

LESSON 4

Gideon: God's Power in Our Weakness

Judges 6:11–24

The Lord turned to him and said, “Go in the strength you have and deliver Israel from the grasp of Midian. I am sending you!”

Judges 6:14

Class Overview: Gideon’s story begins in a season of fear and oppression. Israel had turned from God, and the Midianites were devastating the land. When God called Gideon to deliver His people, Gideon was hiding in a winepress, threshing wheat in secret. He saw himself as the least in his family and his family as the weakest in Israel. Yet God called him a “valiant warrior.” This lesson shows how God’s power shines through human weakness. The Lord does not choose people because of their strength; He makes them strong because of His presence. Gideon’s call reminds us that God delights in using ordinary people who trust Him completely.

Class Objectives: By the end of this class, you should be able to—

1. Describe the spiritual and historical background of Israel during Gideon’s time.
2. Understand how God’s call transforms fear into faith.
3. Explain the meaning of the angel’s words, “The Lord is with you, valiant warrior.”
4. Recognize that God’s power is displayed most clearly through human weakness.
5. Commit to trusting God’s strength rather than your own ability when facing challenges.

Introduction

WHEN THE ANGEL OF THE LORD FIRST APPEARED TO GIDEON, he was not leading an army or standing on a battlefield—he was hiding. The Midianites had overrun Israel, destroying crops and livestock, leaving the people in fear and poverty. Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress, trying to stay out of sight. He felt insignificant, weak, and forgotten. Yet in that unlikely moment, God called him a “*valiant warrior*.” Those words must have sounded absurd to a man hiding from his enemies, but they reveal how God sees differently than we do.

The story of Gideon shows how God takes fearful people and transforms them into faithful servants. When God called Gideon to save Israel, Gideon listed his weaknesses. His family was poor, his tribe was small, and he lacked confidence. But God responded to every doubt with one promise: “*I will be with you.*” That same promise gave Gideon the courage to face his fears and shaped him into the leader God intended. Our true measure of strength isn’t what we bring to God, but what God brings to us. When He calls us, He also gives us the strength we need.

Historical Background

The book of Judges outlines one of the darkest periods in Israel’s history. After Joshua’s death, the people turned away from God and started worshiping Canaanite idols. This led to a recurring pattern: sin, oppression, repentance, and deliverance. Each time Israel cried out for help, God raised up a deliverer, or judge, to save them. Gideon was one of those judges.

By the time of Judges 6, Israel had been under oppression by the Midianites for seven years. The Midianites were desert raiders who invaded Israel every harvest season, destroying crops and livestock. The people were forced to live in caves and strongholds to survive. The oppression was so harsh that Israel finally cried out to God for help. Before sending Gideon, God sent a prophet to remind the people why they were suffering — it was their own unfaithfulness that had made them vulnerable to Midian’s power.

Against this bleak backdrop, the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon at Ophrah. The setting is full of irony: Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress, a small pit usually used for crushing grapes. He was doing the right work in the wrong place—trying to feed his family while hiding from the enemy. Into that fear-filled scene, the angel declared, *“The Lord is with you, valiant warrior.”* Gideon could not see himself that way, but God saw what he could become.

Gideon’s call took place around the 12th century B.C., during a period of intense spiritual decline. Israel had forgotten the God who delivered them from Egypt. Yet even amid their rebellion, God’s grace remained. He came not to destroy Gideon’s weakness but to transform it. The altar Gideon built after this encounter was called *The Lord Is Peace*—a sign that God had met him in fear and replaced it with confidence. From that moment on, Gideon’s story became a testimony that God’s power is perfected in weakness.

God Meets Us in Our Fear

When the angel of the Lord found Gideon, he wasn’t standing tall in faith; he was crouched low in fear. Judges 6:11 says he was *“threshing wheat in the winepress in order to hide it from the Midianites.”* Typically, threshing was done on a hilltop so the wind could separate grain from chaff. But Gideon was doing it in a pit, where no one could see him. That single detail captures Israel’s condition: defeated, discouraged, and afraid. It also shows how God works. He meets His servants where they are, not where they wish they were.

