

# 10

# His Word is Enough

Judges 6:11-16, 25-27

**11** The Angel of the LORD came, and He sat under the oak that was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash, the Abiezrite. His son Gideon was threshing wheat in the wine vat in order to hide it from the Midianites. **12** Then the Angel of the LORD appeared to him and said: “The LORD is with you, mighty warrior.” **13** Gideon said to Him, “Please Sir, if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened? And where are all His wonders that our fathers told us about? They said, ‘Hasn’t the LORD brought us out of Egypt?’ But now the LORD has abandoned us and handed us over to Midian.” **14** The LORD turned to him and said, “Go in the strength you have and deliver Israel from the power of Midian. Am I not sending you?” **15** He said to Him, “Please, Lord, how can I deliver Israel? Look, my family is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father’s house.” **16** “But I will be with you,” the LORD said to him. “You will strike Midian down as if it were one man.”

**25** On that very night the LORD said to him, “Take your father’s young bull and a second bull seven years old. Then tear down the altar of Baal that belongs to your father and cut down the Asherah pole beside it. **26** Build a well-constructed altar to the LORD your God on the top of this rock. Take the second bull and offer it as a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah pole you cut down.” **27** So Gideon took 10 of his male servants and did as the LORD had told him. But because he was too afraid of his father’s household and the men of the city to do it in the daytime, he did it at night.



# Exploration

If you ask a dozen Christians how they know something to be God's will (a relationship, a job, a big life decision, etc.) for their lives, you are likely to get a dozen different answers. Some people will share stories of how they felt God pulling them in one direction or another—they will speak of God opening and closing doors. Others will claim that they prayed and just “felt a peace” about making a particular decision. Still others will share about various signs they noticed that seemed to be speaking into a particular decision.

It can be difficult to get to the bottom of God's will for our lives. In fact, if we are honest, many of us find it frustrating that we just can't seem to find clarity from God on what we should do, where we should live, or who we should marry. We wish God would write the answers to these important questions in the clouds so that we could walk confidently in His will. Gideon asked for such a sign. It is important to note, however, that at the point when he asked for the sign, Gideon already knew God's will. It was his lack of faith, not a lack of clarity, that was holding him back. The same is true for us. While there are specifics about God's will that He has not directly revealed to us, He has clearly told us the most important things about His will for us through His Word. The Bible is crystal clear about God's purpose for our lives—He wants us to love Him with all our hearts and to dedicate our lives to His mission and glory.

## CONTEXT (JUDG. 6:1–12:15)

For a period of 40 years after the ministry of Deborah, God's people enjoyed rest from their enemies (Judg. 5:31). Then once again, “the Israelites did what was evil in the sight of the Lord” (6:1; see also 2:11; 3:7,12; 4:1; 10:6; 13:1). As a consequence, God's judgment fell upon the Israelites. He “handed them over to Midian seven years” (6:1). The Midianites were nomads from the region east and southeast of the Dead Sea. They roamed the country, seeking grazing for their animals. Finding Israel too weak to defend themselves, the Midianites plundered Israel.

The Midianites were probably too small in numbers to plunder Israel alone, so they joined with the Amalekites and other eastern peoples and rode their camels all across Israel. The Midianites grazed their own livestock and stole sheep, oxen, and donkeys from the Israelites. They also plundered homes. The Book of Judges describes the Midianites as a “great swarm of locusts” (v. 5). Consequently, the Israelites fled to the hills and hid in the many caves that dotted the limestone hillsides (v. 2).

Having become poverty-stricken because of the Midianites, the Israelites remembered God and cried out to Him (v. 6). The Lord then empowered an unlikely young man named Gideon to deliver His people and to call them back to Himself.



