

Risk
July 22, 2012
Allen Power

Judges 6:11-16; Judges 7:9-11; Judges 7:13-15

Opening question: So, what are you afraid of? What are some of the most common fears or phobias people have? Anyone have any of these?

It's not uncommon...in fact, it's ALMOST TO BE EXPECTED to have some FEAR when God asks us to take on a task. Not to mention a BIG, CHALLENGING task.

As we'll learn today, God often uses the most unlikely people to accomplish BIG things. Because if God gives the assignment, He also gives the GRACE and POWER to do it!

- In Judges 6:1 we hear a familiar "refrain":
- Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord [worshiping Baal, false idols], and for seven years he gave them into the hands of the Midianites.
- The Midianites were NOMADS. They moved through the land on camels like "desert pirates", RAIDING communities. They would ride in on their camels and STRIP the land of all the good produce and livestock, then withdraw back into the desert.
- 6:5 says the Midianites were like: "swarms of locusts. It was impossible to count the men and their camels; they invaded the land to ravage it."
- And verse 6: "Midian so impoverished the Israelites that they cried out to the Lord for help."
- Again, God would raise up a Judge, a warrior he would use to DELIVER the Israelites from the terror of the Midianites. This time he chooses a FARMBOY named Gideon.

Judges 6:11-16

11 The angel of the Lord came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. 12 When the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, he said, "The Lord is with you, mighty warrior. "

13 "But sir," Gideon replied, "if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our fathers told us about when they said, 'Did not the Lord bring us up out of Egypt?' But now the Lord has abandoned us and put us into the hand of Midian."

14 The Lord turned to him and said, "Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?"

15 "But Lord,[a]" Gideon asked, "how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family. "

16 The Lord answered, "I will be with you , and you will strike down all the Midianites together."

- Verse 11 says “the angel of the Lord” came to Gideon. However, as the conversation continued (verse 14 and 16) we read “The Lord turned to him...” “The Lord answered...”
- This would lead us to believe this was God taking on the form of a human.
- The theological term for that is a “THEOPHANY”. In this case it’s a foreshadowing of Christ coming to earth as a man. We call that a “CHRISTOPHANY”.
- Why is that significant? Gideon had a DIRECT ENCOUNTER WITH GOD.
- Rule #1 before you take a RISK for God: Make sure the assignment REALLY CAME FROM GOD.
- Let’s talk about God’s view of Gideon.
- Verse 12: How did God see Gideon? “Mighty warrior”
- What promise did God make? The Lord is with you...
- But, how did Gideon see HIMSELF?
- Let’s talk about Gideon’s state of mind when the angel...the Lord...showed up.
- Our first clue to Gideon’s state of mind is his location.
- Question: Look at the end of verse 11...WHY was he threshing wheat in a winepress?
- You thresh wheat high on a hill, throwing it into the air so the wind blows away the chaff, and the grain falls to the ground. A winepress or vat would have been at the bottom of the hill so you didn’t have to carry the grapes up hill. He was HIDING OUT.
- Question: Look at verse 13. What does it tell us about Gideon’s state of mind?
- “...if the Lord is with us, why has this happened to us?”
- Have you ever asked that question of God?
- Verse 15: How does Gideon describe his family and HIMSELF? Weaklings...runts!
- Gideon said “We’re all runts and I’m the runtiest of the runts!”
- Let’s put this all together. How did God see Gideon? How did Gideon see himself?
- What did God want Gideon to do? Save Israel from the Midianites
- Question: How can Gideon RECONCILE these conflicting views?
- Someone read verse 14 again.
- 14 The Lord turned to him and said, “Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian’s hand. Am I not sending you?”
- Question: What in that verse RECONCILES why God would call a weakling like Gideon a “mighty warrior”? “Am I not sending you?”
- Question: What do we learn from this about what kind of man or woman God uses?

J. Vernon McGee writes:

“Our problem today, friend, is that most of us are too strong for God to use. Most of us are too capable for God to use. You notice that God only uses weak men.” (and women)

1 Corinthians 1:26-29

Paul writes:

26 Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28 He chose the lowly things of this world and

the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, 29 so that no one may boast before him.

McGee again:

“When God gets ready to do anything, He chooses the weakest thing He can get in order to make it clear that He is doing it, not the weak arm of the flesh. That is God’s method.”

- What did Gideon do? In spite of his bad self image, he OBEYED.
- First, he tore down the shrines to Baal.
- Then, the Midianites and the Amalekites began to close in and they camped in the valley of Jezreel.
- But, Verse 34 says “The Spirit of the Lord clothed Gideon.” So, Gideon raised an army.
- But, Gideon’s self image was still weak. So he asked God for a sign.
- You know the story...what kind of sign did Gideon ask for?
- First the fleece was wet and the ground was dry. Then next morning...the reverse.
- Gideon had been successful in recruiting. He had 32,000 men!
- But, God said, nope, “Too many.” Question: Anyone know why God wanted Gideon to have a small army? The Israelites would boast that THEY had defeated the Midianites.
- Gideon says, “If you’re scared go home!” 22,000 did...10,000 remained.
- God said, “Too many...take them down to the water and see how they drink”
- Gideon wound up with 300.
- You gotta believe Gideon said, “Really Lord? 300 “rag-tag” Israelites is all I get to defeat the Midianites? Really?”
- The Lord said, “You’re still afraid. Do this, tonight, sneak over to the Midianite camp and eavesdrop. I’m gonna give you something to build your confidence.”

