



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

SEPTEMBER 23 2023

Scripture Story: Judges 6–8; 10.

Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 53.

knowing God's will



Photo by Alden Ho

flashlight

“Like Israel, Christians too often yield to the influence of the world and conform to its principles and customs, in order to secure the friendship of the ungodly; but in the end it will be found that these professed friends are the most dangerous of foes. The Bible plainly teaches that there can be no harmony between the people of God and the world” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 559).

keytext

“No sooner had Gideon died than the Israelites . . . set up Baal-Berith as their god and did not remember the LORD their God, who had rescued them from the hands of all their enemies on every side. They also failed to show any loyalty to the family of Jerub-Baal (that is, Gideon) in spite of all the good things he had done for them.”

(Judges 8:33-35, NIV)

what do you think?

Rank the following in order (“1” being the most difficult and “10” being the least difficult) when it comes to knowing God’s will with regard to:

- ___ Whom to marry?
- ___ What career to pursue?
- ___ What to do this weekend?
- ___ Where to work this summer?
- ___ Whom to ask out for a date?
- ___ How to choose friends?
- ___ What book to read for pleasure?
- ___ What to say on Facebook?
- ___ Whether or not to trust in Jesus?
- ___ Whether or not to get involved in a local church?

Questions to consider:

- What’s the most difficult decision I have ever made?
- What made it so difficult?

did you know?

In the ancient world, names were very significant. Often the person’s name captured the uniqueness of that individual. This was the case with Gideon, whose name means “he that bruises” or “great warrior.” Gideon’s name speaks to his mighty conquest of the Midianites. There are other examples in Scripture where we find great significance in a name.

For instance, “Peter” means “the rock.” The name “Jesus” is the Greek equivalent of Joshua, which means “Jehovah shall save his people.” Knowing about the significance of names enlightens our understanding of Colossians 3:17 where we’re called to do everything in the “name of the Lord Jesus” (NIV).

In other words, since the name conveys the deepest essence of the person, we’re called to do everything in the same spirit or character of Christ.

INTO THE STORY

“The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD, and for seven years he gave them into the hands of the Midianites. Because the power of Midian was so oppressive, the Israelites prepared shelters for themselves in mountain clefts, caves and strongholds.”

“The angel of the LORD came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. When the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon, he said, ‘The LORD is with you, mighty warrior.’”

“The LORD turned to him and said, ‘Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian’s hand. Am I not sending you?’”

“ ‘Pardon me, my lord,’ Gideon replied, ‘but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.’”

“The LORD answered, ‘I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive.’”

“Gideon replied, ‘If now I have found favor in your eyes, give me a sign that it is really you talking to me.’”

“The LORD said to Gideon, ‘With the three hundred men that lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands. Let all the others go home.’”

“When the three hundred trumpets sounded, the LORD caused the men throughout the camp to turn on each other with their swords. The army fled to Beth Shittah toward Zererah as far as the border of Abel Meholah near Tabbath. Israelites from Naphtali, Asher and all Manasseh were called out, and they pursued the Midianites. Gideon sent messengers throughout the hill country of Ephraim, saying, ‘Come down against the Midianites and seize the waters of the Jordan ahead of them as far as Beth Barah.’”

(Judges 6:1, 2, 11, 12, 14-17; 7:7, 22-24, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

What details of the story of Gideon might you remember that are not included in the selected verses above?

What words or phrases capture the various emotions of this story most?

In your opinion, what is the most important lesson of the story of Gideon?

If you were to capture this story in a five-word title, what would it be?

What does this story teach us about knowing the will of God?

What does this story teach us about knowing one's purpose in life?

What does this story teach us about the mission of God's remnant people?

punch lines

"Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it' " (**Isaiah 30:21, NIV**).

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight" (**Proverbs 3:5, 6, NIV**).

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (**Romans 12:1, 2, NIV**).

"The righteousness of the blameless makes their paths straight, but the wicked are brought down by their own wickedness" (**Proverbs 11:5, NIV**).

"Do not be surprised, my brothers and sisters, if the world hates you" (**1 John 3:13, NIV**).

further insight

"The great need of the soul is to know God and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent."—Ellen G. White, *Colporteur Ministry*, p. 103.

"The Lord reveals His will to those who are earnest and anxious to be guided."—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 466.

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read 1 Corinthians 14:15.

Finding God's will is a hot topic among teenagers. After all, many young people are facing important decisions and genuinely want to know and follow God's will. But is Gideon's method of testing God with a fleece the best way to discover God's will? Google the phrase "how to know God's will" and see if you can discover some helpful guidance for understanding God's will in your life.

Sunday

Read Judges 6-8.

Read excerpts from the story of Gideon in the *Into the Story* section of this week's lesson and work through the study questions listed in *Out of the Story*. Next, read the entire story in Judges 6-8 and list all the positive character qualities that you see in Gideon.

Monday

Read Judges 8:33-35.

Review the *Key Text* for this lesson. How might you explain the fickleness of the Israelites in their relationship to God? What role does the spiritual leader play in safeguarding God's people from backsliding? What are the idols that we are tempted to worship today? Have you ever failed to "remember the LORD" even when God has rescued you "from the hands of all [your] enemies"?

Also reflect on the phrase "They also failed to show any loyalty to the family of Jerub-Baal (that is, Gideon) in spite of all the good things he had done for them." Do you ever fail to show gratitude toward people who have done good things for you? How can you be more intentional about expressing thankfulness to the people who have had a spiritual impact in your life?

Tuesday

Read Romans 12:2.

The quote in the *Flashlight* section applies to the mistakes that the Israelites made to our lives today. Pray about how the world influences you. Ask a mature Christian about strategies to keep from conforming to the principles and customs of the world. Identify ways in which the world sneaks into us (e.g., billboards, television, music, friends, etc.). Do you have any "ungodly" friends that are influencing you away from Christ? Memorize the statement, "The Bible plainly teaches that there can be no harmony between the people of God and the world" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 559).

Wednesday

Read the *Punch Lines* for this week. Contained in these verses you will find profound principles for enjoying life with God. Read the texts over and over until you have them deeply entrenched in your mind. Now use this biblical foundation to create a game plan for leveraging your life for God. Identify three principles that you can use to guide you in understanding God's will for your life.

Now, apply them to your life and see what happens!

Thursday

Read Proverbs 10:9.

The story of Gideon illustrates that God would prefer a few sold-out soldiers than a mighty army of spiritual pansies. Which group do you think you would be in? What does selling out to God look like in your life?

Gideon reminds us that doing great things for God does not require extraordinary abilities; rather, God seeks people with availability. If

you make yourself fully available for God to use as He wills, watch out! God may use ordinary you as a modern day Gideon and accomplish extraordinary things.

Friday

Read Jeremiah 29:11.

Reflect on this commentary by Ellen White: "The leader whom God chose to overthrow the Midianites occupied no prominent position in Israel. He was not a ruler, a priest, or a Levite. He thought himself the least in his father's house. But God saw in him a man of courage and integrity. He was distrustful of himself and willing to follow the guidance of the Lord. God does not always choose for His work men of the greatest talents, but He selects those whom He can best use" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 553).

If you were completely "willing to follow the guidance of the Lord," where do you suppose He might take you? What is God's grandest dream for your life? What is keeping you from fulfilling that dream?

this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 53.

**Beginning of the End* is a special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#URhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.