# Conversation

› **Share about a time when you wished God would give you a clear sign so that you would know His will for your life.**

› **Why do you think God often does not speak directly to us or give us clear signs like He did for many people in the Old Testament?**

It's easy to look at people in the Old Testament like Deborah, Joshua, Moses, and Gideon, with envy. If we are honest, most of us have, at one time or another, wished that God would speak to us directly like he did to these people. We have all longed for God to give us a clear sign from heaven that would make His will vividly clear to us. By and large, God spoke to these people the same way He speaks to us, through His Word. As we look at the story of Gideon, we see God spoke to Gideon in a miraculous way through the Angel of the Lord and even gave the young judge a visible sign. However, what hindered Gideon from fulfilling God's mission for Him was not a lack of clarity, but rather a lack of trust in what God had already said. The truth of God's Word is sufficient. It is enough for us to know His will for our lives and it empowers us to live on mission for Him. As you dig into the story of Gideon with students, help them see that they already know the most important thing about God's will for their lives—His will is for them to live for His glory.

## JUDGES 6:11-16

› **Look back at verses 1-10. What situation did the Israelites find themselves in? Why do you think they kept falling back into this same cycle?**

Judges 6 opens with yet another Israelite relapse into the evils of Baal worship. This time, the Lord handed the people over to be oppressed by several groups of semi-nomadic peoples. The oppression included elements of the classic conflict between nomadic herders and sedentary farmers. The result was that the Israelites lost their crops, sinking them into poverty. They cried out to God for help and He reminded them through a prophet of the connection between their suffering at the hands of their enemies and their disobedience to Him (see 6:7-10). At the same time, however, God was also preparing to call forth another deliverer to help them. This seemingly perpetual cycle illustrates several truths important to instill in students: the power and deceitfulness of sin, the patience and love of God, and Israel's need of a Savior who would break this cycle and bring true righteousness (Isa. 11:1-16).

› **Where was Gideon's focus (vv. 11-14)? Why do you think he hesitated to believe the word from God that was delivered to him by the angel?**

The first thing we are told about Gideon's demeanor is that he was fearful (v. 11) and felt abandoned by God (v. 13). He remembered God's previous miraculous work in saving Israel out of slavery in Egypt and wondered why God appeared to have abandoned them to Midian. Then in verse 15, Gideon voiced his feeling of inferiority in the face of God's call.







# Conversation

› **Despite Gideon's personal feelings, God referred to him as a "mighty" warrior (v. 12). Why did God chose this title? What does it reveal about God's plans for Gideon's life?**

› **How did the Lord respond to Gideon? How might God's message to Gideon encourage us as we seek God's will? How might these words empower us to live on mission?**

While it is true that Gideon was, at that moment, feeling timid and working in hiding, God was calling him to something greater, specifically to become the leader and warrior who would save His people. The Lord, therefore, addressed Gideon not in terms of what he was, but rather in terms of what the grace of God could make of him. Gideon needed to stop focusing on how terrible the Midianites were and on how small he was. Instead, he needed to have confidence that God would save again. More than that, he needed to have faith that God could use him to deliver the Israelites.

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➤ **ITEM 7 (LEADER PACK)** Consider displaying the **Angelic Encounters** pack item during this session as we see how the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon in this passage.

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The angel of the Lord encouraged Gideon by delivering God's Word to the young judge. God assured Gideon that He had sent him to deliver the Israelites (v. 14) and that His presence would sustain and empower him (v. 16). God's Word is true or upright (Ps. 33:4), and powerful (Heb. 4:12). Every promise He has made will come to pass (Josh. 23:14). Through Christ, God has promised to never leave or forsake us (Deut. 31:6). He has promised to be with us, strengthen us, and use us to proclaim His kingdom (Matt. 24:14). We don't need a special message or sign in order to know and live out God's will, we simply need to believe the promises He has made us in Christ. God's Word empowers and equips us to live on mission for Him.

