**Foolish mistakes we make when we are spiritually high: Why do we do this?**

So what do Len Bias, Richard Nixon & Ted Haggard—a star basketball player, the President of the US & pastor of a mega church—have in common? Each fell from the pinnacle of their success! Bias, the next NBA superstar out of the University of Maryland died of cocaine overdose a few days after being the second overall pick in the 1986 NBA draft. Mr. Nixon resigned from the Presidency, the one he had won by a landslide, because he was about to be impeached for covering up the Watergate scandal. Haggard was forced to resign from his 14,000-member church in 2006, the one he planted years earlier, following the disclosure that he had been involved with a male prostitute for three years. What happened? These men made the kind of mistakes that they were careful to avoid on their way to the top; but once having reached it, their guards were down, leading to the collapse of everything they had worked for. Today’s study continues to examine the life of Gideon but the focus will be on a situation that developed immediately after his greatest victory. How did he handle his success of being one of Israel’s illustrious judges? Did he manage to avoid the mistakes that doomed Bias, Nixon, and Haggard, or did he become yet another reminder that success in any field can be hazardous to your health, be it physical, social, or spiritual?

**Discussion Question:** Can you think of anyone else who fell from the summit of their success?

1. Read Judges 8:22-27.

a What is going on in these verses? Why is Israel so enamored by Gideon? (Judges 6:1-6, 7:19-21)

b. The amount of gold used in the ephod would be valued at about 1.2 million dollars. In view of that amount, how do you think it

appeared?

2. Examine the consequences of what happened.

a. Theologically and spiritually, what was so bad about what happened here?

b. Read Judges 8:33-34 and Proverbs 22:1. What happened to Gideon’s reputation?

3. What was Gideon thinking?

a. Consider how Gideon’s actions are similar to what King Saul (1 Samuel 15:12) and Absalom (2 Samuel 18:18) did. Also consider

Proverbs 16:18.

b. Do we see some of Gideon’s motives and actions in our lives? If so, share with the group.

4. How we can guard against following Gideon’s example?

a. Read and discuss 2 Corinthians 12:9 and John 15:5. What do these verses look like in our lives?

b. **Application:** In smaller groups, talk about practical ways you can encourage each other to keep going and to not stumble when you are doing

well spiritually.