

Unlikely Hero

Trip to China

The story of Gideon -

Judges 6 & 7 – The Israelites had a problem. The issue is that they continued to repeat a cycle and that is why they were in this predicament. For years, they would sin, God would punish them and they would repent. They would sin, God would punish them and they would repent. Over and over this happened. Because of this, the Midianites were their sworn enemies. The Israelites would hide from the Midianites. The Midianites would steal everything that the Israelites had. Everything. They outnumbered them and they just simply overpowered them and ravaged their land. To the Israelites, their opponent looked insurmountable. They were like the sands of the sea.

God also appointed Judges during this time that would help lead the Israelites back to God. This is where we meet our “hero” Gideon. He was a judge but he was a coward and very inadequate. He was threshing wheat in a wine press. This is not normal. Typically, you would thresh wheat on top of a hill or somewhere there would be a bit of wind to blow away the chaff, not down in a hole where you would stomp grapes. But, he was doing this because he was afraid and he was hiding.

Verse 12 says, “The Lord is with you mighty warrior!” Hold up! Mighty warrior?!? How many know that who we are isn’t dictated by how we feel or how we see ourselves. We are who God says we are. God is calling you. He’s calling you a mighty warrior.

You moms, who feel like you are a failure as a mother. That is not how God sees you! He sees a warrior! You dads, who feel like you’ve made so many mistakes and you can’t be a man of God. By the blood of Christ, He does not see a failure, he sees a warrior! Young person, who feels like they’ve given into temptation too many times! How can I be used of God?! I’m a failure. That’s not how God sees you! He sees a warrior! Single people, I must not be of value, I can’t even find a soul mate. That’s not how God sees you, HE sees a warrior! Drug addict, homeless person, down and outs, financial failures, God SEES A WARRIOR! And when we understand that God sees us so much differently then we see ourselves and our own insecurities and we allow Him to use us, our lives change. Our perspectives change.

It's so interesting looking at Gideon's response to being called out. He immediately tells all the excuses why this can't be good. **13“Pardon me, my lord,” Gideon replied, “but if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our ancestors told us about when they said, ‘Did not the Lord bring us up out of Egypt?’ But now the Lord has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian.”**

Isn't it interesting how we can blame God for our bad situations? Don't blame God for the problems you got yourself into! God, how did I get in this position?

My wife and I have been youth leaders for almost 20 years. Quite often, we've heard from parents who are in a difficult situation and they're not sure how they got there. Who has my child become? We've even had parents ask us to tell their child to do this or that or they would love if we could get their child to change in some way.

One of the things that I've heard many times is, "This generation..." First, that is false! I see amazing young people full of the promises of God and so much potential! I see missionaries! I see business executives! I see church leaders! I see parents leading children down a godly path! I see chains being broken! I see young people with so much promise and such a bright future! I have been so challenged by these youth! Of all the kids that we have taken on youth trips abroad, 30% have gone into some type of ministry or Bible College.

Does this generation have their challenges? By golly they do! But so did we! I hate hearing adults say, "This generation..." Who raised this generation?? Maybe as parents, we need to take responsibility for the direction our kids are heading. When we as parents struggle to live a life of purity and make continual compromises, what do we expect our kids to do? So much more is caught than taught.

Lastly on this subject, I've seen kids do well that come from bad homes. I've seen kids do well that come from good homes but I seldom see kids do well with parents that talk like they're Christians on Sunday but live like hell the rest of the week.

Don't blame God for your problems! God, rescue me from financial ruin! I make 50k but bought a house for 500k and a car for 75k but God, why did you allow this?? God, why did you allow my family to fall apart? I chose to not live by Biblical moral standards but God why did you allow my wife to leave me, my kids to have kids before marriage. God why did you allow my health to fail? I went through a time of eating wings and drinking Mt Dew every night...

Back to the text - **15**"Pardon me, my lord," Gideon replied, "but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family."

16The Lord answered, "I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive."

