



March 9, 2014
Judges 8
"Finishing Well"
Pastor Gary Hamrick

Today's study is the second of two on the inspirational, biblical account of Gideon's life. It's remarkable to see how God found a timid young man threshing wheat in a winepress, because he was hiding in fear of the Midianites, and how God saw him not as he was, but as he could be. He was called a *"mighty warrior,"* and he was raised up to be a valiant hero of Israel, who, with a small band of 300 soldiers, defeated the vast army of the Midianites. He also served as one of the major judges of Israel, and under his leadership, the people experienced 40 years of peace.

Pastor Gary commented that it's a shame we don't read that everything was great and everyone lived happily ever after. Unfortunately, the last part of Gideon's life was definitely nowhere near as inspirational and noble as the first part, and Pastor Gary said he wished the details of the last years of Gideon's life weren't recorded in the Bible. He said he wished Gideon had faded off the pages of the Bible as heroes do when they "ride off into the sunset." The Bible includes an additional chapter and a half about Gideon's life and the legacy he left. The first part was truly inspirational, but the last part of his life is still important, because it's instructional, and helps us know what not to do.

Sometimes God wants us to learn from both the good and the bad of people's lives, and that's true of Gideon's life. You might say "finish well" is the main takeaway from today's study. It doesn't matter how good you start out in life; what matters most is how well you finish. In this study, we'll take a look at Gideon's life and legacy, and how both were marred by idolatry and adultery.

Idolatry

1. After Gideon's successful military campaign against the Midianites, the people wanted to make him king, saying, "*Rule over us - you, your son and your grandson - because you have saved us out of the hand of Midian.*"¹
 - a. It's interesting to note that there is no biblical evidence that Gideon even had any sons or grandsons at this time.
2. Gideon gave the people the appropriate response, when he said, "*I will not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you. The Lord will rule over you.*"²
3. When Gideon asked all the people to give him an earring from out of the plunder they had taken from the Midianites, he created a situation that would become a huge sin issue for the Israelites.
4. The people were happy to oblige, so they spread out a blanket, and everyone threw in a ring, and the total weight came to 43 pounds, which is equivalent to about \$1 million dollars in today's money!
5. When Gideon received their offerings, he did something unusual, in that he took the gold and used it to make a gold ephod.
 - a. The priest's ephod was first mentioned in [Exodus 28:15](#), when God gave instructions to Moses about how it was to be made.
 - b. An ephod was part of the official dress of the High Priest of Israel.
 - c. It was an outer vest woven of fine linen with gold, blue, purple, and red thread.
6. The odd thing about Gideon's actions is that he had no need for an ephod, since he wasn't a priest, and an ephod was a piece of clothing, not an idol.
7. Gideon was more or less making a trophy he could take back to his hometown.
8. Whatever his motive or reasoning, the ephod became an idol the people worshiped!³
 - a. This episode is reminiscent of the time when the people brought gold to Aaron so he could make a golden calf they could worship.⁴
 - b. The worship of the "golden vest" goes to show that man has an innate need to worship, which is true, because we were created in the image and likeness of God, so our spirit has a continual need to commune with God, and to ascribe worth to our Creator.

¹ [Judges 8:22](#)

² [Judges 8:23](#)

³ [Judges 8:27](#)

⁴ [Exodus 32](#)

- c. However, if we fail to make the Lord the object of our worship, we will inevitably make something or someone an idol, because we're wired to worship.
9. We need to resist the temptation to laugh at these people who worshipped a golden vest, because we do some pretty silly things too, including:
 - a. Taking up two parking spaces so our car (idol) won't get any dings or scratches.
 - b. Worshiping a boyfriend or girlfriend.
 - c. Making our money or career or possessions more important than God.
 10. **Judges 8:27b** tells us the ephod *"became a snare to Gideon and his family."*
 - a. The Hebrew word for snare is moqesh, which means, "a noose or a hook for catching animals."
 11. Even though the ephod had become a snare, the Bible doesn't indicate that Gideon did anything about it.
 12. **Judges 6:25** tells us that Gideon came from a family of idolaters.
 - a. Gideon's father had Asherah and Baal idols, and one of the first things God told Gideon to do when he raised him up as a leader, was to instruct him to *"[t]ear down your father's altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole beside it."*
 - b. Gideon did as the Lord instructed, but because he was afraid of his family, he destroyed these idols at night.⁵

Adultery

13. **Judges 8:29-30** - *"Jerub-Baal (Gideon) son of Joash went back home to live. He had seventy sons of his own, for he had many wives."*
 - a. We don't know how many wives Gideon had, but if you calculate five sons apiece, he would have had at least 14 wives!
 - b. Polygamy has never been nor will it ever be acceptable to God.
 - c. We need to remember that when we read the Bible, we shouldn't see every human decision that goes unpunished by God as being condoned by God.
14. **Genesis 2:24** - *"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife [singular - not "sister wives"], and they will become one flesh."*

