



This Sunday we reached the account of Gideon in the book of Judges. This week we looked at part 1 – the ‘up’ trajectory of chapters 6-7; next week we will see part 2 – the unravelling of chapters 8-9. We used several ‘ps’ to help us follow:

1. Picked – Again, Israel fell into sin (6v1); again, God gave them to their enemies (the Midianites this time) (6v1-5); again, they cried out to God (6v6); and again, via a prophet (6v8-10), God’s responded by sending a deliverer – Gideon (6v11).

2. Persuaded – However, Gideon (and Israel!) needed some convincing Gideon was the right man. Like Moses in Exodus 3, God called Gideon and gave him repeated assurances (6v12, 14, 16), and Gideon batted them away (6v13, 15). He was finally convinced by a dramatic response to his request for a sign (6v17-22).

3. Prepared – But Gideon still was not ready, for God’s people were not yet ready. Gideon needed first to get rid of his father’s Baal altar in his hometown and replace it with an altar to God (6v25-26). Gideon obeyed, though by night (6v27).

4. Empowered – God’s Spirit then came upon Gideon (6v34) and he gathered the tribes behind him ready to fight.

5. Persuaded again – But Gideon *still* was not ready. Twice, he put God to the test, asking him to prove himself by making a woollen fleece wet and then keeping it dry (6v36-37, 39). Trust seemed to be the issue, rather than clarity. (Notice, God is simply addressed as “God” rather than “LORD” in this section (6v36, 39)). But nevertheless, God graciously answered Gideon’s requests.

6. Prepared again – And yet Gideon *still* wasn’t ready for battle. Aware of how prone our hearts are to attribute our successes to ourselves, God reduced Israel’s army via two arbitrary conditions from 32,000 to a mere 300 (7v1-8).

To give frightened Gideon (7v10) one final assurance, God sent him down to the Midianite camp to overhear a Midianite soldier recounting a dream of Gideon’s decisive victory to his friend (7v9-14).

Finally, Gideon is ready to be God’s deliverer. He leads the troops (7v15), but they win simply by blowing their trumpets, smashing their jars and shouting (7v20), and while they stand stock still, the Midianites turn on each other and flee (7v21). It is abundantly clear by whose power this “battle” has been won!

And this is a pattern we see in Scripture time and again: God in his own strength graciously saves his sinful people from their cruel enemies through and in spite of their weak and/or untrusting leaders (just think of Moses, Saul, Jonah, the vast majority of Israel’s kings, Esther, Daniel and friends...).

And this is a pattern we see in the gospel. Jesus was “crucified in weakness” (2 Corinthians 13v4). He had far more reasons to fear than Gideon, yet he needed no persuading or preparing, for he saved us not *in spite of* his weakness and sin, but *through* his weakness and *because he had no sin*.

And he calls us to be weak, too, as his followers (2 Corinthians 12v9). And so we can pray, pause our activism, and keep plodding!

Here are a few questions you might want to use with your group...

1. What is your experience of weakness as a Christian – personally and/or as part of the church? Does this story ring true for you?
2. Where else in Scripture do we see this pattern of strength in and despite weakness? How do we see it in Jesus’ story?
3. Why do you think God wants us to see our weakness so clearly?
4. How is it a relief that God wants weak followers, and how is it also a challenge?
5. Why do you think we are so prone to *activity*, and what can we do to help ourselves avoid simply trying to *do* all the time?
6. How does knowing our weakness encourage and help us in our prayer life?
7. How does knowing our weakness help us to persevere in the Christian life?