Again, this comes back to not disqualifying ourselves with how we see ourselves vs. how God sees us. Gideon was trying to convince God that he wasn't qualified.

How many times have we done this? Have you ever had that situation with your kids? You know they are capable of something but all they can see is the failures ahead of them? Maybe it was riding a bike, maybe it was going to school. Insert childhood story

Deut. 7:7"The Lord did not set his heart on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other nations, for you were the smallest of all nations! **8** Rather, it was simply that the Lord loves you, and he was keeping the oath he had sworn to your ancestors."

What follows is the Angel of the Lord appearing to Gideon and doing several miracles to convince Gideon that he was hearing from God. But notice something here...

22 When Gideon realized that it was the angel of the Lord, he exclaimed, “Alas, Sovereign Lord! I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face!” 23 But the Lord said to him, “Peace! Do not be afraid. You are not going to die.”

Something that I believe that our generation lacks is a Holy and reverent fear of God. We love to wear him on our sleeve when it is convenient. Somehow, we have gotten to the place where we see God as nothing more than a loving, gracious Father (which He is) who will overlook our sin and our outright disobedience because He understands. He does understand and He is loving and gracious but He is so much more than that.

I remember as a kid, some of my friends were very afraid of my Father. They would come over and say how scary he was. Although my wife knew him her whole life, she thought the same. Whenever these people said these things about my Dad, they never saw the hours he spent doing stuff for us. They never saw him on his hands and knees playing horse while we screamed with delight. I knew him as a loving Father but I also knew him as a Dad who loved me enough to not let me get away with doing stupid.

Look at the examples in scripture where people saw God.

Moses in Exodus 3 – Take off your sandals because you are standing on holy ground.

Moses in Exodus 34 :5 Then the Lord came down in a cloud and stood there with him; and he called out his own name, Yahweh. 6 The Lord passed in front of Moses, calling out, “Yahweh! The Lord! The God of compassion and mercy! I am slow to anger and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness. 7 I lavish unfailing love to a thousand generations. I forgive iniquity, rebellion, and sin. But I do not excuse the guilty. I lay the sins of the parents upon their children and grandchildren; the entire family is affected— even children in the third and fourth generations.” 8 Moses immediately threw himself to the ground and worshiped.

Jacob in Genesis 28 -And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

Isaiah in Isaiah 6 – 1 It was in the year King Uzziah died that I saw the Lord. He was sitting on a lofty throne, and the train of his robe filled the Temple. 2 Attending him were mighty seraphim, each having six wings. With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. 3 They were calling out to each other, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Heaven’s Armies! The whole earth is filled with his glory!” 4 Their voices shook the Temple to its foundations, and the entire building was filled with smoke. 5 Then I said, “It’s all over! I am doomed, for I am a sinful man. I have filthy lips, and I live among a people with filthy lips. Yet I have seen the King, the Lord of Heaven’s Armies.”

We could tell of Joshua, Ezekiel, Daniel, Peter, James and John, Stephen and others who saw God. They all had the same response. A terrifying awe. A realization that they were standing in front of the Creator. A holy reverence. They were in the presence of the Almighty in whom there is no sin. They were undone. Most could hardly speak.

I requested the song "Throne Room" this morning. It is such a remarkable picture of us as Believers going into the presence of God. "The veil is torn, the doors swing wide, I see glory as I run inside the throne room, before you I bow!" Me, a man, failing constantly and ravished with sin, hopeless without Christ and yet able to come into the presence of the Most High and Holy God. And, because of the shed blood of Jesus, He calls me Holy. He calls me worthy.

I'm begging of you this morning to not take lightly the presence of God. I picture myself standing before the Almighty, the Great I Am. Standing there shaking in His presence. Then think of all the excuses that I've made about sin. "I know it's not right but it's too painful to change." NO! I want to stand before Him with arms stretched wide in worship to Him with nothing holding me back. I want to kneel before Him with my face on the ground saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy are you Lord.

