


STUDY 3

Growing Through Doubts

JUDGES 6-7

hen is doubt dangerous? When is it a healthy skepticism? If a securities salesman “guarantees” you a 15 percent return on your money, you’d better have some healthy skepticism. But we can’t live with unresolved doubts indefinitely. We have to face them and deal with them courageously. If we don’t we could develop ulcers, or worse. Doubts also assail us in our walk with God. They gnaw at our faith in God’s integrity, love, wisdom, and power. If we do not handle our doubts positively, as Gideon did, we risk losing spiritual dividends. We have to look at doubt as a challenge to grow, not as an invitation to fail.

God instructed the Israelites to drive out all the pagan nations in Canaan. But after Joshua died, the next generation made them servants, intermarried with them, and worshiped their idols. When the Israelites suffered the consequences of their disobedience, they cried to God, who graciously raised up judges to free them from their oppressors. Gideon considered himself the least likely candidate for being a judge or mighty

warrior. We can identify with Gideon as he struggled with doubts about God and himself.

1. Think of a time when you had doubts about God's will for you. How did you handle your doubts?

READ JUDGES 6:1-32.

2. Describe the extent of the Israelites' economic and psychological oppression by the Midianites (verses 1-6).
3. When the impoverished Israelites cried to the Lord for help, God sent a prophet who explained that the people were to blame for their troubles because they had forgotten God's goodness and had turned to idols. What does the angel's surprise appearance and message to Gideon indicate about God (verses 11-16)?

4. What doubts did Gideon have about God and about himself (verses 12-15)? Why?
5. In what situations have you said: "If the Lord is with us, why...?"; "But the Lord has abandoned us..."; or "How can *I* do that...?"
6. Instead of chiding Gideon for his doubts, how did God encourage Gideon's faith (verses 16-24)?

7. Before Gideon faced the army of Midian, God asked him to act against idolatry in his own family and village. If you were Gideon, what would you be saying to yourself and to your servants as you set out at night to do this risky thing (verses 25-27)?

8. What evidence does Gideon accumulate that showed God was with him (verses 23-24, 28-32)?

READ JUDGES 6:33-40.

9. Gideon's response to the new invasion of the eastern armies was a mixture of faith and doubt. How did he demonstrate faith? doubt?

10. Gideon wanted to obey God but was plagued with a doubt, "Will you save Israel by my hand?" How did God graciously reassure a hesitant Gideon that he was with him?

How has God graciously assured *you* that he is with you in times of uncertainty?

READ JUDGES 7:1-25.

11. How does God reduce Gideon's army from thirty-two thousand to three hundred (verses 1-8)? Why?

12. How does God accommodate Gideon's doubts while still pushing him to act in faith (verses 8-15)?

✪ 13. What do you learn from Gideon about dealing with your doubts?

14. What do you learn about God from the way he related to Gideon and his doubts?

Pray the Bible into Life

- Thank God that he knows your doubts and fears. Ask him to help you see yourself and your situation from his point of view.
- Thank God for taking your doubts seriously and for offering you evidence about himself to encourage your faith.
- Ask God to make you willing to obey him even when you are afraid.