The angel’s greeting seemed entirely out of place: *“The Lord is with you, valiant warrior.”* (Judges 6:12). Gideon must have looked around to see who the angel was talking to. Nothing about his situation appeared heroic. Yet God called him not for what he was, but for what he could become through faith. This is how God always works. He sees potential where we see problems. He recognizes strength where we see weakness. He names us according to His purpose, not our fears.

Gideon’s initial reaction was doubt: *“If the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us?”* (v. 13). His words show both confusion and

disappointment. He had heard stories of God's power before, how the Lord led Israel out of Egypt, but he couldn't reconcile those memories with his current suffering. Like many of us, Gideon believed God had worked in the past, but he found it hard to believe He was still active now. Yet even in his doubt, God didn't rebuke him. Instead, He turned to him and said, *"Go in the strength you have and deliver Israel... I am sending you!"* (v. 14).

God doesn't wait for us to overcome fear before calling us. He calls us while we are afraid and provides strength as we move forward. God didn't promise Gideon comfort; He promised His presence. "I am sending you," He said, reminding Gideon that the mission wasn't based on personal ability but divine authority. The same principle applies today. Our calling isn't about what we can manage, but about what God can do through us when we obey.

Also notice the tenderness of God's patience. Gideon's response was still hesitant: *"Please, Lord, how can I deliver Israel? My family is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father's family"* (v. 15). Every line of that protest is shaped by fear and insecurity. But God answered again, *"But I will be with you. You will strike Midian down as if it were one man."* (v. 16). Those words echo the same assurance given to Moses, Joshua, and every servant God has ever called: *"I will be with you."* That promise is the cure for fear.

Courage doesn't come from pretending we're fearless, it comes from trusting that God is near. Gideon's circumstances hadn't changed when God spoke, but his confidence began to grow because he realized he wasn't alone. God's presence transforms hidden people into courageous ones.

Every Christian can relate to Gideon's experience in the winepress. We all understand what it's like to feel overwhelmed or inadequate. But God still finds us there. He doesn't wait for us to get out; He steps into our fear and speaks peace into our hearts. His call always begins with grace. "The Lord is with you." That truth alone gives us strength to rise, obey, and trust that His power is greater than our fear.

God's Presence Turns Weakness into Strength

When Gideon finally realized who was speaking to him, his fear deepened before it lifted. The angel of the Lord had told him, *"Go in the strength you have,"* but Gideon couldn't see any strength at all. He protested, *"My family is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father's family"* (Judges 6:15). Everything about his situation screamed inadequacy. He saw himself as powerless, small, and unqualified. Yet that was exactly the kind of person God was looking for.

God's reply arrived with unwavering certainty: *"But I will be with you. You will strike Midian down as if it were one man"* (v. 16). That single promise changed everything. The success of the mission would not rely on Gideon's strength but on God's presence. The Lord did not dismiss Gideon's weakness; *He redefined it*. Gideon saw weakness as a barrier; God saw it as the very place where His power could be displayed.

We see this throughout Scripture. When Moses said, "I am slow of speech," God replied, "I made your mouth." When Jeremiah said, "I don't know how to speak," God answered, "I have put My words in your mouth." When Paul pleaded for his thorn to be taken away, the Lord said, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness." God never chooses people because they are strong; He chooses them so that His strength can be seen through their weakness.

For Gideon, the turning point was learning to trust that *God's presence is powerful enough*. When the Lord said, "Go in the strength you have," He wasn't suggesting Gideon had hidden potential inside him; He was reminding Gideon that divine strength was already with him. God was not asking him to act out of self-confidence but out of faith. Courage is born the moment we stop focusing on what we lack and start believing Who is beside us.

In verse 17, Gideon asked for a sign, not to test God's patience but to confirm His promise. He brought an offering, a young goat and unleavened bread, and laid it on a rock. The angel touched it with the tip of his staff, and fire shot out from the rock, consuming the sacrifice. It served as a vivid reminder that God's power was real and present. Gideon fell in fear, realizing he had seen the angel of the Lord face to

face. But instead of judgment, God offered peace: *“Peace to you. Don’t be afraid, for you will not die”* (v. 23).

