

WELCOME (15 minutes)

- **Ice Breaker:** What's something you're afraid of? (spiders, dogs, snakes, the dark,...)

WORSHIP (10 minutes)

- Sing #13, "Lord Almighty" from the **2013 SG Worship CD**.

WIN (15 minutes)

- **PRAY** for your list of people who don't yet know Jesus as their Savior.
- **PLAN** something to do to reach out to these people *(and maybe have fun together!)*
- **Don't forget:** It's time to be discussing summer plans = Fun things you'll do together as a group; Will you take a break? (How long?); Who will do a Women's Summer Study and with what neighbor, friend, co-worker, or family member??

WORD (25 minutes)

Read: In this session, we will study the story of Gideon – a weak and cowardly judge who nevertheless was used by God to deliver His people from the enemy. In the life of Gideon, we see how the God who sends us out to do His will is the same God who gives us strength to fulfill His will in obedience.

Have everyone open their Bibles to Judges 6.

Point #1 – Our strength comes from God who sends us – Read Judges 6:11-16

Discuss: Gideon protested against God's commission on the basis of his inadequacy. God's response was a reminder that the power of deliverance was not in Gideon but in God's presence. As followers of Christ, we trust in Jesus' promise to empower us through His Spirit (Acts 1:8). No matter how inadequate we may feel God sees us as "Mighty warriors!" The strength to obey God and join Him on mission does not come from within us but from God's empowering Spirit. What aspects of obedience to God's mission make you feel inadequate or "not up to the task"?

Discuss: God granted Gideon's request and convinced him of His presence, but the presence of God made Gideon fear for his life. It seems strange that Gideon responded with such terror to being in God's presence. Don't we want to sense God close to us? Don't we yearn for His presence in our lives? Perhaps the strangeness of Gideon's reaction is a sign that we have forgotten what an incredible gift it is to have access to God's power and presence. In the Old Testament, only the high priest could go once a year behind the veil that separated the holy of holies (God's presence). When Jesus was crucified, that veil was torn in two! And then, after Jesus' ascension He sent the

Holy Spirit to empower us and give us His presence forever. How do you take God's presence for granted? What aspects of God's presence comfort and embolden you?

Point #2 – Our assurance comes from God who shows patience – Read Judges 6:36-40

Discuss: Before we pounce on Gideon to condemn him, we ought to recognize in this story a realistic picture of doubt, fear, and lack of faith that we face whenever we struggle to follow something the Lord has clearly shown us. This story isn't here to show us how to set out a fleece to test God or to bash Gideon for his lack of faith. Instead, the point is to reveal God's patience with us when we find it hard to trust Him. God is willing to stoop down and reassure us when we're afraid. When have you asked the Lord for some sort of sign to prove you were on the right track? What was the result? How might you be "putting out a fleece" in some area right now instead of trusting and obeying His call to you?

Point #3 – Our victory comes from God who saves through weakness – Read Judges 7:16-22

Discuss: God accomplished a unique and grand victory solely through His strength and wisdom. Even the manner of victory showed the battle belonged to the Lord and He had accomplished the victory. The 300 men didn't even attack – they pursued *after* the Midianites were fleeing. Don't miss the picture of God granting victory through human weakness, as long as those human beings are depending on Him. In our struggle against the enemy we recognize that God displays His power through our weakness. We win the war from the inside out – by turning our hearts to Christ in faith. The mindset of our world is that great things are accomplished by strong people. How does Gideon's story turn that mindset upside down? What are some ways we can renew our trust in God's strength for the mission when we fall into discouragement and despair?

Read: "It is certain that man must utterly despair of his own ability before he is prepared to receive the grace of Christ." – Martin Luther (1483-1546)

Discuss: The greatest example of God securing a victory on our behalf through weakness is through the cross of Jesus Christ. God stooped down and put on human flesh, coming into our broken world to defeat sin and death once for all. Recognizing the strength that God displays through human weakness, we can be bold when we answer God's call to serve. We trust that the God who sends us out is the God who will sustain us on the journey. We don't sign up for God's mission because of the power we have to offer but because of the presence God has promised! How does Gideon's story give you hope in your weakness?

For next time encourage anyone who wants to read Judges 13-16.

WORKS (25 minutes)

- Break into smaller groups of **2 or 3's of the same gender** to pray for each other.