

Mighty Faith Building

Text : **Judges 6: 17-40**

S#1.

A. Last lesson we looked at God's call of Gideon.

S#2.

1. God called Gideon a "Mighty Man of Valor." (In the NASB "O valiant warrior")
2. He was hiding in a wine press to thresh his wheat. (*You must have the wrong winepress*)

B. These events are happening approximately 200 yrs. after the death of Joshua.

1. Because of their kinship to Israel and to Moses the Midianites had been allies.
2. Some Jewish literature said the Midianites were Israel's guides in the wilderness.
3. Culturally, the Midianites were marauding nomads and Israel became their prey.

C. Gideon complained that they were being oppressed by the Midianites.

S#3.

1. There are so many of them they come in like a swarm of locusts.
2. They bring their livestock and have consumed every harvest for the past 7 years.
3. They have camels (like tanks) and are in such numbers that we cannot resist them.

D. God sent a preacher to call them to repentance rather than an army.

S#4.

1. Their oppression was from the Lord. (*Actions have consequences,*)
Judges 6: 1 – Then the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord;
and the Lord gave them into the hands of Midian seven years.

2. Israel was in violation of their contract with God so their penalty was just.

Deut. 11: 26 – See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse:
27 the blessing, if you listen to the commandments of the Lord
your God, which I am commanding you today; **28** and the curse,
if you do not listen to the commandments of the Lord your God,
but turn aside from the way which I am commanding you today,
by following other gods which you have not known.

S#5.

S#6.

E. Jesus, called the "Angel of the Lord", told Gideon he was the deliverer Israel.

1. Gideon objected that he did not have the ability to do what was commanded.
 - a. "Lord just look at me, I'm hiding in a winepress."
 - b. I'm from the youngest one of the least family in the least tribe.
 - c. His worldview orbited around self so he thought in terms of his own ability.
2. God told Gideon, "*Have a little faith, I've got your back.*"
 - a. **Judges 6: 16** – But the Lord said to him, "Surely I will be with you,
and you shall defeat Midian as one man."
 - b. Gideon acknowledged Jesus by preparing a significant sacrifice.

3. Jesus worked two miracles 1st by consuming the sacrifice and 2nd by vanishing.
 - a. **Judges 6: 21** – Then the Angel of the Lord put out the end of the staff that was **S#7.** in His hand and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. Then the Angel of the Lord vanished from his sight.
 - b. After He vanished the Angel of the Lord (*Jesus*) spoke reassuringly to Gideon.

With this lesson we will observed how God nurtured Gideon's fledgling faith. S#8.

I. Gideon's first test of faith . S#9.

A. Gideon built an altar to declare his faith in God. S#10.

1. Gideon builds this altar as a witness marker, not as a place to offer sacrifices.
2. Cf. **Joshua 22: 10f** (Esp. 26-27) ... The Gilead erected an altar to declare fellowship.
3. Gideon's altar is not to be confused with the altar God later commands him to build.

B. Gideon is instructed to tear down his father's altar to Baal and the Asherah.

1. Gideon had to cleanse his own family of idol worship before leading others.
2. Joash, Gideon's father was a priest of Baal.
 - a. **Judges 2** ... The first generation after Joshua fell into Baal worship.
 - b. God sent a judge each generation until it became useless to do so.

Judges 3: 5ff – The sons of Israel lived among the Canaanites, the Hittites, **S#11.** the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; **6** and they took their daughters for themselves as wives, and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods. **7** The sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and forgot the Lord their God and served the Baals and the Asheroth.
3. He had an altar for sacrificing to Baal and an idol would have been included.
 - a. Baal was the most widely worshipped god in Canaan. (*Son of El, the head god*)
 - b. The word "Baal" means lord, ruler or owner.
 - c. He was the fertility and storm god. (*Fought the water god for the position*)
4. Asherah was the wife of the chief god, EL, and produced 70 other gods by him.
 - a. Called the mother goddess, the moon goddess and the consort of Baal.
 - b. Worship to Asherah included ritual prostitution, both male and female.
 - c. She was represented by a limbless tree that was carved into an idol. (*Totem pole*)
5. Worship of the Asherah must have been particularly offensive to God.
 - a. Some Israelites worshipped her as the consort of Jehovah. (*Yahweh*)

- b. King Manasseh put an idol of Asherah in the temple of the Lord.