That peace became the foundation of Gideon’s courage. He built an altar and named it *The Lord Is Peace*. Before leading an army or sounding a trumpet, Gideon learned the most important lesson of all: peace with God must come before victory for God. When we experience His presence, fear loses its grip. The God who met Gideon in fear now met him in peace, transforming a frightened man into a faithful warrior.

This same truth still strengthens believers today. God’s presence transforms weakness. We often want to wait until we feel strong or ready before serving, but strength comes after obedience, not before. When God calls us, He doesn’t give us a list of qualifications, *He gives us Himself*. His Spirit, His Word, and His promises become the resources we need. As Paul later wrote, “We have this treasure in clay jars, so that this extraordinary power may be from God and not from us.”

In Gideon’s life, the story of transformation started in a winepress and moved to an altar. The place of fear became a place of peace. The man who once hid from the enemy would soon face them with faith. And the only difference was this: God was with him. That same assurance is enough for us. No matter what weakness we bring, His presence is greater. God never asks for strength, only trust.

God Confirms His Call to Strengthen Our Faith

Even after hearing God’s promise and witnessing fire consume his offering, Gideon continued to doubt. Fear doesn’t disappear instantly; it diminishes as faith grows. Gideon believed, but he still needed reassurance. What stands out in his story is how patient God remained. The Lord didn’t scold him for seeking confirmation; instead, He steadily strengthened his faith.

Later in Judges 6, Gideon requested a sign involving a wool fleece and the morning dew. He said, *“If you will deliver Israel by my hand, as You said, I will place a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If dew is only on the fleece and the ground remains dry, I will know that You will deliver Israel through my strength, as You promised.”* When he woke up the next morning, the

fleece was soaked, but the ground was dry. Still uncertain, Gideon asked again—this time for the opposite result. Once more, God answered. He responded to Gideon's fragile faith with patient reassurance.

Many have criticized Gideon for these requests, but his motive was not rebellion, it was insecurity. He wanted to be sure that it was truly God's voice calling him to such a dangerous task. In his weakness, he sought confirmation, and God graciously provided it. The lesson is not to imitate Gideon's method but to appreciate God's mercy. The Lord understands our hesitations and meets us where our faith wavers.

God's patient reassurance remains constant throughout Scripture. God showed Moses miraculous signs, Joshua a visible commander of His army, and Thomas the chance to touch the risen Christ's hands. Faith doesn't mean never needing encouragement; it means bringing our questions to God rather than running from Him. Gideon's honesty became the doorway to deeper trust. Each sign boosted his confidence, preparing him for the battle ahead.

The true miracle in this part of Gideon's story isn't the fleece; it's the change in his heart. When God first spoke to him, Gideon focused on his weakness and Israel's defeat. Now, after experiencing God's presence and power, his focus shifts to obedience. When the Lord later told him to tear down his father's altar to Baal, Gideon obeyed, even though he was scared. That act of obedience marked a turning point. Fear still existed, but faith was starting to lead.

Our faith develops gradually. God often confirms His call through His Word, answered prayers, open doors, or the encouragement of others. Each confirmation is meant to propel us forward, not keep us stuck in doubt. God's goal isn't to eliminate all risk but to deepen our trust. Courage arises as we take one step at a time, witnessing His faithfulness along the way.

For Christians today, Gideon's story reminds us that God's patience and presence remain constant, even when our faith falters. He does not scorn small beginnings or hesitant obedience. When we take the next step, even with trembling hands, He meets us with strength. As Psalm 103:13–14 says, *"As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord*

has compassion on those who fear Him. For He knows what we are made of, remembering that we are dust.”

God’s call is never meant to crush us; it is intended to shape us. He confirms it to remind us that we are not alone and that His strength will be enough. Gideon started as a fearful man hiding in a pit, but God patiently built his faith until he could stand as a leader, confident not in himself but in the Lord. That same God still calls us to step out, trust Him, and let His power be made perfect in our weakness.