⁵ **Judges 6:25-32**

15. In [Matthew 19:4-6](#), Jesus reinforced the Scriptural understanding of marriage when he said: “*Haven't you read, he replied, 'that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.'? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore, what God has joined together, let man not separate.'*”
16. There are no biblical examples in which there was one man and more than one wife that worked out, because there were always elements of the Three C's - chaos, conflict, and cat fights!
- Abraham - Sarah and Hagar
 - Jacob - Rachel and Leah
 - Solomon - 700 wives and 300 concubines
 - [1 Kings 11:4](#) - “*As Solomon grew old, his wives turned [Solomon's] heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God...*”
17. Because marriage has been redefined in our country due to the advancement of same-sex “marriage,” it will only be a matter of time before polygamy is legalized, because when you say marriage is between two men or two women, why would it stop at two or three or ten?
18. Not only did Gideon have a number of wives, he also had a concubine!
- [Judges 8:31](#) - “*His concubine, who lived in Shechem, also bore him a son, whom he named Abimelech.*”
19. The Hebrew meaning of Abimelech's name means, “My father is king.”
- It's interesting to see how Gideon, who at first didn't want to be a king, sure is acting like one!
 - Gideon collected gold from the people.
 - Gideon made a trophy in his honor that people started worshipping.
 - Gideon acquired a harem of women.
 - Gideon had 70 sons and named one of them, “my father is king.”
20. Abimelech is the sad legacy that Gideon left, and [Judges 9](#) tells us the depth of his wickedness and rebellion against the Lord.
- Abimelech put himself forward as the ruler of Israel, even though he was not God-selected.
 - Abimelech should not be counted in the list of Israel's judges, because he was self-appointed.
 - Abimelech murdered all but one of Gideon's 70 sons in order to secure his reign.

- i. Jotham, the youngest of Gideon's sons, was the only son to escape, and we don't read anything about him elsewhere in the Bible.
- c. Abimelech controlled Israel three years, until the Lord sent an evil spirit against him.
 - i. The evil spirit incited the people to rebel against Abimelech, which caused a civil war.
- d. Abimelech, while attempting to keep his reign, suffered a tragic death when a woman, atop a tower, dropped a stone on his head.
 - i. Abimelech's armor-bearer finished him off with a sword.

Gideon's Legacy

21. If Gideon's life were to be chronicled in a book, an overview of the chapters would include the following:
- a. Chapter 1 – Timid young man
 - b. Chapter 2 – Called by God
 - c. Chapter 3 – Valiant warrior
 - d. Chapter 4 – Military hero
 - e. Chapter 5 – Judge of Israel
 - f. Chapter 6 – Refused to be made king
 - g. Chapter 7 – Made a golden ephod
 - h. Chapter 8 – Responsible for Israel's idolatry
 - i. Chapter 9 – Had many wives and a mistress
 - j. Chapter 10 – 70 sons and a rebel son named Abimelech
 - k. Chapter 11 – Abimelech murdered his brothers
 - l. Chapter 12 – Civil war, the death of Abimelech, and the end of a legacy
22. The first half of the book would be incredible, while the final chapters would be nothing short of woeful.

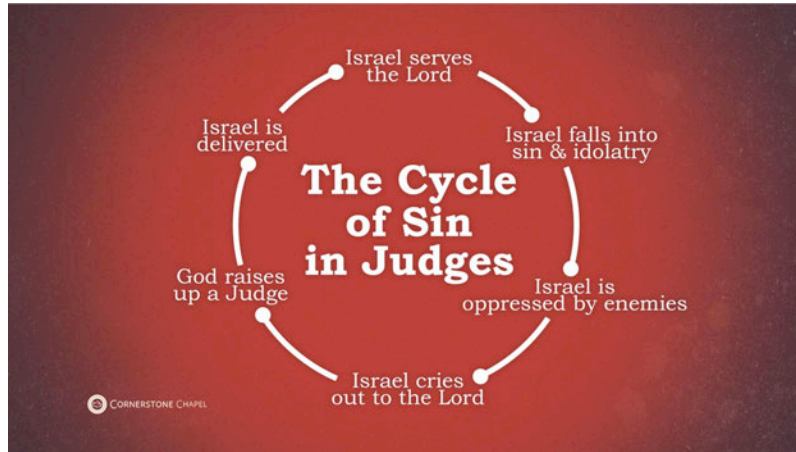
Our Legacy

23. We need to ask ourselves the question, "How will the final chapters of my life read?"
24. In Gideon's case, perhaps it was easier to honor God in the face of a national emergency – to be courageous in a time of crisis – than it was to honor God in the simple, ordinary, everyday ways of life, but that too, takes courage of a different kind.
- a. This requires a consistent courage, the kind of courage that says, "Every day – no matter how mundane or ordinary – I will honor God."

25. [2 Timothy 4:7](#) – *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”*
26. [Acts 20:24](#) – *“... I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace.”*

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Judges 8:22–35](#) to provide an overview for this study.
3. What are some of the ways your words and actions demonstrate your affinity to some kind of idol in your life?
4. How have the idols in your life been a snare to you and/or your family?
5. Read and discuss [Matthew 19:4–6](#) and focus your conversation on God’s view of marriage.
6. Provide an overview of some of the examples of men in the Bible who’ve had more than one wife. (See #16 above)
 - a. What are some of the ways the Three C’s (chaos, conflict, and cat fights) showed themselves in these situations?
7. Allow people to share their thoughts about what they think others would say about their life and legacy.
8. Read and discuss [2 Timothy 4:7](#) and [Acts 20:24](#).
9. Read and discuss [Proverbs 10:7a](#), which says, *“The memory of the righteous will be a blessing...”*
10. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: remember the timeless counsel of forgetting the past and how he or she may or may not have started, and live in such a way as to finish well.



* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).