

LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF GIDEON

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1. Introduction

We see in the Bible that God is able to use anyone for the Glory of His kingdom if that person is obedient to His call. Time and time again we see the verse below enacted where He is able to empower the weak, the reluctant, some who lack confidence. Gideon is one such person whom we are going the study about today.

1 Corinthians 1:27-29 (NIV) *God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.*

2. The Gideon Syndrome

- a. God takes weak, humble, sometimes fearful people and uses them to do wonderful things. Gideon's self-assessment shows that he had a very low opinion of himself.
- b. The story of Gideon has been repeated (in many of our lives in different ways to this day). Consider even the story of Moses and the burning bush.
- c. When God spoke to Moses he was reluctant to take the leadership of the Jews who were in slavery under Pharaoh in Egypt. Exodus 3:10 (NIV) Moses said "*Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?*" God says to him "*I will certainly be with you.*"
In Exodus 4:10 (ESV) Moses says "*I am not eloquent, I am slow of speech*"
God says "*who has made man's mouth? Verse 2; "Now therefore go and I will be with your mouth and teach you what to say"!!*
This is the God we serve!!

3. Gideon – the man

Judges Chapter 6 and 7 introduces Gideon and shows how God chose to deliver Israel from the Midianites.

Judges 6:1-5 paraphrased says:

- a. Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord.
- b. God permitted the Midianites to cause strife and hardships.
- c. The Israelites were hiding in caves.
- d. Their crops and livestock were ravaged by the Midianites and Amelakites.

The Bible says '*so Israel was brought very low because of Midian.*' Instead of the '*land flowing with milk and honey*' they lived in the caves and clefts in the rocks, too scared to face their enemy. Whatever the source of our strife, God uses all circumstances to teach us the truth, and, as we shall soon see, the best victories often come when we are weakest.

4. The Problem

Lessons from Judges 6:6-10:

- a. Israel had strayed away from the Lord and worshipped other gods.
- b. God sends a prophet to convict them of their sins. He makes them realize their folly.
- c. It is the same with us when we backslide and move away from the Lord

“Why ‘strife’ if the Lord is with us?” This is question that many people ask when trouble strikes them.

Judges 6:11-13 paraphrased:

- a. After the prophet had convicted Israel, God begins the deliverance.
- b. The angel of the Lord (not just an angel but the Lord Himself) comes and picks Gideon to deliver Israel.
- c. He says “The Lord is with you “mighty warrior”!!!
- d. Gideon responds – “If the Lord is with us why has all this happened?”
- e. The obvious is that Israel left their God. It was their sin which lead to this difficulty.

5. When God appoints – He anoints!!

Judges 6:14-16:

- a. Gideon is reluctant to take God at His Word
- b. He starts to say how inadequate he feels. His self-assessment shows what a low opinion he had of himself. “How shall I save Israel, when my family is poor, and I am the least in my father’s house”?
- c. We do the same sometimes when God shows us that He wants us to do something which seems difficult in our eyes. (Relate a personal testimony how the Lord showed me. A difficult task to perform but when I was obedient in spite of the odds He took charge and showed me the way).
- d. With God on our side we are a majority. The task at hand might loom ahead of us as something which is insurmountable. But be encouraged.
- e. ‘I will be with you’ God tells Gideon, and that is all that we should ever need to know. God the knows the potential He puts into each of us .Some of us live and die without tapping into that God given potential. We got to stop listening to the negative and hear what God says we are. God saw Gideon as a mighty man. Whose assessment are you going to rely on?

6. The request for a sign...

Judges 6:17-24 (NIV) “*Gideon replied, “**If now I have found favor in your eyes, give me a sign that it is really you talking to me...** [bold text highlighted]*”

- a. He was being asked to fight against and defeat the entire Midian army! He was an ordinary man from an ordinary family in an ordinary tribe.
- b. He was weak enough to cause God to choose him. The angel however tells Gideon that he can be at peace and should not fear. And God would say the same thing to you today if you have faith in Jesus and take the time to ask!

Judges 6:25-27 (NIV) *“That same night the LORD said to him, “Tear down your father’s altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole beside it. Then build a proper kind of altar to the LORD your God on the top of this height. So Gideon took ten of his servants and did as the LORD told him. **But because he was afraid of his family and the men of the town, he did it at night rather than in the daytime.**” [bold text highlighted]*

Before saving the entire nation from the clutches of the enemy, God takes us and teaches us obedience step by step if we will trust Him. Gideon, being weak like us, was fearful, but he still obeyed God’s command.

