

# Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

## *God Sends Help: A Study from Judges*

### Lesson 9: God's Plan for Gideon

**Bible Text**  
Judges 7:1-11

#### **Memory Verse**

"The Lord says to you, 'Do not be afraid or troubled because of these many men. For the battle is not yours but God's.'"  
(2 Chronicles 20:15)

#### **Word List**

**casket:** a box used to bury a dead person  
**revolve:** to move around a center point in a circle; rotate

King Louis XIV became the king of France when he was only four years old. He ruled France for 72 years. He was rich, powerful, and self-centered. He lived in a palace called Versailles. King Louis XIV had 10,000 people who lived near him. These people served his every wish. King Louis named himself The Glorious. He forced his people to worship him, adore him, and sing to him. He also called himself the Sun King. Louis knew the planets **revolve** around the sun. Louis wanted to be the center of the

world's focus and attention. God was not at the center of Louis' life. Instead, Louis made himself the center of everything.

Near the end of his life, Louis planned his own funeral. He expected 10,000 people to attend. Even at his own funeral, Louis planned to remain the focus of the world. He wrote that he wanted to be buried in a gold **casket**. He wanted the whole church to be dark except a single candle. This candle would be near his casket. He planned for this light to draw everyone's attention to his casket. Then people would be looking only at him. Some accounts of the Sun King's funeral tell an interesting story. The religious leader who led the funeral did something unexpected. He blew out the candle. He took the focus off Louis' casket. Then the religious leader said, "Only God is great."

This religious leader was wise. Louis did not worship God. He thought he was greater than God. But only a fool does not recognize God's power and authority. Louis did not understand the truth stated by the psalmist: "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are sinful and their actions are sinful. There is no one who does good." (Psalm 53:1)

The book of Judges tells about a man who was quite different from Louis XIV. Gideon knew God's power and trusted Him.

Gideon worshiped God and obeyed Him even when he was afraid. This is the kind of man that God chooses. Gideon was not perfect. Still, God had a special plan for Gideon's life.

### **Too Many Men (Judges 7:1-3)**

**1 Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the people who were with him got up early and set up their tents beside the well of Harod. The tents of Midian were north of them, by the hill of Moreh in the valley.**

**2 The Lord said to Gideon, "The people with you are too many for Me to give Midian into their hands. Israel might say with pride, 'Our own power has saved us.'**

**3 So say to all the people, 'Whoever is afraid and shaking with fear may leave Mount Gilead and return home.'" So 22,000 people returned. But 10,000 stayed.**

It is easy to understand why a soldier might be fearful in battle. Fear keeps a soldier focused on the wrong things. Fear makes a soldier unprepared for battle. Fear spreads quickly. Military leaders know this. God knew this, too.

God chose Gideon to lead Israel's army in battle against the Midianites. Gideon probably thought the size of his army was important. Most leaders would think this. But

God knew that fear would keep Israel's men from focusing on Him. Fear always distracts God's people from following Him in complete faith.

God instructed Gideon to send home any men who were "afraid and shaking with fear." Even though Gideon might not have understood God's reason for this, he obeyed. After this announcement, 22,000 men returned home, while 10,000 men stayed.

### **Still Too Many Men (Judges 7:4-8)**

**4 Then the Lord said to Gideon, "There are still too many people. Bring them down to the water. I will test them for you there. Whoever I say is to go with you will go. But whoever I say is not to go with you will not go."**

**5 So Gideon brought the people down to the water. The Lord said to Gideon, "Divide every man who drinks the water as dogs drink with their tongues from every man who gets down on his knees to drink."**

**6 There were 300 men who drank from their hand, putting their hand to their mouth. But all the rest of the people got down on their knees to drink water.**

**7 The Lord said to Gideon, "I will save you with the 300 men who drank from their hands. I will give the Midianites into your hands. Let all the others return, every man to his home."**

**8 So the 300 men took the people's food and their horns. Gideon sent all the other men of Israel to their tents. He kept only the 300 men. And the tents of Midian were below him in the valley.**

10,000 soldiers might seem like a lot. But the Midianite army had 135,000 men (Judges 8:10). Gideon was probably confused about God's plan. He was probably afraid, too. After all, how would 10,000 men defeat 135,000? What God told Gideon next was even more surprising. God told Gideon to send 9,700 men home. That's right. God left Gideon with a small army of 300 fighting men. And He promised to use these 300 to save Israel from the Midianites. Again, Gideon obeyed God.

Why would God do such a thing? To most people this makes no sense. But God wanted to show His mighty power. He wanted

Israel and all other nations to know of His power, faithfulness, and goodness. With a larger army, Israel might brag about their own strength and skill in battle. With this small number, Israel had to trust God and depend on His strength alone.

### **Gideon Is Afraid (Judges 7:9-11)**

**9 That same night the Lord said to Gideon, "Get up. Go down and fight against them at their tents. For I have given them into your hands."**

**10 But if you are afraid to go down, go with your servant Purah down to their tents.**

**11 You will hear what they say. Then your hands will become strong enough to go down and fight against them." So he went with his servant Purah down to the side of the tents where soldiers were keeping watch.**

Even people who trust God can grow fearful. Gideon did. God knew about Gideon's fears and encouraged him. He told Gideon to go and fight the Midianites that same night. God promised to give Israel a strong victory. God said, "If you are afraid...go with your servant Purah to [the Midianite's] tents. You will hear what they say. Then your hands will become strong enough to go down and fight."

Even in the middle of his fear, God came to Gideon. God expects His people to

### **Things to Think About**

1. Do you know anyone who acts like King Louis XIV? How would you describe this person?
2. Why is fear such a powerful feeling? How does it affect our relationship with God?
3. Can you tell about a time when you were totally dependent on God for a victory? How did God work in that situation?
4. Why is it hard to approach God in our fear? What can we learn about this from Gideon's situation?
5. How can you trust God's promise for victory in the middle of the battles you face?

obey and follow Him. But God also understands human fear and weakness. He is powerful and mighty, but he is also full of loving-kindness. He showed this to Gideon.

### Things to Remember

We face many battles in life. Some people battle cancer. Some battle failure. Some battle loss or disappointment. We may grow fearful. We might need encouragement. God wants to show His strong power in the middle of every battle. And God alone has the strong power to give His people victory.

Not every battle turns out the way we hope. Still, God's presence gives us victory in the middle of the battle. This is true even when it might seem we have lost the fight. No matter the battles we face in life, our final enemies are sin and death.

Through Jesus, we can find forgiveness for our sin. He has taken the punishment for our sins. Through Jesus we can have life that lasts forever. "Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57, *NIV*).

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