II King 21: 7 – Then he set the carved image of Asherah that he had made, **S#12.**
in the house of which the Lord said to David and to his son
Solomon, " In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have
chosen from all the tribes of Israel, I will put My name forever.

- c. Good King Josiah removed that idol and burned it.

II Kings 23: 6 – He brought out the Asherah from the house of the Lord **S#13**
outside Jerusalem to the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook
Kidron, and ground it to dust, and threw its dust on the graves of
the common people. (*Common people = those who were made priests*)

S#14

* *Unlike the bible, the pagans have no singular authoritative refer about their gods.*

S#15.

C. Gideon obeyed God, but he tore down the altar at night to avoid confrontation.

1. As the youngest son, obedience could cost him his relationship with his father.
2. Gideon was a wealthy man. “**vs 27** Then Gideon took ten men of his servants ”
3. They tore down the altar of Baal, built the altar to Jehovah and offered the sacrifice.

D. As Gideon feared, the men were so upset they wanted to kill him.

1. Unexpectedly, the father of Gideon stood up for him.

Judges 6: 31– But Joash said to all who stood against him, "Will you contend **S#16.**
for Baal, or will you deliver him? Whoever will plead for him shall
be put to death by morning. If he is a god, let him contend for himself,
because someone has torn down his altar."

2. His father changed Gideon's name to “Jerubbaal” i.e., “let Baal contend against him.”
3. This was a faith-building exercise to get Gideon ready for the battle.

ILL – Boxers are matched against easily defeated opponent before facing real contenders.

II. Move by the Spirit of God, Gideon blew a trumpet to assemble an army. **S#17.**

A. After the army began to assemble, Gideon's faith began to wane.

1. Gideon knew God's command and that God was with him, **but** needed reassurance.
2. He threw down a fleece and asked God to give him a sign.
3. Make the dew fall on the fleece and everything else be dry.
4. God demonstrated His patience by doing as Gideon requested.

B. Gideon's faith was not sufficiently reinforced by the sign. **S#18.**

1. **Vs – 39** ... Gideon knew he was trying the patience of the Lord
Then Gideon said to God, “Do not let Your anger burn against me that I
may speak once more; please let me make a test once more with the fleece ...”

2. He requested that the process be reversed, all wet except the fleece.

S#19.

C. The asking of a sign is not favored by God, but He patiently built Gideon's faith.

1. When one sees a demonstration, it eliminated faith ... only by sight.
2. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for asking for a sign.

Matt. 16: 4 – An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and a sign will not be given it, except the sign of Jonah." And He left them and went away.

3. Gideon was to lead a miraculous event which would change a generation.
4. The event which Gideon was to lead was to become part of scripture.

III. Gideon's "laying down the fleece" was not held up as an example for us. S#20.

A. Gideon's testing of God was a confession of a lack of faith. S#21.

1. **Judges 6: 36 – Then Gideon said to God, " If You will deliver Israel through me, as You have spoken, 37 behold, I will put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor.**
2. When Gideon saw the great hoards of Midianites, he was afraid.
3. They had been overwhelmed year after year for 7 yrs.

B. Notice that Gideon was not seeking the will of God.

1. **"If You will deliver Israel through me, as You have spoken."**
2. Gideon was saying, ***"I know what you said, but will you really do it"***
3. This was a clear indication of a lack of trusting faith.
4. He was saying, ***"God, you must prove yourself to me before I obey."***

C. Gideon a good reason to be afraid, but not to doubt God.

1. In this whole process it was clear that Gideon was just being converted from Baal.
 - a. Having an altar to Baal in his father's house he grew up in the church of Baal.
 - b. He knew about God, but was not taught to fear Him.
2. The common thought was that the most powerful God won the battles.
 - a. The Midianites and the Amorites had defeat them for 7 yrs.
 - b. Thus, they would have viewed the god of the Midianites and Amorites as being more powerful than their God, Jehovah.
3. Being a priest of Baal would have sheltered Gideon's father from some of the pillaging of the raiders.

D. Compare Gideon to others who were called.

1. When Noah was told to build an ark, he spent 100 years doing so.
2. When Abraham was told to get out away from his family, he did so.
3. Young David's faith motivated him to face off against the giant.
4. Gideon was seeking FAITH, not the will of God.

