

# GIDEON

*Mighty Man of Valor*

**PETER J. PELL, JR.**



*Developed as a study course by Emmaus Correspondence School, founded in 1942.*

*Gideon: Mighty Man of Valor*

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# STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS

In this study of the man Gideon, we learn much of how God works and who God uses. Gideon, like many of us, was weak in the eyes of this world, but God worked in and through him to deliver God's people. In observing Gideon we can observe ourselves and learn to serve God better.

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## Course Components

This course has two parts: this study course and the exam booklet.

## How To Study

This study has ten chapters, and each chapter has its own exam. Begin by asking God to help you understand the material. Read the chapter through

at least twice, once to get a general idea of its contents and then again, slowly, looking up any Bible references given.

Begin studying immediately, or if you are in a group, as soon as the group begins. We suggest that you keep a regular schedule by trying to complete at least one chapter per week.

## **Exams**

In the exam booklet there is one exam for each chapter (exam 1 covers chapter 1 of the course). Do not answer the questions by what you think or have always believed. The questions are designed to find out if you understand the material given in the course.

After you have completed each chapter, review the related exam and see how well you know the answers. If you find that you are having difficulty answering the questions, review the material until you think you can answer the questions.

## **How Your Exams Are Graded**

Your instructor will mark any incorrectly answered questions. You will be referred back to the place in the course where the correct answer is to be found. After finishing this course with a passing average, you will be awarded a certificate.

If you enrolled in a class, submit your exam papers to the leader or secretary of the class who will send them for the entire group to the Correspondence School.

See the back of the exam booklet for more information on returning the exams for grading.

## FOREWORD

**T**he book of Judges, giving the story of Israel's conflict with her national enemies in the land of Canaan, is a rich source of helpful instruction for the people of God today in their struggle against the principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness of this world, those "spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." It was the sincere desire and prayer of the author that these simple meditations on the life of Gideon would help to arouse the interest of the Lord's people in this section of Scripture, now so little studied.

The substance of the meditations contained in this volume first appeared in a series of lessons in the Bible Class Edition of "Words of Love." The material was carefully revised by Mr. Paul C. Clarke in 1950 and for the most part rewritten. It was sent forth in that form with the hope these chapters would prove valuable as devotional reading. Each chapter was divided into several parts (usually seven), making this volume useful for class study.

This edition has been updated by ECS Ministries to reference the New King James Version of the Bible and includes additional minor changes for the modern reader.

## 1

## SEVEN YEARS OF DEPRESSION

Judges 6:1-6

*1 Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD. So the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian for seven years, 2 and the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel. Because of the Midianites, the children of Israel made for themselves the dens, the caves, and the strongholds which are in the mountains. 3 So it was, whenever Israel had sown, Midianites would come up; also Amalekites and the people of the East would come up against them. 4 Then they would encamp against them and destroy the produce of the earth as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep nor ox nor donkey. 5 For they would come up with their livestock and their tents, coming in as numerous as locusts; both they and their camels were without number; and they would enter the land to destroy it. 6 So Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites, and the children of Israel cried out to the LORD.*

“**T**he LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!” How startled Gideon was to be addressed in such a way, and by the angel of the Lord! Gideon thought nobody had noticed him there in the hollow of an abandoned winepress, stealthily threshing wheat to hide it from the Midianites who had overrun the land. But, while no Midianite saw him there, heaven was especially interested in that humble man. God saw in him a vessel He would use to deliver His people and defeat the army of Midian. No one else would have recognized God’s chosen vessel in that quiet, thoughtful, discouraged man. But such is God’s way. The people by

whom God works deliverance are generally insignificant persons. Raised up out of obscurity and equipped with power from on high, they are God's mighty men. Such a one was Gideon.

————— ❧ —————  
**Israel's failure  
serves to enhance  
the faithfulness of  
Israel's God.**  
————— ❧ —————

The background for the story of Gideon was a dark one. The prosperous and victorious days of Deborah and Barak had been followed by days of gloom and evil. It was a time of misery, of desolation, and of grim warfare. For forty years the land had enjoyed rest, and then the old story was repeated, the story that

darkens so many pages of the book of Judges. Seven times over in that book we read, "The children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD." And seven times over we read of the Lord delivering them into the hands of their enemies. Just as bright objects are seen to their best advantage against dark backgrounds, so Israel's failure serves to enhance the faithfulness of Israel's God. It is always true that where sin abounds, grace abounds much more (cf. Rom. 5:20). We see this in God's dealings with the nation of Israel. Groaning under circumstances brought about by their own sin, Israel cried to Jehovah and He heard them and sent them "saviors." We read of twelve such saviors in the book of Judges. Seven departures, twelve saviors—that is God's way. He is the God of recovery, the God of grace.

