

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

God Sends Help: A Study from Judges

Lesson 11: Gideon Is a Strong Leader

Bible Text

Judges 7:23-25; 8:1-4

Memory Verse

"A gentle answer turns away anger, but a sharp word causes anger." (Proverbs 15:1)

Word List

criticized: expressed disapproval; talked about someone's faults or problems

influence: the power to change or affect someone or something

perseverance: the quality that allows a person to keep going when things are hard

In today's culture, people are very focused on leadership. In fact, a quick search of Amazon's website shows this is true. If you type *leadership books* into the search bar, the website shows over 60,000 choices. It seems that everyone wants to be a leader. Or at least, everyone wants to learn about leadership.

Why are people so interested in this topic? Leadership affects every person. Simply put, leadership is influence. In some way,

every person has a circle of **influence**. It might be on a team or with a child. It might be with a co-worker or in a church. It could be in a club, an organization, or in a job. Every person has some level of influence. This means that every person is a leader.

The opposite is also true. Every person is under the leadership of others. Sometimes people choose their leaders. Other times leaders are placed over them. There are leaders placed in our families, our workplaces, our communities, and our countries. Sometimes we get to help choose these leaders. Other times we do not want these leaders or like them.

In addition, every person allows certain leaders to influence their lives. People choose friends who influence them. Often, they allow famous people to influence them. People can also decide which religious leaders they will listen to.

For sure, leadership affects every person. While there are many valuable books on this topic, the Bible offers strong truths about leadership. In today's lesson, we will learn about one man's example of leadership. Gideon's life shows us what a godly leader is like.

Gideon Asks for Help (Judges 7:23-25)

23 The men of Israel were called out from

Naphtali and Asher and all Manasseh, to go after Midian.

24 Gideon sent men through all the hill country of Ephraim, saying, “Come down against Midian. Take the waters in front of them, as far as Beth-barah and the Jordan.” So all the men of Ephraim were gathered together. And they took the waters as far as Beth-barah and the Jordan.

25 They took the two leaders of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb. They killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb. And they killed Zeeb at the place of Zeeb where the grapes are crushed. They went after Midian, and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon from the other side of the Jordan.

With a small army of only 300 men, God gave Israel victory over the Midianites. This small group of men surrounded the Midianites’ camp. Israel defeated them without using a single weapon (Judges 7). The 135,000 Midianites heard them blow their horns and shine their fire sticks. Then the Midianites ran far away. It was an amazing display of God’s power and might.

After the Midianites were defeated according to God’s plan, Gideon “called out” for help. He asked the tribes from Naphtali, Asher, Manasseh, and Ephraim to help him.

As a wise leader, Gideon listened to God and obeyed His plan for battle. Now Gideon did another wise thing. He asked for help.

Gideon knew that God had given Israel’s enemy into his hands. God had won the battle. Now, Gideon invited others to help capture the Midianites as they fled. By inviting others into the work, he also invited them into God’s victory and Israel’s success. A wise leader looks for chances to involve others. But a selfish leader does not like to share glory and success. Strong leaders like Gideon see the wisdom in sharing the work and the rewards with others.

Gideon Answers Softly (Judges 8:1-3)

1 Then the men of Ephraim said to Gideon, “What is this you have done to us? Why did you not call us when you went to fight against Midian?” They were angry when they argued with him.

2 But he said to them, “What have I done to compare with you? Are not the grapes that are left of Ephraim better than all the grapes gathered of Abiezer?”

3 God has given the leaders of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb, into your hands. What was I able to do to compare with you?” They were no longer angry when he said that.

When the Midianites were all captured,

Gideon experienced something common to many leaders. With God's help, Israel had seen a great victory. By working together, they experienced great success. After this, Gideon was **criticized** by the people of Ephraim. They were the last group Gideon asked for help. They were upset that Gideon did not include them earlier. They were angry and argued strongly against Gideon.

This might seem strange. After all, the people from Ephraim were part of Israel's great success. Why would they argue? The Ephraimites were not focused on God's power and goodness to Israel. They were not focused on God's strength in this victory. Instead, they were focused on themselves. They wanted more glory. They wanted more fame. They were angry that they did not have a bigger part in things. In short, they were selfish.

Many leaders would argue with a group like this. The truth is, Gideon did not have to

include them at all. But Gideon was different. He was not like other leaders. He chose to respond in a **humble** way. Gideon did not try to prove he was right. He did not point out their selfishness. Instead, Gideon gave a soft answer to their complaints. He honored the people from Ephraim. He pointed out their strength. He said, "What have I done to compare with you?" Gideon's soft answer was a wise response. After this, the people from Ephraim stopped complaining.

Gideon Keeps Going

(Judges 8:4)

4 Then Gideon and the 300 men with him came to the Jordan and crossed it. They were tired but they kept going.

Gideon faced many hard things. He overcame his fear. He fought a battle which seemed impossible to win. He led others to help capture Israel's enemies. His people argued with him in an unfair way. Gideon was tired. His men were tired. But through it all, Gideon never quit. Gideon stayed faithful to complete the job God gave him.

It would have been easy for Gideon to quit. It would have been easy for him to stop at the Jordan River. But Gideon did not do what was easy. Instead, Gideon showed **perseverance**. Even in hard times, Gideon kept going. He led his men to do the same. Gideon's perseverance in leading God's

Things to Think About

1. Who are the important leaders in your life? In what ways are you a leader to others?
2. Do you think it is wise for leaders to ask for help? Why do you think it is hard for leaders to ask for help?
3. Read Proverbs 15:1. Explain the meaning of this verse in your own words.
4. Have you ever been in a situation where you were tempted to give up? How did you respond?
5. What characteristic of Gideon's leadership do you most admire?

people brought honor and glory to God. And Israel “had peace for forty years, during the life of Gideon” (Judges 8:28). Gideon’s leadership was a blessing to God and to all Israel.

Things to Remember

Being a strong leader is no easy thing. It is easy for leaders to be selfish. It is easy for them to argue. It is easy for them to give up. But with God’s help, Gideon avoided all these things. Through his wisdom and obedience, Gideon blessed an entire generation of God’s people.

Think about Gideon’s leadership. What kind of leader do you want to follow? What kind of leader do you want to be? What can you learn from Gideon’s example? A leader like Gideon builds up God’s people. A leader like Gideon acts in humble ways. A leader like Gideon stays faithful to his task. How did Gideon do all these things? Gideon listened to God and obeyed Him. You can do this, too.

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