

Warrior in Training

Our readings this week contain fascinating stories surrounding the disobedient lifestyle of the Israelites, their oppression, their cries to the LORD, and His deliverance. We meet Deborah, Barak, Sisera, Jael, and the infamous tent peg. We read about Samson and the Spirit of the LORD coming powerfully upon him, giving him superhuman strength to deal with roaring lions, heavy city gates, myriads of Philistines, and supporting pillars.

Gideon appears on the scene during a time when Israel was at the mercy of the Midianite army. The Midianites were swarming over Israel like locusts, destroying every living thing. The land was ravaged, and Israel became so impoverished that they finally cried to the LORD for help.

We find Gideon threshing wheat when the angel of the LORD appears, saying, "The LORD is with you mighty warrior." Gideon's response reveals his feelings of defeat as he questions, "If the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us?" Where, he continues, is the God of our ancestors?

The LORD responds, "Go.... Am I not sending you?"

Gideon offers an excuse: "My clan is the weakest..., and I am the least...."

The LORD assures him, "I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites."

Gideon begins to accept the role given to him as he presents an offering to the angel. He obeys the LORD's command to tear down Baal's altar and build a new altar to the LORD.

The Spirit of the LORD comes upon Gideon as he summons an army to attack Midian. Yet he still feels the need for affirmation and decides to test the Lord by laying out fleece to see if God would "prove" that Gideon was the right man for the job. God indulges Gideon's requests, even though they were direct violations of Mosaic Law (Deut 6:16). God could have easily rebuked Gideon for testing His authority.

As the story continues, Gideon recruits 32,000 men to fight Midian. However, God needed to cull the army to a mere handful so it would be obvious that the LORD, not Israel, defeated Midian. Gideon ends up with an army of just a few hundred, which appears to put him at a massive disadvantage. God knows Gideon's heart and in His grace, He gives Gideon one more assurance of victory by revealing the dream of a Midianite warrior. The story ends with Gideon defeating the entire Midianite army of 135,000 with a mere 300 men.

The victory in this story is about more than just a defeated army. We watch Gideon mature from a fearful Israelite who questioned God's faithfulness, tried to excuse himself by citing his own weakness, and tested the LORD when his fears overwhelmed him, to becoming "one with the bearing of a prince." This should give us great hope as we grapple with our own doubts, fears, and weaknesses.

Where do you find yourself in this story? Are you relating to Gideon's resistance, fears, and questions, or are you in the process of allowing God to mature you into accomplishing His purposes? No matter where you find yourself today, take heart. God can take us in our weakness, infuse us with His spirit, and grow us into mighty warriors for His kingdom.

~ Lori Voss

April 1st Readings

JUDGES 3:31-6:40

April 2nd Readings

JUDGES 7:1-9:21

April 3rd Readings

JUDGES 9:22-11:28

April 4th Readings

JUDGES 11:29-15:20

April 5th Readings

JUDGES 16:1-18:31

April 6th Readings

JUDGES 19:1-21:25

April 7th Readings

RUTH 1:1-4:12