

CONFIDENCE

WEEK 2

LIVING LIKE YOU BELIEVE WHAT GOD SAYS IS TRUE

Gideon
Judges 6–8

MEMORY VERSE | Psalm 27:13

Even though God had given His people a new home in the Promised Land, the Israelites still turned away from Him. So God allowed their enemies to attack and defeat them. Each year, the Midianites and Amalekites destroyed the Israelites' crops and livestock.

At last, the Israelites cried out to God. He saw how helpless His people were, so He sent the angel of the Lord to a new leader. You'd expect someone powerful, but instead, God picked the least important person from the least important family: a man named Gideon.

Gideon was the sort of guy other people looked right past. In fact, when the angel appeared, Gideon was hiding out to thresh his wheat. He was so worried enemies would steal his grain that he worked where no one could see him.

"Mighty warrior," announced the angel, *"The Lord is with you!"*

Gideon cowered, nearly blinded by the light. "If God is with us, why have all these awful things happened?" he asked.

"You are strong," the angel of the Lord said. *"Go save Israel . . . I am sending you."*

"Who, me?" croaked Gideon. "You know: me. Gideon. Least important guy in the family at the bottom of the pecking order."

"I will be with you," God said.

Gideon still couldn't believe that God would actually choose him, so he asked for a sign. When God sent fire from heaven to burn up an offering, Gideon could no longer deny it was God Himself.

Soon, enemy armies marched across the Jordan River to attack Israel. God's Spirit came on Gideon, giving him courage, and Gideon called for men of Israel to join him. Even though Gideon considered himself unimportant, 32,000 men rallied around him at Mount Gilead!

"Yikes!" Gideon exclaimed as he surveyed the huge army. "They think I'm gonna lead them in battle. Are You sure about this, God?"

"Have you seen the enemy camp? They're like a swarm of locusts!"

God was patient with Gideon and gave two more signs to show that He would use Gideon as He had promised.

"I want to hand Midian over to you," God told Gideon.

"Okay, great," Gideon said, and took a deep breath. "Let's do this!"

But God wasn't ready to send him yet. *"But you have too many men for me to do that,"* God told Gideon.

"Too many men?!" cried Gideon. "Have you seen the enemy camp? They're like a swarm of locusts!"

"Then Israel might brag, 'My own strength has saved me.'" God said. "So tell the army, 'Those who tremble with fear can turn back.'"

With a deep sense of dread, Gideon gave God's message to the men of Israel. Many of them did leave.

"We've only got 10,000 soldiers to fight the enemy now!" said Gideon, anxiety driving him to pace back and forth.

"There are still too many men," said God. "So take them down to the water and I will tell you who should leave."

Feeling sick, Gideon led all the men down to the water to drink. Here, God instructed Gideon to separate the men who lapped the water like dogs from those who scooped the water and drank from their hands. Those who got down to drink were to be sent home.

When Gideon had finished separating the men, he could hardly bring himself to count the small group of soldiers who remained. "God," he choked, "there are only three hundred men left!"

"With [their] help . . . I will save you," God told him.

That night, Gideon and his small band of warriors camped at the spring of Harod. In the valley below, the vast enemy armies spread out, torches and campfires flickering in the dusk for what seemed like miles. They looked to be as many as the sand on the seashore.

Gideon tossed and turned on his mat, unable to sleep. Once again, the voice of God startled him: *"Get up. . . Go down to the camp with your servant . . . Listen to what they are saying. After that, then you will not be afraid to attack the camp."*

So Gideon and his servant snuck down the hillside. At the edge of the enemy camp, they hung back in the shadows when they saw men huddled around the last glowing embers of a campfire. One of the men awoke with a start. "I just had this awful dream," he wailed. "I saw a giant loaf of bread race down the mountain. It flattened a tent!"

His friend shivered. "*That can only be . . . Gideon. . . . [God] has given him the whole camp!*" the man cried.

In the shadows, Gideon could barely keep from shouting. "God has given us the whole camp!" he whispered to his servant.

Both men rushed back up the hill to the sleeping Israelite band. "Get up. Get up!" Gideon called. "God has given you the Midianites. Each of you, take a trumpet. And a torch in a jar. Watch me and do exactly what I do!"

Gideon divided the men into three groups of one hundred. Fanning out, they crept down the mountain to the outskirts of the enemy camp.

***"A sword for the Lord
and for Gideon!"
the Israelites yelled.***

"Now!" shouted Gideon. Immediately, the Israelites blasted their trumpets and smashed their jars so the torches inside blazed into the night. "*A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!*" they yelled.

The Israelites held their ground at the edge of the camp, but their enemies panicked. Some ran away in fear. Others began to fight each other. It was pure chaos, as the enemy camp fell apart.

“Send messengers through the hill country,” Gideon instructed his men. “Tell our friends we’re following the enemy!”

Gideon’s band was joined by other Israelites as they chased the Midianites back across the Jordan River. The enemy was completely destroyed that day, and Gideon led Israel through forty years of peace—all because he had allowed God to use him in spite of his doubts.



Let's
Talk!

***We all tell ourselves stories inside our head—
things we believe about ourselves, even though
they aren't true.***

“I’m not big enough.” “I’m not important enough.” “I can’t do hard things.”
What are some of the things you tell yourself? (Parents, you can help if your child needs suggestions.) Gideon definitely didn’t think he was strong enough or important enough to lead the whole army, but God picked him anyway! It didn’t matter what Gideon could or couldn’t do, because God was working through him. And God can use you, too, no matter what you think of yourself and your abilities. You simply have to be willing to listen and to allow Him to work. Pray for each other, that you would be open to any way God might want to work through you this week.