Lesson Summary and Reflection

The story of Gideon shows us that God’s power shines brightest when His people feel weakest. When the angel of the Lord found Gideon, he was hiding in fear. Yet God called him a “valiant warrior” and sent him to deliver Israel from Midian. That call seemed impossible, but it revealed a timeless truth: God does not wait for strength—He supplies it. What matters most is not our confidence but His presence.

Gideon learned three key lessons. First, *God meets us in our fear*. The Lord didn’t wait for Gideon to find courage; He came to him while he was hiding. He spoke peace to a frightened man and gave him a new identity. God still does the same today. He calls us not for who we are, but for what His grace can transform us into.

Second, *God’s presence turns weakness into strength*. When Gideon said, “My family is the weakest,” God answered, “I will be with you.” That promise transformed the whole situation. Victory would not depend on Gideon’s ability but on God’s power. The consuming fire on the altar proved that divine strength was already at work. Gideon named that place *The Lord Is Peace*—the moment fear began to give way to faith.

Third, *God affirms His call to strengthen our faith*. Gideon’s repeated need for reassurance did not turn God away—it revealed His patience. The Lord responded to Gideon’s vulnerable faith with grace, giving signs that increased his trust and prepared him for obedience. God understands our hesitations. He builds confidence over time through His Word, His presence, and His faithfulness.

The story of Gideon isn't about a hero who finds courage, it's about a God who gives courage to those who trust Him. Gideon's journey from hiding in a winepress to leading an army began with one truth: "The Lord is with you." That same promise still stands for us. When we bring our fears and weaknesses to Him, He transforms them into tools for victory. His strength is perfected in our weakness.

Key Truths

- God meets His people in their fear, not after they overcome it.
- The presence of God is the source of real strength.
- Weakness is not a barrier to service—it's the doorway for God's power.
- God patiently confirms His call and strengthens our faith step by step.
- Peace with God gives courage to face any battle for God.

Conclusion

Gideon's story proves that God can use anyone willing to trust Him. He turns hiding spots into sacred ground and fearful hearts into faithful ones. Every excuse Gideon made was met with a promise: "I will be with you." That truth has never changed.

You may feel weak, unqualified, or afraid. But God's call doesn't depend on your strength. It depends on His. He remains the Lord of peace, remains patient with doubters, and remains powerful through the humble. When He calls you to act, go with the strength you have. He will provide what you lack, confirm what He commands, and accomplish His will through your faith.

Memory Verse and Weekly Challenge

The Lord turned to him and said, "Go in the strength you have and deliver Israel from the grasp of Midian. I am sending you!"

Judges 6:14 (CSB)

This verse captures the message of Gideon's call. God did not tell him to become stronger before obeying, He told him to go in the strength already given, trusting that His presence would supply the rest. The same command calls every Christian today to move forward in faith, even when confidence feels small.

Weekly Challenge

1. Identify Your "Winepress."

Reflect on an area of life where fear has made you hide: an opportunity avoided, a conversation delayed, or a step of faith resisted. This week, ask God for courage to face it.

2. Remember God's Presence.

Write the phrase *"I will be with you"* somewhere visible—on your desk, in a mirror, or on your phone screen—as a daily reminder that you never face anything alone.

3. Trade Fear for Faith.

When anxiety rises, pause and pray, "Lord, You are my strength." Replace every fearful thought with a promise from Scripture.

4. Encourage Someone Struggling.

Gideon needed reassurance, and so do others. Find someone who feels weak or unsure and remind them of God's patience and power.

5. Build Your Altar of Peace.

Set aside a few minutes this week to pray and thank God for His presence in your life. Like Gideon, name your moment of faith, acknowledge that *"The Lord is Peace."*

For Discussion

1. What fears most often hold you back from trusting or obeying God?

2. How does Gideon's story encourage you when you feel weak or uncertain?

3. In what ways have you seen God's presence turn your weakness into strength?

4. Why is it important to remember that God's patience with Gideon reflects His patience with us?

5. What "altar of peace" could you build this week—something tangible to remind you of God's faithfulness and power in your life?
