

Judges 6:1-16 (NLT) - The Israelites did evil in the Lord's sight. So the Lord handed them over to the Midianites for seven years. ²The Midianites were so cruel that the Israelites made hiding places for themselves in the mountains, caves, and strongholds. ³Whenever the Israelites planted their crops, marauders from Midian, Amalek, and the people of the east would attack Israel, ⁴camping in the land and destroying crops as far away as Gaza. They left the Israelites with nothing to eat, taking all the sheep, goats, cattle, and donkeys. ⁵These enemy hordes, coming with their livestock and tents, were as thick as locusts; they arrived on droves of camels too numerous to count. And they stayed until the land was stripped bare. ⁶So Israel was reduced to starvation by the Midianites. Then the Israelites cried out to the Lord for help.

⁷When they cried out to the Lord because of Midian, ⁸the Lord sent a prophet to the Israelites. He said, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I brought you up out of slavery in Egypt. ⁹I rescued you from the Egyptians and from all who oppressed you. I drove out your enemies and gave you their land. ¹⁰I told you, 'I am the Lord your God. You must not worship the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you now live.' But you have not listened to me."

¹¹Then the angel of the Lord came and sat beneath the great tree at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash of the clan of Abiezer. Gideon son of Joash was threshing wheat at the bottom of a winepress to hide the grain from the Midianites. ¹²The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said, "Mighty hero, the Lord is with you!"

¹³"Sir," Gideon replied, "if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? And where are all the miracles our ancestors told us about? Didn't they say, 'The Lord brought us up out of Egypt'? But now the Lord has abandoned us and handed us over to the Midianites."

¹⁴Then the Lord turned to him and said, "Go with the strength you have, and rescue Israel from the Midianites. I am sending you!"

¹⁵"But Lord," Gideon replied, "how can I rescue Israel? My clan is the weakest in the whole tribe of Manasseh, and I am the least in my entire family!"

¹⁶The Lord said to him, "I will be with you. And you will destroy the Midianites as if you were fighting against one man."

Judges 6:25-32 (NLT) - That night the Lord said to Gideon, "Take the second bull from your father's herd, the one that is seven years old. Pull down your father's altar to Baal, and cut down the Asherah pole standing beside it. ²⁶Then build an altar to the Lord your God here on this hilltop sanctuary, laying the stones carefully. Sacrifice the bull as a burnt offering on the altar, using as fuel the wood of the Asherah pole you cut down."

²⁷So Gideon took ten of his servants and did as the Lord had commanded. But he did it at night because he was afraid of the other members of his father's household and the people of the town

²⁸ Early the next morning, as the people of the town began to stir, someone discovered that the altar of Baal had been broken down and that the Asherah pole beside it had been cut down. In their place a new altar had been built, and on it were the remains of the bull that had been sacrificed. ²⁹ The people said to each other, "Who did this?" And after asking around and making a careful search, they learned that it was Gideon, the son of Joash.

³⁰ "Bring out your son," the men of the town demanded of Joash. "He must die for destroying the altar of Baal and for cutting down the Asherah pole."

³¹ But Joash shouted to the mob that confronted him, "Why are you defending Baal? Will you argue his case? Whoever pleads his case will be put to death by morning! If Baal truly is a god, let him defend himself and destroy the one who broke down his altar!" ³² From then on Gideon was called Jerub-baal, which means "Let Baal defend himself," because he broke down Baal's altar.

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Study Guide

This last week we continued our Influencer series by looking at Gideon and examining how God's plan's are beyond our capability, so His plans will also be beyond our comfort. As you take a look at your life, what were some moments when the plans and purposes of God moved you outside of where you are comfortable?

Take a moment to read 2 Corinthians 1:3-11. What does this verse tell us about the experience of being a part of what God is doing? What is Paul's experience like? How does he feel about that? How is he encouraging the Corinthians to treat difficulty?

There can be a temptation to paint a picture of the Christian life as one of blessing and joy, free of difficulty or discomfort, but that is not what we are promised. God calls us beyond where we are comfortable, often beyond where things are pleasant. But when we follow him beyond our comfort, we discover all that He has for us and the work that He wants to do in us and through us.

Take some time to share about how you continue to hold on hope when things are not comfortable, and how we can draw strength from the Holy Spirit as we go beyond what we know. Pray for encourage, peace, and hope for those who are counting on God for those very things.