



Stumbling Across the Finish Line

Judges 8
October 2, 2022

The Big Idea: The “early” Gideon was so unsure of himself that he knew he had no chance of success unless he **leaned fully** on the Lord. The “later” Gideon seems **impressed** with what he himself has done and learned. Good beginnings don’t guarantee strong finishes.

8 Then the men of Ephraim said to him, “What is this that you have done to us, not to call us when you went to fight against Midian?” And they accused him fiercely. ³ ... Then their anger against him subsided when he said this.

✓ **THE TEST OF CRITICISM:** how you respond when people question your decisions.

⁴ And Gideon came to the Jordan and crossed over, he and the 300 men who were with him, exhausted yet pursuing. ⁵ So he said to the men of Succoth, “Please give loaves of bread to the people who follow me, for they are exhausted ... ⁷ *I will flail your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers.*” ... ⁹ And he said to the men of Penuel, “*When I come again in peace, I will break down this tower.*”

¹⁶ *And he took the elders of the city, and he took thorns of the wilderness and briers and with them taught the men of Succoth a lesson.* ¹⁷ And *he broke down the tower of Penuel and killed the men of the city.*

²⁰ So he said to Jether his firstborn, “Rise and kill them!” But the young man did not draw his sword, for he was afraid, because he was still a young man. ²¹ Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, “Rise yourself and fall upon us, for as the man is, so is his strength.” *And Gideon arose and killed Zebah and Zalmunna, and he took the crescent ornaments that were on the necks of their camels.*

✓ **THE TEST OF NON-COOPERATION:** how you respond when people refuse to do what you asked of them.

²² Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, “Rule over us, you and your son and your grandson also, for *you have saved us from the hand of Midian.*” ²³ *Gideon said to them, “I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; the LORD*

will rule over you.” ²⁴ *And Gideon said to them, “Let me make a request of you: every one of you give me the earrings from his spoil.”* (For they had golden earrings, because they were Ishmaelites.) ... ²⁷ *And Gideon made an ephod of it and put it in his city, in Ophrah. And all Israel whored after it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and to his family.*

✓ **THE TEST OF APPROVAL:** how you respond when people think you and what you do are great.

²⁸ So Midian was subdued before the people of Israel, and they raised their heads no more. And the land had rest forty years in the days of Gideon.

²⁹ Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and lived in his own house. ³⁰ Now Gideon had seventy sons, his own offspring, for he had many wives. ³¹ And his concubine who was in Shechem also bore him a son, and he called his name *Abimelech*. ³² And Gideon the son of Joash died in a good old age and was buried in the tomb of Joash his father, at Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

✓ **THE TEST OF LEGACY:** how you choose to live in the second half of your life and the true effect of your life when you’re gone.

³³ *As soon as Gideon died, the people of Israel turned again and whored after the Baals and made Baal-berith their god.* ³⁴ And the people of Israel did not remember the LORD their God, who had delivered them from the hand of all their enemies on every side, ³⁵ and they did not show steadfast love to the family of Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) in return for all the good that he had done to Israel.

LESSONS FROM GIDEON ABOUT FINISHING STRONG

1. Trusting God and obeying Him must be choices we make **each day**.
2. Good beginnings are just that – beginnings. The reward comes to those who **finish** what they began. Pray for and strive toward a strong middle and end of your race.
3. Treating people with **grace**, kindness, and **patience** will only happen if I remember that the Lord treats me with grace, kindness, and patience.
4. Only **God** is worthy of Glory. I must be relentless in giving Him **credit** for the good that comes my way and for anything I accomplish in life.
5. Once again we see how flawed all human deliverers are and with each **disappointment** our eyes and hearts need to look to **Jesus** – our ultimate Savior and deliverer.