Judges 7:9-11

9 During that night the Lord said to Gideon, “Get up, go down against the camp, because I am going to give it into your hands. 10 If you are afraid to attack, go down to the camp with your servant Purah 11 and listen to what they are saying. Afterward, you will be encouraged to attack the camp.” So he and Purah his servant went down to the outposts of the camp.

- So Gideon is eavesdropping, and here’s what he hears:

Judges 7:13-15

13 Gideon arrived just as a man was telling a friend his dream. “I had a dream,” he was saying. “A round loaf of barley bread came tumbling into the Midianite camp. It struck the tent with such force that the tent overturned and collapsed.”

14 His friend responded, “This can be nothing other than the sword of Gideon son of Joash, the Israelite. God has given the Midianites and the whole camp into his hands.”

15 When Gideon heard the dream and its interpretation, he worshiped God. He returned to the camp of Israel and called out, "Get up! The Lord has given the Midianite camp into your hands."

- A round loaf of barley bread? Huh? Barley was poor man's grain. It represented Israel "peasant farmers".
- That Midianite warrior interpreted the dream correctly.
- The poor, ragtag army Gideon was leading would ROLL OVER the Midianites.
- He said, "This can be nothing other than the sword of Gideon."
- They were expecting "swords". But there were no swords.
- Gideon went back and divided up his 300 men and they surrounded the enemy.
- He gave each one a torch, a clay pot to cover the torch, and a trumpet.
- "Guys, when I give the signal...smash the pot so they can see the fire, then blow that trumpet LOUD and shout: 'For the Lord and for Gideon!'"
- They DID just that. And, the Lord confused and panicked the Midianites and they turned their swords on each other and started killing each other, then the rest began to run for the hills!
- Gideon sent word for the rest of the Israelites and they defeated the enemy and took back the land!
- Not bad for a runt with 300 "rag-tags"!

So, what do these two chapters teach us about fear and faith?

Charles Stanley cites several Biblical TRUTHS we can glean from the story of Gideon. Let's see if we can discover them.

- Question: Gideon was faced with incredible challenges. How does God use incredible challenges in our lives as He did with Gideon? "God uses difficulties to build our faith."
- Question: Clearly Gideon felt inadequate for the mission. When it comes to doing an assignment from God, why can it be a healthy thing to feel inadequate? "God wants to 'strip us of our dependence on anything other than him.' (2 Cor. 12:9 God's grace is sufficient...His strength is made perfect in OUR weakness.)"
- Question: Why would it NOT have been God's will for the Israelites to win the battle on their own? THEY would have received the credit not God. "The Lord always leads us to do what will bring Him glory."
- Question: God allowed Gideon to overhear the mindset of the enemy the night before battle. What does that say about how God works with us in the midst of doing His will? "God sends encouragement when we need it the most. He is sensitive to our weaknesses and knows the proper time to send help and an encouraging word."

- Question: God instilled confusion in the army of the Midianites. What does that say about how God works? “The Lord always works behind the scenes on our behalf.”
- Question: God ordered Gideon into battle with only 300 men and just torches, jars, and trumpets. Did that make any sense at all? What does that say about the things God may lead us to do in fulfilling His will? “At times God may require the unreasonable.” Also, “God provides specific instructions for victory. If we will rely on Him, He will lead us through every trial we face, step-by-step, according to His plan for our lives.”
- * (A summary of Dr. Stanley’s points is shown below in these notes)

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- God uses “common” people who feel inadequate enough to be totally dependent on Him.
- When God gives us a challenging assignment we need to focus on HIM and not US.
- We need to be perceptive of circumstances and people God has provided to encourage us.
- We need to respond in faith and worship to God for his grace, patience, and encouragement to accept God-given tasks.

To Summarize Dr. Stanley’s points on Biblical Truths in Gideon’s story:

1. God uses difficulties to build our faith. He wants to strip us of our dependence on anything other than Him. We are to fix our focus on Christ, the Author and Perfecter of our faith (Heb. 12:2).
2. At times God may require the unreasonable.
3. The Lord always leads us to do what will bring Him glory. Had Israel won the battle in their own strength, the credit would have gone to them and not to God.
4. God sends encouragement when we need it the most. He is sensitive to our weaknesses and knows the proper time to send help and an encouraging word.
5. The Lord always works behind the scenes on our behalf.
6. God provides specific instructions for victory. If we will rely on Him, He will lead us through every trial we face, step-by-step, according to His plan for our lives.

<http://internationalstandard.wordpress.com/2011/07/19/charles-stanley-on-the-lessons-of-gideon/>