

## **Judges 6:36-40 – How To Strengthen Your Confidence in God**

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Surely you will admit that you need to constantly increase your confidence in God if you are going to do the work God has called you to do. If you don't, doubts will creep in and you will become more and more indecisive in your work. But why do you lack that confidence? And how can you fix that confidence? This is what you will learn about today?

Our headings are:

**Why did Gideon need to Test God**

**How did Gideon Test God**

**What is the Result of Gideon Testing God**

Our goals are: **That you will learn how God graciously strengthens your confidence in him so that you will trust him more and serve him better.**

### **Why did Gideon need to Test God**

36 So Gideon said to God, "If You will save Israel by my hand as You have said—

**1. Gideon, the man chosen to be the deliverer of Israel, had real faith.** His faith was so real that he was given honorable mention in the New Testament.

Hebrews 11:32 And what more shall I say? For the time would **fail me to tell of Gideon** and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets:

**But Gideon's faith was weak.**

**2. Realizing his weak faith and this doubts that God had indeed called him to be the deliverer, Gideon wanted to test God.**

**3. Why was Gideon's faith weak?** (You must know this to fix the problem.) It is not hard to understand why Gideon struggled so much with his faith and calling in life.

**Israel wasn't a strong Christian nation.** Even Gideon's father worshipped idols, probably alongside the true God. (Shakespeare: Show me your company and I'll tell you who you are.) Idolatry was no longer a secret thing. Israel publicly worshipped the most perverted gods of the time. This was a constant struggle of Gideon's flesh. And underscoring this, you know that whenever society falls apart, there is a lacking of the Word of God. No prophets were mentioned around this time.

**Even though the Lord performed some miracles for Gideon, those previous miracles were not enough. They were wonderful, but Gideon's weak faith needed more! What were those miracles?** The Lord had miraculously appeared to him in the threshing floor. The Lord had miraculously burned up the soaked offering on the fire. The Lord had talked to him during the night. But he needed more. The need for another sign was emblematic of the weakness of Gideon's faith.

**4. And isn't it true that you too have a constant need to strengthen your faith, otherwise you too will become weak and not be or do as you should?** Even after becoming a Christian you need regular assurances so you can grow...and you can confidently make decisions about your life, about your spouse, about your children, and follow through with them. (Is disciplining my children this way right? Should I really give my tithe? Do I really need to spend so much time reading my Bible? Am I doing the right thing?) This doubt is why the man cried out Jesus when Jesus asked him if he had faith that he would heal his son!

Mark 9:23 Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes."

24 Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"

Yes, admitting weakness is not bad. It is the foundation of asking for help. And foundationally, your weak faith is a lack of faithful preaching and/or believing of the Word of God. It is not surprising that the trend in North America is to have shorter sermons and accommodate the desires of hearers.

### **How did Gideon Test God**

37 "look, I shall put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said."

38 And it was so. When he rose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece together, he wrung the dew out of the fleece, a bowlful of water.

**1. Gideon asked for quite a miracle from God:** That God would keep the fleece of wool wet on the threshing floor overnight but that the surrounding ground would be kept dry.

**2. God did this miracle.** Keep in mind that this was a country with plentiful dew. So the miracle was not the dew. The miracle was the dry ground. This was the only means much of the land was watered. The miracle was made even greater because Gideon could squeeze a bowlful of water from the fleece. Furthermore, the dew was God's gift to man and yet, because man had need for it to stop, God did it. That is God's goodness. That was also why God kept the sun in the sky so Joshua could complete his battle.

39 Then Gideon said to God, "Do not be angry with me, but let me speak just once more: Let me test, I pray, just once more with the fleece; let it now be dry only on the fleece, but on all the ground let there be dew."

**3. But that was not enough for Gideon, though it should have been. Gideon asked for a second miracle:** He asked God to keep the fleece dry and the ground around wet. This was a harder miracle. In the first case, it could be argued that the ground could soak up water but the wool fleece would keep it. In this second case, the fleece of wool, which was more inclined to hold water, was to be kept dry.

**4. You will notice that he expected that God would be angry by his doubt and his constant need for reassurance.** So he quickly followed up the request with a promise not to ask for anything more. He was weak but not arrogant. This was what Abraham did when he was seeking God's favor to protect Sodom from destruction.

Genesis 18:30 Then he said, "**Let not the Lord be angry**, and I will speak: Suppose thirty should be found there?" So He said, "I will not do it if I find thirty there." 32 Then he said, "**Let not the Lord be angry**, and I will speak but once more: Suppose ten should be found there?" And He said, "I will not destroy it for the sake of ten."

**5. God, in his grace and patience, did as Gideon asked.** This is what you can count on from your heavenly Father. He condescends and helps the weak of faith. He gives them his assurance.

Hebrews 6:17 Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath, 18 that by two immutable things, in which *it* is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before *us*.

