



CONFIDENCE | SHAWN JOHNSON

START

To get things started, go around the circle and answer these two questions:

If you had to pick a breed of dog that would most represent your personality and temperament, what would you be and why?

SHARE

Welcome to our series “Battle Tested.” Throughout this series we are taking a look at some stories of people in the Bible who were battle-tested. We all go through battles at different times and for different reasons. As we walk through these stories, our hope is that we can learn from each one and gain a better understanding of the wisdom, strength and sustaining power of God.

In the word of God, we find stories where God makes a promise to an individual or to a people, and then many times there is a gap between the time the promise is made and the time it is fulfilled. There are also times where God’s people received a promise, yet that was just the beginning of the fight. We can find ourselves fighting battles when times are tough; and also when we are experiencing success, we can be faced with brand new fights and pressures we never imagined.

As we go through this series, allow God to speak to you about your life and the battles you might be facing. What God calls us to is always worth the fight. Maybe your battle is working tirelessly on building a better marriage, struggling to live a life of purity, fighting to be ethical and honest at work, digging deep to forgive someone. Whatever the fight might be, we must always cling to the promises of God and remember that He can lead and sustain us.

Last weekend, Shawn spoke passionately about being ‘battle-tested’ in our own backyard. The story of Gideon is a powerful reminder of how God meets us right where we are in life, especially when we don’t expect it. God met Gideon at a low point in his life, where he was hiding out in the hills from the Midianite people who continually raided their cities, stole all the crops and animals; leaving the Israelites with nothing. God allowed the people of Israel to be oppressed to allow them to realize the darkness of living life apart from Him. God chose to use Gideon to lead His people; but first Gideon needed to get rid his own worship of false gods before he ever stepped foot on a battlefield.

This week we get to witness how God leads Gideon and his vastly outnumbered army to prepare to take on 135,000 highly trained and equipped Midianite troops and Arab mercenaries.

Let's revisit the situation Gideon was in when an angel of the Lord appeared to him in Judges 6:11-16.

What were Gideon's excuses?

Is there a battle you feel you are being called to face but feel inadequate to meet?

When you think about God doing something great in and through your own life, what are some of the excuses you tend to believe about why God wouldn't choose to use you?

What is God's answer to Gideon's excuses?

GROW

God's answer to Gideon is that *He will be with him*. At times the simple truth can be easily overlooked with the numerous overwhelming facts surrounding the situation. Yes, the fact is that Gideon is an anxious and self-doubting leader. Yes, Israel has gotten itself into some major trouble. Yes, there is a well-trained army of 135,000 in the valley that is assembling to once again raid the land.

But God's answer is that He will be with Gideon. The great I AM will be with him. God is saying to Gideon, "You aren't strong enough, wise enough, experienced enough, smart enough, qualified enough ... but I AM."

Let's read Judges 7:1-14

D.I. Block, in *Judges, Ruth Vol. 6 Commentary*, we can gain more insight into the situation and how God's concerns were not the same as Gideon's concerns:

The site where Gideon deploys his forces is significant for several reasons. Most obviously, as v. 1b indicates, the Israelite base is located opposite the Midianite forces camped on the north side of the Harod Valley, against the hill of Moreh. Strategically, by camping at a spring⁵⁸⁵ Gideon ensures that a refreshed force may be sent against the enemy. But from a literary point of view, since the name "Harod" derives from a verb, *rad*, "to tremble," this is also "the spring of trembling." Whether or not Gideon still trembles at the sight of the Midianites despite Yahweh's repeated assurances, v. 3 indicates the majority of his troops did.

7:2 In v. 2 Yahweh raises a problem before Gideon, but it is quite the opposite of what we would have expected. From a human perspective we might have anticipated, "The people who are with Midian are too many for me to give them into your hands," but the problem here is the opposite (lit.): "The people who are with you are too many." Obviously the issue is not that God cannot win the victory but Israel's potential response. Given their spiritual independence and waywardness, if the massive forces under Gideon defeat the Midianites, they will claim the credit for themselves rather than crediting Yahweh with delivering the enemy into their hands. So as Commander in Chief, Yahweh prescribes a two-stage process of refinement by which Gideon must reduce his troops (v. 3).

7:3 First, God instructs Gideon to announce to all the troops that any who are frightened at the prospect of battle with the Midianites may turn around and "fly" from the "mount of trembling."⁵⁸⁹ For one as fearful as Gideon himself, the sight of more than two-thirds of his troops (twenty-two thousand of thirty-two thousand) abandoning him must have been both shocking and dismaying.

Why does God want to thin out the army when they are already completely outnumbered?

God is patient and understanding when it comes to Gideon's fear. How does God reassure him of the victory?
What does this say about God's character?

MOVE

Facing overwhelming odds and all the emotions that come with it, Gideon obeyed every step of the way in preparing for the battle. Sometimes the preparation for the actual fight is the most difficult part of the journey. That certainly was the case for Gideon. What separates Gideon from so many other leaders is that when God seemed to be doing the opposite of how Gideon would have wanted things to go; he leaned into God all the more. His seeking after God made him the great leader he is remembered to be.

What Gideon was becoming as a man was more important than the results of the battle. This can be seen clearly in Judges 7:15 when Gideon realizes that God is promising a victory. He worships God in that moment. Gideon doesn't run to the battlefield to brag; he takes a moment to worship God. What God wanted from Gideon was his worship. Not because God needed it, but because Gideon did. Gideon was developing a sustaining faith that would keep him from hiding in the winepress.

Let's read Judges 7:15-25

Although Gideon was promised victory; he still relied on tactics, strategy, and creativity in his military approach. He took what looked like an impossible situation and used it to his advantage. What are some ways in which you see good leadership?

Even though Gideon was scared, he kept trusting God and moved forward. Thinking about your own life, what does that look like for you?

PRAY

As a group, spend some time praying for each other and the struggles we all face. If you are in a co-ed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to talk more freely.

TO GO

Isaiah 41:10

*"Don't be afraid, for **I am** with you. Don't be discouraged, for **I am** your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand."*