

## Leader's Guide

# Session 4: Judges 6

### SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

**Main Idea:** Though God's people choose the roundabout way of obedience, God is faithful to his word to bring about their deliverance.

**Head Change:** To know God's presence will never fail us because he is faithful despite our hesitancy or unwillingness to obey.

**Heart Change:** To feel confidence in God's faithfulness to us in our slowness to obey him.

**Life Change:** To obey him when he asks us to take a step of faith and confess and repent when we don't.

### OPEN

**What are some of your fears that seem irrational? Why do those things scare you?**

All of us are afraid of something—maybe it's heights, the future, or spiders. The judge we're reading about today was full of fear when God called him to rise up against the enemies of Israel. We're going to see how God moved in his life even though he was afraid.

### READ

Read Judges 6:1–40.

## WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in J.D.'s teaching. As you watch, pay attention to the following questions.

**What does J.D. say about bravery? Do we have to be brave to be called by God? Why not?**

**What is true courage?**

**What do we have as proof of God's presence with us?**

Show Session 4: *Judges 6:1–40* (12 minutes).

## DISCUSS

We left the story of Judges with forty years of peace. But this section of the story picks up like all the rest: Israel falls back into rebellion.

Read Judges 6:1–10.

Midian oppresses the people of God like never described before in the book of Judges. People are afraid to gather food, they hide in caves, and all their livestock is taken away. When they cry out to God for help, God sends a prophet. **How would you summarize what the prophet said to Israel in verses 8–10?**

God is straightforward with Israel about her sin—she's fallen away from God and the oppression she's experiencing from Midian is a consequence of her rebellion. Throughout Judges and in this story especially, God is clear about his conviction of sin and call to action. **In what kinds of situations have you experienced God directly deal with you—maybe by convicting you or sin or calling you to do something? How did you respond?**

When God points something out in our lives, he demands a response, usually of repentance or obedience. What's interesting about this story is the Israelites hear God's conviction and yet they don't repent. **Why do you think God chose to save them even though they didn't repent?**

God's faithfulness outshines Israel's sin. He continues to rescue them even though they don't completely turn back to him first. **In what situations has God shown his faithfulness to you?**

This story begins with God speaking to Israel directly about their sin. At verse 11, it shifts to God interacting with a specific person—his next judge, Gideon.

Read Judges 6:11.

**What reason did J.D. give for Gideon hiding in the winepress?** (He explained that a winepress was a hidden place—not a location usually used for threshing. The fact that Gideon hides and tries to thresh wheat in a winepress shows that he is fearful of the Midianites.)

The way Gideon is introduced shows his cowardliness. He's hiding from his enemies to thresh wheat—the opposite of what a warrior would do in the same situation. God sends a messenger to speak to Gideon.

Read Judges 6:12–16.

**What's ironic about how the angel of God addresses Gideon?** (The angel calls Gideon a man of valor, a courageous warrior but he's hiding from his enemies. His actions don't match God's description.)

**What does it say about God that he'd call Gideon by a name that didn't match his actions?**

### **DUST OFF THE HEBREW**

When the angel of the Lord greets Gideon, he calls Gideon a “mighty man of valor” (ESV) or a “mighty warrior” (NIV). The Hebrew phrase, *gibbor hayil*, is used throughout the Old Testament to describe exceptional men of war. Joshua's army (Josh. 8:3), Saul's followers (1 Sam. 10:26), and David's mighty men (2 Sam. 23:8–39), are all examples of men of valor. What the angels says to Gideon drips with irony because Gideon is hiding from his enemies and questions God, while a true mighty man of valor would face his enemies and follow God wholeheartedly.

J.D. said, “God doesn’t call the brave, he makes brave the called.” In other words, God calls his people to tasks knowing our weaknesses and need for him. The same goes for Gideon—God knows his lack of bravery and still calls him forward to lead Israel’s army. **What difference does it make to your relationship with God to know God fully recognizes your weaknesses yet still calls you to follow him?**

**When has God asked you to do something you felt ill-equipped to do? How did that situation play out? Did you obey? If so, how did God equip you to follow through in obedience? If not, what did that situation teach you about God and yourself?**

Gideon’s first reaction to the angel’s greeting is to question what he said. He doubts God was really with Israel because of the oppression from the Midianites. He neglects to heed the words of the prophet in verses 7–10, which say the reason for the oppression is Israel’s sin, not God’s unfaithfulness. **In what kinds of situations is it easy to recognize God’s presence with you? What about situations where it has been more difficult? What helps you remember his presence in those moments?**

### **GO DEEPER**

*Compare Gideon’s encounter with the angel of the Lord with Moses and the burning bush: Exod. 3:1–6, 10–12; 4:1–5, 13–17, 20.*

**What are the major similarities between Moses’s encounter with the angel of God and Gideon’s?** (They both were called by God to deliver Israel, questioned God repeatedly, and witnessed a miracle of God as confirmation.)

**What are some key differences between Moses and Gideon?** (Gideon obeyed on his own terms— under cover of darkness and after many signs from God. Moses obeyed right after the burning bush story. Moses shows more reverence for God by hiding his face (Exod. 3:6) while Gideon doesn’t recognize the importance of the visitor until after he leaves (Judg. 6:22).)