IV. Some lessons for us :**S#22.****A. It is not a proper thing for a Christian to throw down a fleece before God. S#23.**

1. Many Christians advocate seeking a sign to determine God's will in a decision.
2. **Example :** The elders of one congregation threw down a fleece when they were deciding whether or not to build a church building that they were convinced they needed. They said, if we can raise \$100K by a certain date, that will be a sign that God wanted them to build. **They** only raised \$93,500 so they did not build.
3. **Example #2 :** A man wants to buy a new car, but he is not sure he can afford the payments. (*One should not buy anything that challenges his budget.*) He prays, "Lord if I have one more car repair this month I will know that you want me to buy a new car. He runs into a pipe sticking off the back of a truck and punctures his radiator so he buys a new car." (*If he can't make his payments, it's God's fault.*)
4. Signs appointed by man do NOT reflect or reveal the will of God.

S#24.**B. God guided Gideon through His spoken words and he guides us via His book.**

1. Asking for a sign is a clear admission of doubt.
2. Asking for a sign before a decision is an indication of fear.
3. The word of God is the only guide we need to know God's will.
- a. **Psa. 119: 7** – I shall give thanks to You with uprightness of heart,
When I learn Your righteous judgments.

S#25.

- b. **Psa. 119: 105** – Your word is a lamp to my feet, And a light to my path.

S#26.**C. We must spend enough time in God's word to enable God to use it to guide us.**

1. The Spirit of God is within every Christian and He speaks to us through His words.
Psa. 48:14 – For such is God, Our God forever and ever; He will guide us until death.
2. We can't go through life with a concordance under our arm, **lay up the word.**
Psa. 119: 11 – Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You.

INVITATION : Put your full faith and trust in Jesus.**S#27.****S#28.** ... Communion slide

Lesson Text :**Judges 6: 17-40**

17 So Gideon said to Him, "If now I have found favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You who speak with me. **18** "Please do not depart from here, until I come back to You, and bring out my offering and lay it before You." And He said, "I will remain until you return."

19 Then Gideon went in and prepared a young goat and unleavened bread from an ephah of flour; he put the meat in a basket and the broth in a pot, and brought them out to him under the oak and presented them. **20** The angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened bread and lay them on this rock, and pour out the broth." And he did so. **21** Then the angel of the Lord put out the end of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. Then the angel of the Lord vanished from his sight. **22** When Gideon saw that he was the angel of the Lord, he said, "Alas, O LordGod! For now I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face." **23** The Lord said to him, "Peace to you, do not fear; you shall not die." **24** Then Gideon built an altar there to the Lord and named it The Lord is Peace. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

25 Now on the same night the Lord said to him, "Take your father's bull and a second bull seven years old, and pull down the altar of Baal which belongs to your father, and cut down the Asherah that is beside it; **26** and build an altar to the Lord your God on the top of this stronghold in an orderly manner, and take a second bull and offer a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah which you shall cut down." **27** Then Gideon took ten men of his servants and did as the Lord had spoken to him; and because he was too afraid of his father's household and the men of the city to do it by day, he did it by night.

28 When the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was torn down, and the Asherah which was beside it was cut down, and the second bull was offered on the altar which had been built. **29** They said to one another, "Who did this thing?" And when they searched about and inquired, they said, "Gideon the son of Joash did this thing." **30** Then the men of the city said to Joash, "Bring out your son, that he may die, for he has torn down the altar of Baal, and indeed, he has cut down the Asherah which was beside it." **31** But Joash said to all who stood against him, "Will you contend for Baal, or will you deliver him? Whoever will plead for him shall be put to death by morning. If he is a god, let him contend for himself, because someone has torn down his altar." **32** Therefore on that day he named him Jerubbaal, that is to say, "Let Baal contend against him," because he had torn down his altar.

33 Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the sons of the east assembled themselves; and they crossed over and camped in the valley of Jezreel. **34** So the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon; and he blew a trumpet, and the Abiezrites were called together to follow him. **35** He sent messengers throughout Manasseh, and they also were called together to follow him; and he sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and they came up to meet them.

36 Then Gideon said to God, " If You will deliver Israel through me, as You have spoken, **37** behold, I will put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground, then I will know that You will deliver Israel through me, as You have spoken." **38** And it was so. When he arose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece, he drained the dew from the fleece, a bowl full of water. **39** Then Gideon said to God, " Do not let Your anger burn against me that I may speak once more; please let me make a test once more with the fleece, let it now be dry only on the fleece, and let there be dew on all the ground." **40** God did so that night; for it was dry only on the fleece, and dew was on all the ground.