Judges 6:36-40 Gideon tests God’s faithfulness one more time- THE FLEECE STORY!!

It again highlights Gideon’s uncertainty and God’s gracious response in confirming what was being asked of Gideon. God is again kind and will meet us in our weakness if it is for the purpose of being obedient.

God has committed a simple message to simple people so that others may come to know Him. And He will often use the ‘strife’ of Midian to bring people to the place of weakness where they will totally rely on Him and His grace.

7. God’s strategy for battle and Gideon’s obedience (Judges 7:1-3)

Under the Lord’s direction Gideon prepared for battle with the Midianites:

- a. He mustered *the volunteers* of Israel that amounted to 32000.
- b. The Midianites were 135000 with chariots and horsemen.
- c. Israelites were outnumbered 4:1.
- d. God says, ‘Gideon you have too many men’.
- e. Sometimes God will ask us to do the ridiculous, but when we know it is God who is speaking to us we can rest assured that He is on our side and we need not worry.
- f. Then God commands Gideon to send away all those who are fearful and 22000 men left them, leaving behind 10000.
- g. God had not finished His plan!! He gave Gideon a task to lead them to water and see how they drink.
- h. All those who lapped water to their mouths using their hands were separated. All the rest who went on their knees and lapped water with their mounts were told to go home. Gideon was left with just three hundred to fight the 135000 Midianites.

God tests us, looking for hearts that are truly His, and these tests come in the ordinary events of our daily lives often without our knowing. So in all, 300 people remained... that’s 300 Israelites versus 135,000 Midianites. Israel was outnumbered 450 to 1

Why does God allow times of weakness...even overwhelming odds at times? It is so that we will be more reliant upon Him and through that, He can show us more of Himself. We will not trust in our own ability but in God. It is hard when God makes provision and then withdraws it. It is the testing of our faith to take it to a higher level of trust. The glory belongs to Him!

8. Gideon displays his leadership qualities

- a. He worshipped God.
- b. He could walk forth in unwavering faith, even though in the natural the odds were truly against him.
- c. He held on to the promises and encouragement God gave in whatever form.
- d. Because it is from God, it is as tangible as experiencing the real thing! He walks

by faith and not by sight.

9. The strange weapons of our Warfare! (Judges 7:15-18)

So Gideon divides his 300 men into three companies and gives them their weapons. They are massively outnumbered. Their weapons are:

- a. an empty clay jar,
- b. a torch, and
- c. a trumpet!

These are strange weapons to go to battle with but Gideon trusted God. Different situation will demand different methods

10. The battle (Judges 7:19-21)

As the jars are smashed exposing the light of the torches, and the trumpets are frantically blown on every side of the camp, confusion reigns amongst the Midian forces! God is bringing victory over Midian! From all angles a cry goes out saying 'a sword for the Lord and for Gideon.' Does God still use Midian today? And if so, what clay jars, torches and trumpets do we use to gain victory today?

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

2 Cor 4:5-10 (NIV) ***"For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts....But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body."***

- a. God has made His light the light of His presence shine in our hearts –We are the jars of clay.
- b. So there must be times of weakness which cause a 'cracking' of our normal strength.
- c. Paul says it was times when he was... 'hard pressed', 'perplexed', and 'persecuted'. These times when through the power of weakness, 'the life of Jesus may be revealed in our body'. So Gideon, with his limited followers, armed simply with a jar, a torch, and a trumpet, stormed the Midian camp from every side. 300 Israelites. He worshipped God and gave glory to God for his victories

It was when the trumpet sounded (Judges 7; 22-23) that the Lord brought victory over the Midianites – 'For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord.' The testimony and trumpet call that we sound is about Him, not us.

11. Conclusion

We have seen how God delights in using weak vessels to display His strength and faithfulness. We have also seen that this can often come about in the times when strife and trouble, is around. Like Gideon, it is daunting when faced with overwhelming odds. 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! The Apostle Paul said

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 (NIV) *“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.”*

12. Summary

Leadership lessons from Gideon:

He listened to God.

He trusted in God. Not on his own strength.

He had faith that God would keep His promises –fleece story.

He led from the front.

He worshipped God and gave glory to Him for His victories.