## JUDGES 6:25-27

› **For context, look back at verses 17-24. What did God ask Gideon for (v. 17)? How did Gideon respond when God answered his request (v. 22)?**

Despite God's assurance that Gideon would be victorious, Gideon still struggled to believe. He asked God for a sign to confirm that it really was God that had spoken to him through the angel. God set fire to the sacrifice that Gideon set up, confirming that it was indeed the Lord who had spoken through the angel. Upon seeing this miracle, Gideon feared for his life because he realized that he was in the presence of God's messenger. We see God's grace both in the sign and in His response to Gideon's fears. God did not owe Gideon a sign, but He gave him one, proving that He was indeed calling Gideon to judge the Midianites. When Gideon's heart is struck with fear at the thought of hearing a direct Word from God, the Lord pronounces peace and tells him not to fear (v. 23). This encounter looks forward to Jesus who spoke peace to His disciples when they feared Him after He calmed the storm (Mark 4:35-41), and produced the miraculous catch of fish (Luke 5:1-11). Like the disciples, we should approach God with a sense of fear, of holy reverence, and yet, like Gideon, we need to realize that God's presence and approval calms our fears.



# Leader Prep

We can see Gideon's feelings of insecurity. When told to deliver Israel, he asked: how can I deliver Israel? Gideon admitted: my family is the weakest in Manasseh. Gideon's recognition of being the youngest in his family only caused more insecurity.

Again, the Lord guaranteed to be present with Gideon (see also v. 12). Because of the Lord's presence, victory was assured. The idea of mighty Midian having no more power than one man was the Lord's way of reassuring Gideon he could successfully fulfill God's calling on his life. God was molding Gideon into a mature believer.

## JUDGES 6:17-24

Gideon was concerned about miracles (v. 13), so he decided not to budge until he saw one. His position was that he needed divine confirmation ("give me a sign") before he would commit himself to action. He also dictated the nature of the sign. The segment unfolds in this way: first, Gideon prepared an offering; second, God provided a consuming flame; and finally, Gideon reacted with fear.

Gideon prepared an offering (not a meal), consisting of a young goat, a large amount of unleavened bread, and broth. Then the angel of God told him to put the meat and bread on a nearby rock, saturating both with the broth; Gideon obeyed. With the tip of his staff, he touched the offering on the rock, which blazed with flame, consuming all. The divine being then disappeared.

Strangely, Gideon's reaction was the opposite of what should have occurred. God had reassured him of his presence and his protection, yet Gideon was terrified, thinking that he had seen God face to face and would therefore soon die. Again in grace the Lord communicated in some way to Gideon, Peace! Do not be afraid. You are not going to die. In response Gideon built an altar and called it "The LORD is Peace." Like any scholar concerned with historical accuracy, the writer adds a parenthetical note mentioning that, at the time he was writing, the altar was available for verification: "To this day it stands in Ophrah of the Abiezrites."



After God told Gideon to destroy the objects of pagan worship, the Lord instructed him to build an altar to the Lord on the site. Gideon was to use the wood from the Asherah pole as fuel for the burnt offering. He would transform a place of Baal worship into a place to worship the Lord.



# Conversation

› **What did Gideon do to the altar of Baal? What did this act communicate about God? About Gideon's faith?**

› **Where did Gideon find the strength to do this? What can we learn from his example?**

God charged Gideon to not only tear down the altar to the false God Baal and the Asherah pole beside it, but also to use the wood from the Asherah pole to sacrifice a bull in worship of Him. It communicated to the Midianites and to all of Israel that Baal was a false god and that the Lord was the one true and living God. It was a bold statement, but also an act of war. There was no going back. Once Gideon did this there would be open conflict between Israel and Midian, and Gideon would have to embrace God's call to deliver Israel.

› **Was there anything lacking in Gideon's faith (v. 27)?**

It would have taken tremendous faith and God-given courage to do this and yet, verse 27 tells us that Gideon did this by night because he feared the men of the town and even his own family, many of whom were Baal worshipers. If we are not careful, students can easily become discouraged when they study about men and women in the Bible who did great things because these people seem so much more godly. Verse 27, however, makes it clear that Gideon's faith was mixed with fear. Challenge students not to waste time feeling inferior to the "heroes" of the Bible. God is the one true hero of every story in Scripture and He empowers His people to act mightily for His glory.

