

Lesson 4: Gideon's Test

Thesis: We often fall short when tested by God, but God never fails. (We just might not understand the grading system)

ICEBREAKER: Have everyone in the group share.

- What is a nickname that you have been given by someone?
- Why was it given to you?
- Did you like it? Why or why not?

REVIEW:

- What was your impression of Judges 5?
- How did it enhance your understanding of Judges 4?
- Which did you like better, Judges 4 or 5? Why?

MEET GIDEON: Read Judges 6:11-14

- What nickname does the "angel of the Lord" give Gideon?
- What do you think God is saying about Gideon and to Gideon based on this introduction?
- What is your initial impression of Gideon?

SERMON DISCUSSION: This week's sermon was on Gideon's test and his start as a judge.

- What are some things you learned during this week's sermon?
- What are some questions you have or items you were confused about?
- What is your impression of Gideon, based on the sermon?
- How did this week's sermon help you understand the cycle of sin and redemption in the people of Israel?
- What did you learn about the cycle of sin and redemption in your life?

BACKGROUND: Read Judges 6:1-4

The Cycle Resumes:

- What areas of the cycle do we see repeated here?
- How does this cycle get a little bit worse than the previous cycles?
- What impact do you think the Midianite occupation had on the people of Israel?

Read the first two paragraphs of "**Sermon before Salvation**" (Pages 67-68) in *Judges For You*.

- What additional insight do we gain on the Midianite occupation?
- How does God change "the cycle" and why.

Read Judges 6:7-10?

- What message does God give the Israelites?
- How might this prophetic message sound familiar? Where have you seen similar messages in the Bible?

Read the fourth and fifth paragraphs of "**Sermon before Salvation**" (Pages 68-69) in *Judges For You*.

- What is the difference between worldly sorrow (regret) and Godly sorrow (repentance)?
- How have you seen regret and repentance lived out in your life?

Encourage the group to read through the rest of that section "**Sermon before Salvation**" on their own and process with God the implication that Keller makes about regret vs repentance on page 70.

GIVE ME A SIGN:

- Have you ever known God was wanting you to do something, but you asked God for a sign? If so, share your experience.
- Why do we want God to provide signs for us? What does that say about us? What does that say about our understanding and trust in God?

Read Judges 6:15-24

- Does your opinion of Gideon change based off this passage? How and why?
- Gideon provides an excuse for why he cannot be used by God. Who else in the Bible gives God excuses instead of obedience? Why are people prone to offer excuse instead of commitment?
- Gideon asks for a sign of God's favor. Why might he have a hard time accepting God's call? Why does he need a sign?
- What sign does the angel give Gideon and what is his response?

Read the last three paragraphs of **"If God is With Us"** starting with 'so God tells Gideon...' (Pages 73-74) in *Judges For You*.

- Keller provides three reasons why the angel calls Gideon a 'Mighty Warrior.' What are the three reasons?
- Which reason do you think is correct, or do you have another possibility? Why?
- God's understanding of ourselves is different than our personal understanding. What does that say about our view of God and his understanding of us? How have you seen this in your life?

TEAR IT DOWN: *If time is limited, encourage your group to work through this section on their own.*

Read Judges 6:25-32

- What does God tell Gideon to do?
- How does he do what God wants? How does he fall short of God's expectations and why?
- How does fear keep us from wholeheartedly following Jesus? How has fear kept you from wholeheartedly following Jesus?
- Why are the men of the city enraged by Gideon's actions (and his cowardice)? What does that say about the commitment to God versus their commitment to Baal?

Read the last three paragraphs of **"Two Alters"** (page 77) in *Judges For You*. This whole section has excellent insight and may enhance your personal study.

- Keller says we need to "throw off the enemies among us." What is he referring to here? What were the enemies among the people of Israel?
- What does he suggest are the enemies that we live among? What are some of the idols in your life that you have a hard time throwing off?
- Why does God want us to get rid of these idols? How do they negatively affect our lives and our relationship with Him?

GIVE ME ANOTHER SIGN.

Read Judges 6:36-40

- "If you will..." Gideon still seems uncertain. Why do you think he doubts God and himself? Why do we tend to doubt even when God makes things clear to us?
- Gideon once again (and again) asks God for a sign. What is the sign? What was he hoping to discover?
- Read the second full paragraph on page 78 starting with "Gideon was very specifically..." How does this provide a deeper insight into Gideon's faith?
- Have you ever asked God for a sign, even after he made his way clear? Share your experience.
- Why do you think God honored Gideon's request?

PERSONAL REFLECTION:

Read Romans 8:31-39

- Paul rhetorically asks “If God is for us, who is against us.” How does he then prove that God is for us?
- If God is for us, then why do we continually ask God to prove himself?
- How is what Paul writing equivalent to proclamation that Gideon is a Mighty Warrior?
- How does this passage encourage you in your life right now?
- How can it help strengthen your faith and build confidence in Christ?

Prayer Request: How can the group be praying for you? Are there signs you are asking God to show you? Who are some people that need to experience confidence in Christ this week?

Close in prayer: Spend time praying for each other in the group?