

☞ Doing the Gideon

Judges 6-7 (God takes the weak and makes them strong)

God appeared to Gideon during a time of oppression and shortage. 7 years under Midianite oppression. Crops were stolen along with livestock and working animals. They were beat down into extreme poverty. They were trying to survive and thrive, but their enemy was overwhelming them. It says the enemy was so vast, it was like trying to count locusts.

This is as bad as it ever gets! Now, the name **Midian** means ‘**strife**’ and they were certainly being true to their name in their actions with Israel! We also face strife and trouble while living in this world. Strife from our own sinful nature; Strife from a fallen world; God uses both to teach us.

In Gideon’s story, no matter what the Israelites did, they could not get ahead. Have you ever felt that way? I think we all do from time to time. In this case, it all started because they hadn’t listened and were walking away from God. So, God let them have it their way. We are often our own worst enemy. **God’s way is always the best way, but we want it our way, which leads to the wrong way.** But at least the Israelites knew enough to cry out to God. They turned to God and he responded.

Once they turned to God, he entered the scene and began to change the situation. So, make sure you are right with God and then hang in there, because your time of visitation ☞ could be any moment. **God can suddenly change your circumstances.**

Joseph went from being in jail to standing before Pharaoh. One minute, no one would listen to him. The next minute, the most powerful man in the country was asking his opinion.

One minute Blind Bartimaeus was sitting on the roadside as a beggar, and the next minute, after telling Jesus what he wanted, his sight was restored!

Saul was out to destroy Christians but as he journeyed on his mission, “suddenly there was a bright light from heaven” that transformed him into the great Apostle Paul.

Paul and Silas were in jail. This was a literal midnight hour. And in that hour Paul and Silas didn’t complain; they sang praises to God, even though they were hurting and humiliated. Suddenly, there was an earthquake so great that the foundation of the prison was shaken. Immediately, all the doors were opened and their bonds were loosed.

So, God begins his intervention on behalf of the Israelites and he begins with just one man – Gideon. Gideon was all alone when God came on the scene. (v. 11) Moses was alone when he heard from God in the burning bush. Elijah was alone when he heard that gentle

whisper from God. In fact, he was on Mount Horeb, which literally means “solitude.” Even Jesus practiced silence and solitude to connect with the Father. God speaks in our silence.

Isaiah 30:15

In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength.

Psalms 46:10

Be still, and know that I am God.

☞ **We hear God best in silence and solitude.**

v. 12 God calls Gideon “mighty warrior.” And, on the surface, Gideon is anything but a mighty warrior. He’s hiding out just trying to survive. He believes the Lord has abandoned him and he sees himself as the least of the least. Have you ever felt that way? Gideon said, “how can I save Israel?”

Think you’re not good enough for God to use? Well, you’re in good company...Noah was a drunk; Abraham was too old; Isaac was a daydreamer; Jacob was a liar; Leah was ugly; Moses stuttered; Samson was a womanizer; Rahab was a prostitute; Jeremiah and Timothy were too young; David had an affair and was a murderer; Elijah was suicidal; The Disciples fell asleep while praying; Martha worried about everything. So you fit right in.

George Bernard Shaw was interviewed by a reporter late in life. "Mr. Shaw, if you could live your life over and be anybody you've known, or any person from history, who would you be?" "I would choose," replied Shaw, "to be the man George Bernard Shaw could have been, but never was."

☞ That’s a challenge for us all. **God sees our potential.** Who does God say you are?

John 16:27	You are loved by the Father.
Romans 6:6b	You are no longer a slave of sin.
Romans 8:16	You are a child of God.
Romans 8:17	You are an heir of God and fellow heir with Christ.
1 Corinthians 1-2	You are a sanctified saint in Jesus Christ.
2 Corinthians 5:20	You are an ambassador for Christ.
Ephesians 2:19b	You are a member God's household.
Ephesians 3:20	You have Christ’s power in you.
Philippians 2:1	You are a light in the world.
Hebrews 3:1	You are holy.
1 Peter 2:9	You are chosen; You are royal; You are holy; You belong to God.

☞ He also says, “the Lord is with you.” This is a good reminder for us all. **God is always near. He never leaves us.** Cf. Hebrews 13:5

v. 13 Gideon questions his circumstances. (So did other prominent people.) Questions are okay. It’s refusing to believe that gets you in trouble. The Psalms are full of questions, but they always end up trusting God in all circumstances.

v. 14 “Go in the strength you have.” What strength do you have? You may think you’ve got nothing to offer. “I can’t speak publicly; I can’t sing; I can’t explain theology; I can’t, I can’t, I can’t.” But God says “go in the strength you have.” He doesn’t say “go in the strength you don’t have.”