› **What affect did Gideon's act have on his father? How might even the smallest act of faith have a ripple affect on those around us?**

Presumably, Gideon's father Joash was one of the many Israelites who had begun worshiping Baal and Asherah. It seems, however, that Gideon's bold act of destroying the altar of Baal and building an altar to the Lord inspired him to join his son in standing against the Midianites. When the Midianites ask Joash to betray his son and hand him over, he too boldly stood against them, saying, "Let Baal contend against him." While God is the hero of this story, we need also to recognize that Gideon's faith inspired and strengthened his Father. Guide students to see that God intends to use their faith in a similar way—to demonstrate His glory and inspire those around them to trust in Him.

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**GO DEEPER OPTION:** Read Acts 4:1-31, taking special note of verses 23-31 and how Peter and John's faith inspired the faith of others. Challenge your students to carefully consider how God might use their faith to encourage and empower others to live on mission for Him.

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# Application

## CENTRAL TRUTH

*The truth of God's Word empowers us to live for His glory.*

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➤➤ **ITEMS 2 & 6 (LEADER PACK)** Consider displaying the **Timeline** and the **Judges Cycle** pack items for students to see. This may be especially beneficial to those who are visual learners.

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## NOW WHAT?

➤ **How can you know God's will? How might focusing on what you know about God's will help you to grow in your walk with Christ?**

➤ **What fears or insecurities do you have about living on mission for Christ? How might knowing God's will for you help you overcome these fears?**

While we would all like God to speak directly to us and tell us where we should go to college, who we should marry, and what career we should choose, these concerns are actually rather minor in the big scheme of things. The Bible gives us the answers to much deeper and more important questions—it tells us everything we need to know about God's will for the world, our purpose, and eternal future. God's will for the world is to redeem it (Col. 1:19-20) and display His glory in it (Ps. 19:1; Isa. 55:12). According to Scripture, our purpose is to glorify God and proclaim the good news about His Son (Isa. 43:7; Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). Our future is secure as Christ has redeemed us (2 Cor. 5:21) and restored us to a right relationship with God (1 Pet. 3:18) and He promises to come again to take us to be with Him forever (John 14:1-7). When we prioritize the glory of God and the mission of God, these "big" decisions will not seem so intimidating.

➤ **In what areas of your life is your faith mixed with fear?**

➤ **Journal a prayer to God asking Him to help you rest in the truth of what you know about His will in Scripture. Pray that these promises would empower your mission.**



## PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Finish your group time with these thoughts and encourage students to memorize the verse listed for this session. Memorizing God's Word allows it to dwell in us and allows Him to speak through His Word in our times of need. Also encourage your group to take advantage of the Keep on Digging section in their Personal Study Guides and to take the truths of this section and apply them to their lives.

› **Dwell:** Journal a list of actions and things from Scripture that are part of God's will for you to do (i.e. love God, love your neighbor, share the gospel, care for the needy, etc.). Once you have compiled a list, take some time to pray that God would give you opportunities to do each of these things. Pray that He would burden your heart to engage in these things for the sake of His kingdom and glory.

› **Memorize:** Judges 6:16

› **Pray:** Ask God to help you submit to and live out of His will for your life. Pray that He would reveal to you the areas of your life that are not submitted to His kingdom and glory. Ask God for the courage necessary to commit to and engage in His mission for the world.

## KEEP ON DIGGING

Read Matthew 22:34-40. What does this passage teach you about God's will for your life? Augustine once said, "Once for all, then a short precept is given to you: Love, and do what you will." Augustine wasn't saying that we can do whatever we want to as Christians, but rather that if we really do love God with all our hearts, if He really is most important to us, we won't be paralyzed by not knowing specific answers about God's will for our lives. This doesn't mean that we won't have questions about the details of our lives, but if our focus really is on Christ, we don't have to live in fear of making the wrong decisions and messing our lives up.



For an expository verse-by-verse sermon outline/discussion guide that complements this session with a study in Galatians, see [lifeway.com/ETBWIN17JJR](http://lifeway.com/ETBWIN17JJR). For **free** training, go to [MinistryGrid.com/web/ExploreTheBible](http://MinistryGrid.com/web/ExploreTheBible).