6:12-13

<sup>12</sup> When the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon, he said, “The LORD is with you, mighty warrior.” <sup>13</sup> “But sir,” Gideon replied, “if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our fathers told us about when they said, ‘Did not the LORD bring us up out of Egypt?’ But now the LORD has abandoned us and put us into the hand of Midian.”

- God calls Gideon “mighty warrior.” What would you call him? Explain.
- What has been happening to Israel that brings out Gideon’s discouragement?
- Why is Gideon too quick to question God’s love and compassion?

#### **“Does God Know What He’s Doing?”**

Judges 6:14-24

<sup>14</sup> The LORD turned to him and said, “Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian’s hand. Am I not sending you?” <sup>15</sup> “But Lord,” Gideon asked, “how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am

the least in my family.”<sup>16</sup> The LORD answered, “I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites together.”<sup>17</sup> Gideon replied, “If now I have found favor in your eyes, give me a sign that it is really you talking to me.”<sup>18</sup> Please do not go away until I come back and bring my offering and set it before you.” And the LORD said, “I will wait until you return.”<sup>19</sup> Gideon went in, prepared a young goat, and from an ephah of flour he made bread without yeast. Putting the meat in a basket and its broth in a pot, he brought them out and offered them to him under the oak.<sup>20</sup> The angel of God said to him, “Take the meat and the unleavened bread, place them on this rock, and pour out the broth.” And Gideon did so.<sup>21</sup> With the tip of the staff that was in his hand, the angel of the LORD touched the meat and the unleavened bread. Fire flared from the rock, consuming the meat and the bread. And the angel of the LORD disappeared.<sup>22</sup> When Gideon realized that it was the angel of the LORD, he exclaimed, “Ah, Sovereign LORD! I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face!”<sup>23</sup> But the LORD said to him, “Peace! Do not be afraid. You are not going to die.”<sup>24</sup> So Gideon built an altar to the LORD there and called it The LORD is Peace. To this day it stands in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

- Is Gideon questioning his own ability or God’s wisdom in choosing him (v. 15)?
- Why did God choose the “least” person from the “weakness” clan (vs. 15-16)?

### **“Will God Take Care of Me?”**

#### **Judges 6:25-32**

<sup>25</sup> That same night the LORD said to him, “Take the second bull from your father’s herd, the one seven years old. Tear down your father’s altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole beside it.”<sup>26</sup> Then build a proper kind of altar to the LORD your God on the top of this height. Using the wood of the Asherah pole that you cut down, offer the second bull as a burnt offering.”<sup>27</sup> So Gideon took ten of his servants and did as the LORD told him. But because he was afraid of his family and the men of the town, he did it at night rather than in the daytime.<sup>28</sup> In the morning when the men of the town got up, there was Baal’s altar, demolished, with the Asherah pole beside it cut down and the second bull sacrificed on the newly built altar!<sup>29</sup> They asked each other, “Who did this?” When they carefully investigated, they were told, “Gideon son of Joash did it.”<sup>30</sup> The men of the town demanded of Joash, “Bring out your son. He must die, because he has broken down Baal’s altar and cut down the Asherah pole beside it.”<sup>31</sup> But Joash replied to the hostile crowd around him, “Are you going to plead Baal’s cause? Are you trying to save him? Whoever fights for him shall be put to death by morning! If Baal really is a god, he can defend himself when someone breaks down his altar.”<sup>32</sup> So that day they called Gideon “Jerub-baal,” saying, “Let Baal contend with him,” because he broke down Baal’s altar.

- What is the significance of the altar that Gideon built (vs. 25-27)?
- If Gideon was so impressed with God (vs. 22), why does he work at night, when no one can see (v. 27)?

### **“Does God Keep His Promises?”**

#### **Judges 6:33-40**

<sup>33</sup> Now all the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples joined forces and crossed over the Jordan and camped in the Valley of Jezreel. <sup>34</sup> Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, summoning the Abiezrites to follow him. <sup>35</sup> He sent messengers throughout Manasseh, calling them to arms, and also into Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali, so that they too went up to meet them. <sup>36</sup> Gideon said to God, “If you will save Israel by my hand as you have promised— <sup>37</sup> look, I will place a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said.” <sup>38</sup> And that is what happened. Gideon rose early the next day; he squeezed the fleece and wrung out the dew—a bowlful of water. <sup>39</sup> Then Gideon said to God, “Do not be angry with me. Let me make just one more request. Allow me one more test with the fleece. This time make the fleece dry and the ground covered with dew.” <sup>40</sup> That night God did so. Only the fleece was dry; all the ground was covered with dew.

- There is no doubt that Gideon is a fearful man with a wavering faith. With this in mind, what is the significance of the “Spirit of the Lord” coming upon Gideon (v. 34)?
- Why is God so patient with Gideon’s repeated requests for signs?
- How would you describe Gideon’s strengths and weaknesses?
- Why did God choose him as the leader?

#### **USE IT / APPLY IT ...**

- When trouble comes, why do some blame God while others trust in God?
- Why do faith and fear not mix well?
- How are we tempted to “work at night” so no one will notice our faith?
- What would be our equivalent to putting out the fleece?
- Close in prayer asking God to not only make your weakness clear, but to work in you, in spite of your weakness and perhaps even through them.