For seven years Israel suffered under the hand of the Midianites. "The hand of Midian prevailed against Israel" because Jehovah had delivered His people into their hands. Though the Midianites did not know it, they were the rod in Jehovah's hand to punish His people for their sins. The story of those seven years is summed up in the opening verses of our chapter. Let us consider these verses under six headings, each beginning with the letter "D."

## **1. Departure (v. 1)**

After forty of the brightest and best years in their history, "the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD." We wonder how they could possibly depart from the living God in such circumstances. The answer is found in Judges 21:25, where we have the Holy Spirit's comment on the times of the judges: "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes." That is man's ideal, but having one's own way is not as pleasant as man supposes it to be. It is accompanied

with destruction and misery, and it leads to disaster and ruin. Israel soon discovered this.

## 2. Discipline (v. 1)

Sin and sorrow can never be divorced one from the other. “Do not be deceived; God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (Gal. 6:7). We shall feel the sting of God’s rod if we choose to not enjoy the sunlight of His face. Because Israel refused to walk in God’s ways, they smarted under His discipline, for it was He who delivered Israel into the hand of Midian.

And here is a lesson for New Testament believers: the secret of going on well is to keep our eye on the Lord Jesus Christ. Jehovah’s reassurance

————— ❧ —————  
**The secret of  
 going on well is  
 to keep our eye  
 on the Lord Jesus  
 Christ.**  
 ————— ❧ —————

to the repentant David was, “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye” (Ps. 32:8). But if we are like the horse or the mule and insist on having our own way, the bit and the bridle will guide us (Ps. 32:9). We cannot escape God’s disciplinary dealings when we sin against His grace.

## 3. Defeat (v. 2)

“Midian prevailed against Israel.” No enemy could have triumphed over them if they had been faithful to Jehovah, but sin opened the door for the enemy. Who were these Midianites who oppressed Israel? They were descendants of Midian, a son of Abraham (Gen. 25:2), so they were related to Israel—yet they were their enemies. Midian means “strife,” and these Midianites were indeed sons of strife, bringing untold misery to the people of God. Forsaking the rule of the God of peace, Israel came under the yoke (control) of the sons of strife.

The history of the Midianites is very instructive. We first read of them in the divine record when Joseph is delivered into their hands. They do not hesitate to buy and sell the beloved son of his father Jacob for they have no love for Jacob (Genesis 37). Later on in Israel’s history they seek to hinder Israel’s progress to the Promised Land (Numbers 22). Failing to do this, they seek through Balaam to seduce Israel and lure them into immoral



relationships (Num. 25:3-18). In Gideon's day they rob Israel of their God-given heritage, leaving them "greatly impoverished."

How much better is the rule of God than that of Midian! When the "sons of strife" rule, the results are coldness of heart toward Christ, unholy alliances with the world, and emptiness of soul. James warns us of their power. "Where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there" (James 3:16). The apostle Paul's counsel is, "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts" (Col. 3:15).

Let us beware of the inroads of "the Midianites" into our lives, our homes, and our churches. Worldliness robs us of the peace of God in our hearts, destroys the joy of Christian fellowship, and sets aside the assembly testimony to the Lordship of Christ.

————— ∞ —————  
**Worldliness robs us  
of the peace of God  
in our hearts.**  
————— ∞ —————

#### **4. Distress (v. 2)**

Mountain sunlight was exchanged for the shadows of the cave when Israel came under the rule of Midian. Deborah had judged Israel from under a palm tree in the sunny heights of mount Ephraim. "Israel came up to her for judgment" (Judges 4:5), but now in trembling and fear they go creeping into the holes of the earth. God did not intend His people to be cave-dwellers, and it is a sad comment on their spiritual condition that Israel was brought so low. It is their *enemies* who are supposed to seek "the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, from the terror of the LORD," in the day when "the loftiness of man shall be bowed down" (Isa. 2:17-19).

#### **5. Devastation (vv. 3-6)**

The food supply of His people had always been a matter of special concern to God. In Egypt He had them feast upon the roasted lamb; in the wilderness He fed them with manna from heaven; and when they came into the land of Canaan, all the abundance of what grew there was theirs to enjoy. But now the Midianites had cut off Israel's food supply. Israel sowed the seed, but Midian was reaping the harvest; Israel had neither flocks nor herds, for Midian had taken them all. They overran the land with their marauding bands. Thus, in the very place where God had promised the

Israelites “bread without scarcity” (Deut. 8:9), they hungered. Through disobedience, the Promised Land had become a wilderness, and the Lord’s people, like the younger son in Christ’s parable in Luke 15, exchanged the bountiful blessings that God provides for hunger and poverty. Midian left “no sustenance for Israel.” They had nothing for God, nothing for others, and nothing for themselves.

