

THE STORY

STUDY 8

CHAPTER 8

1. What does God's choice of Deborah as judge during this time reveal about God's view of women?

It reveals His original view recorded for us in Genesis 1:27 *"So God created man (both male and female) in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them."*

God's view of woman is that they are equal with men as persons before Him. Men and women were created in God's image equally and can be used by God to accomplish his purposes. There is no superior sex or inferior sex. God can use the wisdom, emotions and spirituality of Deborah as a Judge to govern his people, as he can use the wisdom, emotions and spirituality of a Gideon to do the same.

In God's eyes women are not inferior to men and can be used by God in positions of great influence or responsibility or authority (eg; government, business) just as equally as men.

Although God did create men and women equal as persons, He did provide distinctive roles for men and women within certain situations.

But God's choice of Deborah as judge during this time in Israel's history tells us that God views men and women equal in person.

2. Why does God often use weak and uncertain people like Gideon to do his work?

1 Corinthians 1:27-29 *"But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things – and the things that are not – to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him."* (NIV)

Israel forgot about their God, they relied on their own wisdom, strength and abilities even to the point of worshipping false gods. And so God chose Gideon, a simple farmer who through his own admission felt unqualified and unable to fight against such a great army that had gathered against Israel, to shame Israel that they might turn from boasting in themselves to boast in their God once again.

God uses weak and uncertain people like Gideon in order that we, who might think we don't need God in our lives, can see and experience who he is and what he promises us, so that we might respond and relate to Him in total dependency.

3. If you ever feel uncertain about your gifts and abilities, how could the story of Gideon encourage and strengthen you?

God can use whatever your gifts and abilities are to accomplish his purposes. Gideon was just a simple farmer, from the weakest clan in his tribe – least influential, and least in his family – not a leader, yet he led Israel in victory against her enemies.

God desires to use a faithful follower who might not be as gifted, more so than, someone who might have all the gifts and abilities and who trusts in those gifts rather than in God. Even though Gideon asked for signs that it was God who was calling him and that he would accomplish what he was asking him to do, Gideon trusted in God and gathered his army to go to battle for the Lord.

God's power, provision and wisdom more than makes up for my inability if I would only trust and obey Him. It's amazing that God cut Gideon's army down to just 300 men, in comparison to the multitudes of the armies that gathered against them. And he enabled this simple farmer with his small army to be victorious.

4. What reasons can you give for why the Israelites kept repeating their downward cycle of sin?

New Generations did know and were not taught about their God.

They kept being influenced by other nations and following their gods.

During times of peace and prosperity they forgot about their God because they thought they never had a reason for him.

The Religious leaders of the time were not leading the people in God's ways.

Primarily, they were leaderless. There were 12 tribes that made up the nation of Israel in Canaan and no leader (Joshua had died). The people were supposed to live under a Theocracy, meaning that their leader/King was their God and their lives were governed by his rule and law. But they soon forgot about their God or did not recognise God as their leader and everyone did what was right in their own eyes.

5. What was the root cause of Samson's fall? What was the result?

Samson was given incredible strength by God to deliver his people from the oppression of the Philistines. Samson killed a lion with his bare hands, he easily overpowered 30 men on one occasion, on another he killed 1000 men with a donkey's jawbone, in the end he managed to push down the support pillars in the temple of Dagon. Samson could easily break the bonds that men put on him, but the shackles of a heart that lusted after flesh, and the temptations that came with it, he could not overcome. He wanted a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines (what God had prohibited) and he forced his parents to get her for him, he slept with prostitutes, and then he married another lady named Delilah, also a foreigner who would be bought by the Philistines to find out the secret to Samson's strength. The root cause of Samson's fall was his weakness to the temptation of the flesh.

Eventually his lust for women would be his down fall, as Delilah would find out the secret to his strength and his strength would depart from him and ultimately result in his death.

6. What are the strongest temptations that you face? How do you fight such temptations?

Temptations will be with us until we see Jesus face to face as our hearts battle with the evil one and his influence in this world. And so an ever increasing love for God and for His ways will help us fight such temptations when they do come. The more we love God and his ways the more we will want to submit to him and his ways in dependence on his strength, his wisdom and His promises to help us overcome such temptations.

If Samson love for God was greater than his love/passion for women, his physical strength would have never been in jeopardy nor his life. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength" Deut 6:5

"Be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." (Isaiah 41:10) Loving God because of his promises (*like this one from Isaiah*) will help us as we fight the temptations of life.

Therefore ask God to help you love him more, help you to be satisfied in all that he is for us in Jesus Christ, and to help you trust in his promises.

Our Love for God will result in what practical measures we take to fight temptations. Such as asking someone you trust to hold you accountable; removing yourself from the temptation or removing the temptation from yourself; searching the scriptures for God's promises that pertain to your struggle, seeking Godly advice and counsel...etc