Gideon’s story has similar elements as the story of Moses and the Exodus: God’s people were oppressed so he raised up a leader to deliver them. He called the leader in a miraculous and specific way. We read the story of Gideon with hope for an Exodus-like deliverance. But what we’ll see by the end is Gideon’s lack of faith eventually leads Israel astray.

Instead of answering his questions, God's messenger clarifies the call God has for Gideon: he's the one God's chosen to deliver Israel from Midian. Rather than embracing the call of God and obeying, Gideon again questions God, making excuses for his weakness. **What kind of excuses have you given God before? How do they hold up against him?**

**What might be different about your life if you always obeyed God immediately without giving excuses?**

Any excuse we have to delay or avoid obedience withers before God and his presence. God reminds Gideon of the reality of his presence again. At this point, God's made it pretty clear that he will be with Gideon, but Gideon still isn't sure.

Read Judges 6:17–24.

**What do Gideon's actions in this section show about his attitude toward God and his message?**

Gideon proves yet again that he doubts God. Instead of obeying, he asks for a confirmation. God is gracious to prove himself to Gideon. **In what situations have you been tempted to ask God for a sign? Why do you think that's not usually how God operates?**

Gideon's behavior—and ours too at times—treats God more like a genie or a Magic8 ball. We'd rather have a sure sign from him than trust his guidance. Even though the request for a sign is irreverent to God, God still granted Gideon's request. **What does God's confirmation to Gideon reveal about his character?** (It shows that he is patient, generous, and kind.)

After God affirmed Gideon, he asks him to make a bold move.

Read Judges 6:25–32.

**What does Gideon's decision to do what God said at nighttime tell you about him?**

Gideon is still operating out of fear, just as he was at the beginning of the story. J.D. took this part of the story to explain his next point: following God isn't about not being fearful at all, it's about following him in the midst of fear. **What effect can fear have on your relationship with God?**

**What does it mean to follow God even when you're fearful? When have you had to do that in your life?**

Even though Gideon is fearful, God still protects him from his family and neighbors. Gideon continues on his quest to defeat Midian in the final section of this passage.

Read Judges 6:33–40.

**Looking back on the first 35 verses of chapter 6, what are all the ways God has confirmed Gideon's call to lead Israel to defeat Midian?** (God told him several times through his messenger, he affirmed what he said by taking the offering, he protected Gideon when he tore down the pagan idols, and he provided Gideon with an army.)

God goes above and beyond to show Gideon that he was with Gideon and would deliver Midian into his hands. Gideon continues to doubt God and ask for more signs. **What do Gideon's requests about the fleece tell you about him and his trust in God?**

**What has God done to show his patience with Gideon? Why do you think he's been patient with Gideon?**

God is incredibly patient with Gideon. He allows Gideon to take the long, roundabout way of obedience. Gideon questions God at every turn—and his actions won't change after this chapter. **What are some of the questions you've brought to God? What difference does it make to your relationship with God to know that he's patient with you, even in your questions, doubts, and hesitations?**

God shows us great patience as well. He allows us to come to him with questions, doubt his character, and hesitate when he asks us to obey. J.D. urged us to not fall into the same trap as Gideon—to test God. He said that Jesus is our sign of God's presence with us. We don't need more confirmation than his sacrifice, resurrection, and gift of the Spirit. **What aspect of the gospel story is especially helpful to you to remember God's character—his patience, presence, and faithfulness?**

**What could be keeping you from stepping out in obedience? What could you do this week to obey God?**

## **LAST WORD**

God knows that he calls weak and disobedient people to follow him. He isn't surprised by Gideon's cowardice. Even as Gideon continues to question God and ask for signs, God persists in patience and keeps his word to Gideon. He never abandons Gideon, especially when his life is at stake.

God deals with us in the same way. He's patient, kind, and gracious to us. His faithfulness is never ending. In our sinfulness, he remains constant. We know he will stay by our side even when we delay obedience or question him.

This week, take time to consider the ways you could be delaying or avoiding obedience to God. What excuses are you giving him? What's standing in your way? Pray for the boldness to step out in obedience.

## **LIVE IT OUT**

**Pray:** Take 10 minutes to bring your questions, doubts, and hesitations to God. Ask him to show one step of obedience you could take this week.

**List:** Write a list of the questions you have for God. Next to your list of questions, write down some of the characteristics of God as a reminder that even if God never answers your questions, his character is trustworthy.

**Obey:** Choose one thing you feel like God has been asking you to do and do it this week—maybe it's writing a thank you note to your boss, praying for the checkout lady at the store, or giving money to a friend in need.

## **READING PLAN**

**Leader:** *The reading plan picks up in chapter 6 with the story of Gideon and also includes chapter 7, which will be covered in the next session.*

### **Judges 6:1–7:25**

**Day one:** 6:1–10

**Day two:** 6:11–27

**Day three:** 6:28–40

**Day four:** 7:1–15

**Day five:** 7:16–25

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