Ever felt like that you really don’t have much to offer God and probably can’t be used? Well if you have, welcome to the Gideon factor! It just well may be the very thing which propels you into being a likely candidate! **One God plus one weakling is always a ☞majority in any fight.**

Start right where you are. Moses had a stick. David had a sling shot. The little boy had 5 loaves and 2 fish. In all these cases, God took what little they had and used it to do amazing things. What do have to offer? A smile; a compliment; a financial gift; a fresh ☞idea; a prayer; a servant’s heart. **Start where you are.**

In v. 15 Gideon says, “My clan is the weakest... I am the least in my family.” But in v. 16 God says, “I will be with you.” He loves humble people. God chose Moses even though he stuttered and lacked confidence. God chose David, who was the youngest of his ☞family. God chose Mary, who was just a humble, young lady. **God is drawn to humility.**

1 Peter 5:5

"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

You think you don’t have much to offer? Good, then God can use you to do something especially amazing.

v. 17-19 Gideon brings an offering to God. He didn’t reject the Lord’s calling and neither did he rush out to fulfill God’s calling. He took the time to bring an offering and worship ☞the Lord first. We must **put God first.** In verse 24 he builds an altar to the Lord.

Haddon Robinson points out that one old recipe for rabbit stew started out with this injunction: "First catch the rabbit." Says Robinson: "The writer knew how to put first things

first. That's what we do when we establish priorities -- we put the things that should be in first place in their proper order.

v. 20-23 God does a miracle with fire from the rock consuming the offering. When we put God first **he proves himself** to us. Remember, the troubles in this chapter all began because the people had walked away from the Lord. But now Gideon is doing things right and God is proving himself faithful.

v. 25-27 Gideon starts with a small task of tearing down an altar and a pole to false gods. He was afraid, but he started out with a small task and was obedient to the Lord.

☞ **It's okay to start small. Just don't allow fear to prevent obedience.**

Zechariah 4:10

Do not despise these small beginnings, for the Lord rejoices to see the work begin.

In fact, God seems to like the small beginnings and overwhelming odds. God loves to do the Gideon. In chapter 7, God reduces the army. It started off with 32,000 versus 135,000, and yet, the Lord speaks to him saying 'Gideon, you've got way too many men!' So, God decided to make weak Israel even weaker. Now why would God do that? Why does God allow times of weakness... even overwhelming odds at times? It is so that we will be

☞ **more reliant upon Him.**

All those who were too fearful to fight were allowed to go home. So, 22,000 (over two-thirds!) said 'thanks, but I'm out of here!' Out of the 10,000 people that remained, 9,700 knelt down and drank straight from the water, whereas 300 evidently stood and used their hands to bring the water to their mouth. God was only interested in the smaller group who were more watchful and alert. So, in all, 300 people remained... that's 300 Israelites versus 135,000 Midianites. They were outnumbered 450 to 1! Does that ratio sound familiar? It's the same as Elijah against the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. But in Gideon's case the story gets even crazier!

Gideon divides his 300 men into three companies and gives them their weapons. Put yourself into their position for a second... You know you're massively outnumbered. So, you take your place in the line and Gideon hands out the weapons... an empty clay jar, a torch, and a trumpet! Oh, thanks a lot Gideon! What are we trying to do? Burst their ear drums? Drive 'em crazy by playing off key?

This passage in Judges has its New Testament fulfilment in 2 Corinthians chapter 4. **You ☞ are the clay jar; Jesus is the light within; and your testimony to His greatness is the trumpet call you are asked to sound!**

Paul says it was when he was... 'hard pressed,' 'perplexed,' and 'persecuted' that the light shined the most. When you are going through difficult times, but keep the faith and testify to God's goodness, his light shines the brightest through you.

We shouldn't leave this chapter without emphasizing the last ingredient for true victory over Midian. The jars had been smashed, the light of the torches had been exposed, but it was when the trumpet sounded that the Lord brought victory over the Midianite enemy. Blow the trumpet! Not your own trumpet, however. A lot of people blow their own trumpet and while they like the sound it gives, it is definitely way off key for the rest of us! Blow the trumpet of God. Look at how the Apostle Paul wrote it – 'For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord.' The testimony and trumpet call that we sound is about ☞ Him, not us. **In the midst of difficulty, the real and honest testimony about God is an awesome thing.** God will speak through it to draw people to him.

Trials are never nice when you are in them, otherwise they wouldn't be called trials! But we can take heart that **God has a purpose for them. It is for the strengthening of your faith and the displaying of His life through you!** Each crack in the clay vessel brings forth a little more light!

2 Corinthians 12:9-10

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

To be honest I can't say that I 'delight' in weaknesses and in hardships. Paul had learned the reality of what this is all about. But I can look back and say that through difficulties and times of weakness, God has been my strength. And looking back now, I wouldn't change those times even though at the time they were very difficult. So whether you are currently faced with 'strife' or can look back and recall such a time, always remember that ☞ **God's power is made perfect in weakness; and God loves to do the Gideon!**

Let's do the Gideon with God. In your personal life, let him use your weakness to display ☞ his strength. When trials come, **remain faithful, rely on God** and **relate to others how God helps you.**

As a Church, we're not in the biggest city or the most prominent place, but let's do the Gideon. Let's work together with God to accomplish more than we might imagine for the kingdom, right here in Boone, Iowa!