The lesson is clear. The world has no capacity to provide spiritual nourishment. In fact, it deprives God’s people of their “food.” If our souls have become empty it is because of our own unfaithfulness. Christ is the food of God’s people, “the finest of the wheat” (Ps. 81:16) is our portion. When we feed on Him we are satisfied. But it is impossible to enjoy the world and Christ at the same time. When we have Egyptian longings, we loathe the manna.

## 6. Despair (v. 6)

“And the children of Israel cried out to the LORD.” For seven years God had been waiting to hear that cry. He allowed the hand of Midian to prevail against them. He brought them to extremities of distress and despair so they might seek and turn to Him. That cry would bring deliverance and become the key to unlock the floodgates of God’s mercy.

————— ❧ —————  
**Repentance is always  
 the forerunner of  
 revival.**  
 ————— ❧ —————

Repentance is always the forerunner of revival. God is waiting today for a cry from His people. There is much boasting today, and very little weeping. We have so much of this world’s dignity, influence, and riches that we do not know our true condition. We do not realize how poor, how wretched, and how destitute we are. If, instead of saying, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing” (Rev. 3:17), we would cry out to the Lord, confessing our personal sins and the sins of His people as a whole, times of refreshing would come from the presence of the Lord. It does not matter how poor we are materially when all God’s fullness in Christ is ours to enjoy. It does not matter how weak we are when all power is His. We can be content to be nothing when He is everything. Let us confess our worldliness, our waywardness, and our wretchedness, and cry to the Lord. He will hear that cry and will work deliverance for His people!

# GIDEON

*Mighty Man of Valor*

## EXAM BOOKLET

AK '10 (1 UNIT)

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STUDENT NAME (PLEASE PRINT)

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ADDRESS

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CITY, STATE, ZIP

COURSE GRADE: \_\_\_\_\_

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INSTRUCTOR



*Exam developed by Emmaus Correspondence School, founded in 1942.*

## A NOTE ON THE EXAMS

The exams are designed to check your knowledge of the course material and the Scriptures. After you have studied a chapter, review the exam questions for that lesson. If you have difficulty in answering the questions, re-read the material. If questions contain a Scripture reference, you may use your Bible to help you answer them. If your instructor has provided a single page Answer Sheet, record your answer on that sheet. This exam contains the following types of questions:

### **MULTIPLE CHOICE**

You will be asked to write in the letter of the correct answer at the space on the right. Here is an example:

The color of grass is

- A. blue
- B. green
- C. yellow

     **B**     

### **WHAT DO YOU SAY?**

Questions headed this way are designed to help you express your ideas and feelings. You may freely state your own opinions in answer to such questions.

### **RETURNING THE EXAM**

See the back of this exam booklet for instructions on returning your exam for grading.

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# CHAPTER 1 EXAM

## SEVEN YEARS OF DEPRESSION

### EXAM GRADE

*Before starting this exam, write your name and address on the front of this Exam Booklet.*

*Directions: Read each question carefully and write the letter of the correct answer in the blank space on the right. Use the separate answer sheet if provided.*

1. During the time of Gideon, Israel was greatly impoverished because of the
  - A. Egyptians
  - B. Midianites
  - C. Romans\_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Those by whom God brings deliverance are generally
  - A. important people
  - B. rich people
  - C. insignificant people\_\_\_\_\_
  
3. During the times of the judges, when Israel did evil in His sight, God
  - A. turned His back on them
  - B. delivered them into the hands of their enemies
  - C. continued to give them victory over their enemies\_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Israel suffered under Midianite dominance for how many years?
  - A. 7
  - B. 40
  - C. 27\_\_\_\_\_
  
5. The times of the judges are characterized by the fact that
  - A. their leaders led them astray
  - B. everyone did what was right in his own eyes
  - C. the Lord had abandoned them\_\_\_\_\_
  
6. The Israelites were oppressed by Midian because
  - A. they were under God's discipline
  - B. they had a weak army
  - C. their king was ineffective\_\_\_\_\_

- 7. The Midianites were related to the Israelites through
  - A. Moses
  - B. Abraham
  - C. Jacob\_\_\_\_\_
  
- 8. Spiritual nourishment for the believer is found in
  - A. the world
  - B. Christian service
  - C. Christ\_\_\_\_\_
  
- 9. The Lord brought deliverance from the Midianites when
  - A. Israel strengthened her army
  - B. Israel cried out to Him
  - C. Israel found a strong leader\_\_\_\_\_
  
- 10. According to the author, “\_\_\_\_\_ is always the forerunner of revival.”
  - A. personal sacrifice
  - B. increased church attendance
  - C. repentance\_\_\_\_\_

**WHAT DO YOU SAY?**

What lessons have you learned in your own life about God’s discipline of His children?

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