

**Episode:** Promised Land Series No. 17

**Narrator:** Gideon

**Primary Scriptures:** Judges 6-12

**Story Summary:** Gideon and the judges following him

**Location:** Canaan

**Time:** c. 1406 BC The Israelites enter Canaan

c. 1209-1169 BC The rule of Deborah

c. 1075-1055 BC The rule of Samson

**Suggested Memory Scriptures:** Judges 6:1, 12; 7:2; 8:27; 9:56; 12:6

Judges 6 opens with the Israelites being oppressed by the Midianites. The Midianites were descendants of Abraham and his second wife, Keturah.<sup>1</sup> It's hard to tell whether they were a single tribe or a confederation of tribes. Midian and the Midianites are mentioned as slave traders in the time of Joseph, as a place of refuge for Moses, and as participants in the downfall of the Israelites on the Plain of Moab prior to entering the Promised Land. They are often associated with Moabites and Amalekites, and possibly lived in the desert lands south and east of Moab.

In the time of Gideon, the nomadic Midianites oppress the entirety of Israel by occupying it from time to time and stripping it of all crops and animals. The Midianites are so large in number that the Israelites are helpless to stop their devastating invasions. It seems that the Israelites have become twelve independent tribes who do not act cohesively, and that the people have mostly become poor farmers.

God calls Gideon to put an end to his community's worship of false gods. When he successfully does that, God calls Gideon to rally the people of many other Israelite tribes to fight against the Midianites. Gideon was a reluctant leader, much as Moses was a reluctant leader. This is proof that heroes and leaders are not always looking for that position. The story of Gideon also proves that the battle belongs to the Lord, not the leaders he chooses.

Although Gideon was a successful leader and delivered his people, his pride and actions showed that he was susceptible to the charms of pride and false gods. Gideon's weaknesses had an influence on the devastating fates of his descendants.

Gideon was succeeded by Tola, Jair Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon. Their stories are powerful and often tragic. They are followed by Samson, one of the last, and best known, judges.

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 25:1-2

### Discussion Questions:

1. According to Judges 6:10, why did God let the Midianites ravage the lands of the Israelites?
2. Name two other stories in the Bible prior to Gideon that featured Midianites.
3. Judges 6:33 says the Amalekites joined the Midianites in ravaging the lands of the Israelites. Why would this have been extra irksome to the Israelites?
4. Why did Gideon make the gold earrings into an ephod? What was the significance of the ephod?
5. Describe the significance of Judges 8:33.
6. Describe the cycles of the behavior of the Israelites in Judges 6-12.

1. Because the Israelites worshiped the false gods of the people who lived among them. 2. Joseph was sold to Midianite traders. When the Israelites committed sexual immorality with the Moabite women just prior to entering Canaan, the Midianite women were also involved. 3. God had declared war against the Amalekites and said he would destroy them because they had attacked the Israelites on the Exodus. 5. Gideon made the ephod to take the glory away from God. It became a false idol. 6. Despite God saving them and providing for them, the Israelites forgot him and worshiped false idols. This was another repetition in the cycle of the disobedience.

### Application Questions:

1. The Angel of the Lord called Gideon a “mighty warrior” when he was just a scared farmer from a tiny clan. Does the New Testament lead you to understand that you are a mighty warrior in the cause of Jesus, no matter your earthly status? What does the phrase “mighty warrior” mean to you as a Christian?
2. In Judges 6:36-40, Gideon tested God twice and God chose to pass the test without getting angry. Can you name a time when you have put God to a test? Did you stake your faith on his passing the test in a manner you required?
3. Judges 8:10 said there were “only” fifteen thousand warriors left. Have you ever had a great victory that made the remaining obstacles in your life seem small?

### Application Questions for Teens:

1. Judges 6:31-32 tells of Gideon’s father calling out the worshipers of the false gods to let the false gods prove their own power. What are some false gods you see around you? What illusions of power do they exert over people? How can you demonstrate the might of Jesus in the light of those gods?
2. Judges 7:2 describes why God had Gideon reduce his number of warriors. Was that selfish of God to want the glory for the victory over the Midianites? Why or why not?
3. Describe the foolish vow made in Judges 11:30-31 and the outcome of it. Have you ever made a foolish vow that you regretted? How can you keep from doing so again?