Back to Judges – **25 That same night the Lord said to him, "Take the second bull from your father's herd, the one seven years old. Tear down your father's altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole beside it. 26 Then build a proper kind of altar to the Lord your God on the top of this height. Using the wood of the Asherah pole that you cut down, offer the second bull as a burnt offering." 27 So Gideon took ten of his servants and did as the Lord told him. But because he was afraid of his family and the townspeople, he did it at night rather than in the daytime.**

Although Gideon was a coward (Vs 27) he still knew what needed to be done and did it. He took care of the sin that was causing defeat for the whole nation and he built an altar to God.

Finally, after all of the signs from God and after taking care of sin in the camp, he finally realized that he is supposed to attack. He gets his army ready to fight this insurmountable enemy and God says, "You've got too many men." Say what?!? The Midianites were already too numerous to count and if you look in vs. **33 Now all the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples joined forces and crossed over the Jordan and camped in the Valley of Jezreel.** Now there are more than ever!

Gideon only had 32,000 men! Anyone who is too afraid can leave. (Besides Gideon!) 22,000 leave! After quaking in fear for a good while, I'm sure Gideon is thinking, "this ought to be good". God says, "Still too many."

God needed to whittle this army down so that Israel wouldn't take credit for a victory. This is why the "Unlikely Heroes" make the greatest impacts. If we can do it on our own, why do we need God? You ever been in that situation? "As long as I'm aware of the presence of Jesus Christ, I'm adequate for anything."

You ever been there where you feel like God has taken about all He needs to take and He says, "I need a little more. I need less of you so I can show my glory and you won't get in the way." But God! You've already taken more than is necessary. **II Cor 12:9 Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me.**

Watch what happens!

Gideon, have your remaining guys take a drink. Only 300 left! "God, you've cut this by 99%!!" I'm pretty sure that if I were in Gideon's shoes, I would need a sign from God too!

Sometimes we need a nudging from God. Gideon had more than a nudge. He overhears two men speaking and this gives him ridiculous courage!

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 bowed down and worshiped. He returned to the camp of Israel and called out, "Get up! The Lord has given the Midianite camp into your hands."

Gideon's act of obedience led him to immediate victory. How can 300 men, using trumpets, jars and torches, defeat an army of over 100,000?!

Have you been in that situation? Maybe you're in that situation now? Maybe you're in the place that we talked about earlier where we've gotten ourselves into our own mess. There's no way we can blame God for the stupid decisions we've made but what we can do is admit we don't have it all together and allow God to use us and make a decision here and now to follow God's calling on our life moving forward.

- Abraham -Was old.
- Elijah – Was suicidal.
- Joseph – Was abused.
- Job – Went bankrupt.
- Moses – Had a speech problem.
- Gideon – Was afraid.
- Samson – Was a womanizer.
- Rahab – Was a prostitute.
- Samaritan Woman – Divorced.
- Noah – Was a Drunk.

- Jeremiah – Was young.
- Jacob – Was a cheater.
- David – Was a murderer.
- Jonah – Ran from God.
- Naomi – Was a widow.
- Peter – Denied Christ three times
- Martha – Worried about everything.
- Zacchaeus – Was small and money hungry.
- The Disciples – Fell asleep while praying.
- Paul – A Pharisee who persecuted Christians before becoming one.

If God can use these people and build His church on men and women who have struggled with everything imaginable, I know He can use you.

I may never know the impact that I had, as a 17-year-old kid in the middle of China who felt inadequate, ill equipped and unworthy, but I pray somehow, someone's life was changed because of it.

I hope the same for you. That you would be willing to step into a life, fully surrendered to God. Holding nothing back. And, like Gideon, the legacy of a family, a tribe and a nation were forever changed.

What excuses have you been making? What fears have been holding you back? What lies are you believing about who you are?

If you've been asking God for a sign to do that thing He's been asking you to do, this is it. Today I want to invite you to step out in faith. The altar is open and I'm inviting fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, men and women who are ready to accept God's invitation to becoming the hero of the story He has written for you to come. We want to pray for you as you commit yourself to following God's call on your life, no matter how inadequate you feel.