

This guide is an invitation to follow Jesus with greater purpose and hope. It will help you to explore the scriptures and challenge you to live out your faith. Each week we'd love for you to think about how you relate: **Up** (with God), **In** (with church) and **Out** (with neighbors).



**Weekly Questions:**

- How is God getting my attention? For help, think about these areas:
- How are you living up with God?
- How are you living in community with other followers of Jesus?
- How are you living out on mission with your neighbors?
- What are you going to do about it?

**From Garden to Garden: Conversation 1**  
**Judges 6-8**

**Meeting Us in Our Reality: The Scared Warrior** We find the Israelites frozen in panic, hiding in mountain caves and strongholds to escape the oppressive, crop-ruining raids of the Midianites. Having assimilated by worshipping local deities for survival, they are impoverished and desperate. It is here that the angel of the Lord encounters Gideon secretly threshing wheat in a winepress and greets him with a jarring disruption: "The LORD is with you, mighty warrior." God does not demand perfection before He works, nor does He shame Gideon for his immediate terror or self-protective hiddenness. Instead, God meets us in the concrete truth of our anxiety, looking past our shamed or stuck realities to declare who we truly are in God's kingdom.

- Where are you currently hiding or playing small—metaphorically threshing wheat in a winepress—out of fear of your environment or changing cultural dynamics?
- How does it reshape your relationship with God to know that He names you by your true kingdom identity ("mighty warrior") rather than your present anxiety or failures?
- In what ways have you observed the Holy Spirit breaking through human restrictions or institutional exclusions to demonstrate God's active presence in your community?

**The Room for Lament: Embracing Honest Doubts** Authentic conversation with God requires a vulnerable transparency that rejects the superficiality of a "fake faith." Faced with the divine commission, Gideon does not offer clean, pietistic answers; instead, he responds with immediate, raw lament: "If the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders?" He demands sign after sign, testing God with the soaking meat and bread, and later with the alternating wet and dry wool fleece on the threshing floor. Crucially, God does not penalize or silence Gideon for his relentless questions, doubts, or requests for assurance. In a culture that often demands insincere certainty, scripture reminds us that honest relationship is infinitely better than automated compliance.

- What are the honest laments, questions, or doubts about your life's circumstances that you have been hesitant to bring fully into your dialogue with God?
- How can you pivot away from a performance-based "fake faith" toward an authentic relationship that leaves room for processing your fears and losses?

- Looking back at your own journey, what "signs of grace" or quiet answers has God provided to gently sustain you through seasons of profound uncertainty?

**Tearing Down Altars: The Strength of Surrender** The dialogue with God inevitably exposes our compromised allegiances and invites us to trust God with the unguarded totality of our hearts. Before Gideon can lead an army, he is commanded to perform a costly act of domestic defiance: tear down his father's altar to Baal and chop down the local Asherah pole. Terrified of his family and neighbors, Gideon obeys under the cover of night, using the wood of the pagan idols to build a proper altar and offer a sacrifice to the Lord. When the surrounding world shifts, our basic human instinct is to frantically gather resources, accumulate weapons, and engineer control. Yet, God intentionally short-circuits this power-seeking strategy by whittling Gideon's army down from thirty-two thousand men to a mere three hundred, stripping away all human leverage so that the victory cannot be attributed to strategic size or social dominance. Faithfulness frequently looks like foolishness in a world obsessed with power.

- What "compromised altars" or secondary securities (e.g., social status, financial hoarding, control) is God asking you to dismantle in your life right now?
  - How do you respond when God begins a "whittling process" in your life—reducing your resources, size, or control to show that God's strength is made perfect in weakness?
  - How can you guard your heart against the human tendency to seek God only during crises, ensuring you do not manufacture new idols once safety is restored?
- **Practice: Honest Dialogue and Surrender**  
To align with the calling and conversation of Gideon means dropping our defensive armor, confronting our compromises and stepping out in vulnerable obedience. Engage with God's transforming dialogue through these weekly rhythms:
    - **The Reality & Lament Audit:** Set aside twenty minutes this week for completely unvarnished honesty with God. Write out your raw questions, anxieties, and areas where you feel abandoned or stuck. Refuse to polish your words; allow your faith to be defined by absolute transparency rather than polite pretense.
    - **Dismantling the Cover of Night:** Identify one area where you are compromising your values or blending into cultural expectations out of fear of what your neighbors, family, or colleagues will think. Take one concrete, visible action that prioritizes your allegiance to Christ over social assimilation, stepping out of the dark into clear kingdom alignment.
    - **Embrace the Whittling:** Look at a space in your life or leadership where you feel under-resourced, outnumbered, or stripped of control. Instead of panicking or overworking to regain leverage, pray a daily prayer of deliberate surrender: "Lord, Your strength is made perfect in my smallness. I trust Your 300 over my 32,000."
    - **What is one area of your life where you need to trust God with an honest conversation today?**