When a wicked generation asked Jesus for a sign, he did not give it to them. But **when a struggling saint asked for one, or two, he willingly gave it.**

Matthew 12:39 But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

**6. So are you to ask for such a sign to test God today so you can have more confidence in God and do what he has called you to do?** Is it okay to say: Lord, if it rains tomorrow when I have to go for the job interview, then I will take that as a sign that I shouldn't take that job? Is it right to say: Lord, if a church member says "welcome" as soon as I enter the church door, I will take it as a sign to join the church and work hard in it? The answer is a resounding "no." For supposing that person at the door was possessed by evil spirits and used by the Devil to be polite, won't you be deceived? Doesn't Devil himself come as an angel of light?

**7. So how can you get proper guidance and how can your faith be made stronger?**

**a. God gives you direction in his Word to know what to do or not do.** Use principles (if there is not a direct command) to determine if the job you are applying for is appropriate or not. Will it require that I not worship? Will it hinder my family? Etc. If there is no violation of God's law, then choose the one you like. Don't wait for a sign. If you want to know if New Horizon is a good church, then ask yourself: Is there faithful preaching, proper sacraments, and consistent discipline? If you find many like New Horizon, then choose one where you can serve the Lord better.

**b. And in order to strengthen your confidence in God so that you trust him and his word,** you have the record of miracles of Bible and the prophecies that came true. Signs in the Bible are like picture books to a child. You can trust he will be with you in what he calls you to do...and help you. His Holy Spirit helps you to have assurance.

### **What was the Result of Gideon Testing God**

40 And **God did so** that night. It was dry on the fleece only, but there was dew on all the ground.

**1. God strengthened Gideon's faith in him and in his commission. This prepared Gideon to lead**

**the armies of God and to liberate Israel from the tyranny and assault from the Midianites, Amalekites, and Arabians.** How good God was to strengthen his faith is such a patient way! Imagine his excitement. Article 22 of Belgic Confession said, in part: "And faith is the instrument that keeps us in communion with him and with all his benefits."

**2. This is the same kind of joy and confidence you should have if you constantly see the fulfillment of God's promises in the Bible.** So never read God's Words like some dry unimpressive lists of "do's" and "don'ts." It is much richer, fuller, and most rewarding. **Those who reject the signs (the record of God's Word) they are weak and unable to put their trust in God. An example of ignoring God's sign and becoming weak in battle against the enemy was Ahaz.**

Isaiah 7:3 Then the LORD said to Isaiah, "Go out now to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-Jashub your son, at the end of the aqueduct from the upper pool, on the highway to the Fuller's Field, 4 "and say to him: 'Take heed, and be quiet; do not fear or be fainthearted for these two stubs of smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria, and the son of Remaliah. [11] "Ask a sign for yourself from the LORD your God; ask it either in the depth or in the height above." 12 But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, nor will I test the LORD!" [14] "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.

**God was so angry with Ahaz, so God gave him a sign anyway, a sign he would never see.** So don't ignore God's Words. Dearly beloved, **love God's Words which record all the signs he wants you to know, and learn God's Words.** Maclaren: "*We have Christ and the Spirit, and so have a 'word made more sure' than to require signs. But still it is true that the same gracious willingness to help a tremulous faith, which carries its tremulousness to God in prayer, moves the Father's heart to-day, and that to such petitions the answer is given even before they are offered: 'Ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.' No sign that eyes can see is given, but inward whispers speak assurance and communicate the assurance which they speak.*"

**3. The problem with God's gracious signs to Gideon is that Arminians who do not believe that the Bible is sufficient, use this as an excuse for not searching the Scriptures for answers, and instead, they rely heavily on strange signs.** This is wrong. If they want to know what to do they should look to the Bible. God will strengthen your confidence if you read and believe his Word.

### **Conclusion:**

Gideon tested God because he struggled with confidence in who God was and whether God was willing to help him in the battle ahead. God performed the miracles Gideon asked for and as a result, Gideon's faith was strengthened. He was fully ready to battle. He knew his God. He trusted his God with his life and the life of Israel's soldiers.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Whether it is to strengthen your faith in Christ or for strength to do the work, look to the record of God's Words. Let God's Holy Spirit work through God's Words to strengthen your faith and give you confidence to fulfill your calling.
2. If you ignore God's Words and his Holy Spirit and choose to rely upon feelings or external signs, you are attacking the sufficiency of God's Word and you are going back to more elementary things, things that are subject to misinterpretation.
3. If you don't fulfill your calling to your Savior because you are led astray, imagine the injury you will cause you brother and the indignity you will cause your Christ.

Finally, while God converts and cares for his children and constantly strengthens their faith, God will condemn those who are not his children and confine them to the severe fires of hell...that is, unless they call upon him for mercy and forgiveness. So if you are not a Christian, I urge you to call on him to convert you to be his child, adopt you, and secure a heavenly inheritance for you.