

## ISRAEL'S JUDGES: GIDEON & JEPHTHAH

### GIDEON

*Gideon is certainly a hero of the faith, but he is far from the perfect example. What lessons can we learn from his successes and from his failures?*

#### **Successes:**

→ Underdog Victor!!! (Judges 7)

- > What was Gideon's biggest problem in preparation for battle vs. the Midianites? (v.2)
- > How many Midianite soldiers did Gideon have to face? (v.12)
- > Why do you think God adjusted the numbers of Gideon's army?

(1) 300 men ensured that GOD GOT THE GLORY!

-- ill: 300 vs 300 (deadliest warrior)

(2) It wasn't only about the number of men ... but the RIGHT MEN!

-- What separated Gideon's 300 from the rest of the 31,700?

- \* COURAGE
- \* SKILL

-- ill: trying to find volunteers to teach a class. Any warm body will do? Or the right person for the job!

→ Turns the VOLATILE into VICTORY!! (7:24 – 8:3)

- > Why were the Ephraimites upset with Gideon?
- > How did Gideon appease Ephraim?
- > Proverbs 15:1
- > Was Gideon simply using flattery?
  - Gideon's handling of this situation demonstrates HUMILITY
  - What lessons can we take from this episode?

#### **Failures:**

→ DOUBT (6:17, 36-40)

-- Consuming the offering (a sign), the Fleece

→ FEAR (7:9-15)

- How did God deal with Gideon's fear?
- Compare this episode with v.3 – do you see the irony?
- What does this say about our weakness and failures?
  - \* Jesus STRENGTHENS our WEAKNESS so that we can carry out His CALLING!

→ REVENGE (8:4-21)

- What is different about this battle vs. chp. 7? (Where is God?)
- What shows that Gideon is motivated by revenge? (vv.18-19)

→ PRIDE (8:22-27)

- Though his intention seemed good (vv.22-23), how did Gideon succumb to pride?
  - > What was an "ephod?"
- What articles did Gideon take from the people? What was their significance?

## **JEPHTHAH (10:6 – 12:7)**

One of the most troubling stories in the Bible is the story of the judge, Jephthah.

### **The Setting:**

- > Oppressing Nation: Philistines and Ammonites; 18 years of being “bullied.”
- > Unlike the other cycles, what is different about Israel’s “distress?” (10:10,15-16)
- > Based on this and the other judge stories, how would you describe the way YHWH deals with Israel’s sin?
- > Israel’s strategy: 10:18
  - \* What does this statement tell us about Israel?

### **The Judge:**

- > Jephthah would make a good movie character:
  - \* ILLEGITIMATE SON (born to a prostitute)
  - \* Surrounded by ADVENTURERS
  - \* A MIGHTY WARRIOR
  - \* A Social OUTCAST
  
- > Jephthah’s motivation (11:4-10): REVENGE? POLITICAL POWER?
  
- > Jephthah’s vow (vv.30-31): What deal did Jephthah make with God?
  - \* Considering v.29, was this vow necessary?
    - The source of Jephthah’s strength: The SPIRIT OF THE LORD CAME UPON HIM ...
  
  - \* Have you ever make a “deal” with the Lord?
  - \* How did Jephthah “make good” on his deal?

### **The Big Question:**

- Did Jephthah really kill his own daughter?
  - \* Evidence Against:
    - > 11:37 – they wept because she would NEVER MARRY
    - > 11:39 – And she was A VIRGIN
  
  - \* Evidence For:
    - > There is no Biblical precedent.
    - > The language is NOT symbolic: A BURNT OFFERING
    - > Israelite women found their identities in marriage and childbearing! Thus, the focus on not getting to marry.
  
- Why didn’t he just “take it back?”
  - \* Numbers 30:1-2; Deuteronomy 23: 21-23; Ecclesiastes 5:1-7
  
- \*\*\* What lessons do we learn about making “deals” and “promises” to God?
  - > The NIV Study Bible calls this SUPERFICIAL religion!