

The background of the entire image is a photograph of ancient stone ruins, likely Mayan or Aztec, under a dramatic, cloudy sky. The scene is bathed in a warm, golden light, suggesting either sunrise or sunset. In the foreground, there are large, weathered stone blocks and a set of stone steps leading up to a larger structure. In the mid-ground, a tall, intricately carved stone column stands prominently. In the background, a large, multi-tiered stone temple or pyramid is visible, partially obscured by other ruins. The overall atmosphere is one of historical grandeur and mystery.

TEAR *down your* IDOLS

lessons from the life of Gideon

Tearing Down Your Father's Idols

Introduction: Gideon pulled hard on the reins leading the bull forward, his heart pounding, sweat dripping from his forehead. The rope tightened. He could feel his pulse through the veins protruding from his temple. He led the bull in one final lurch, and the rope drew slack as the idol tumbled to the earth, shattering on impact. Gideon's heart jumped to his throat as he fell to the ground in exhaustion. But he pulled himself to his feet, gripping an axe tightly as he ran through the darkness toward the towering trees of sanctuary. In a voice filled with rage he commanded the servants to follow suit. He wielded his axe with reckless abandonment until all the trees lay horizontally. He transformed quickly from lumberjack to craftsman as he piled the rocks that lay around the hillside into an altar and stacked the timbers in squares on top of the altar. Once again he gripped his axe with hands that were swollen, bloody, and trembling. The bull was the perfect object of sacrifice. With care and urgency Gideon butchered the bull and laid it upon the altar. He then took a torch from a servant's hand and touched the flame to the wood. Although green, the wood blazed high into the blackness of the night. Gideon fell prostrate before the altar with his sweat soaked face buried in the earth. He breathed a deep sigh of relief and triumphantly whispered, *"I'm ready."*

Gideon was just about to go embark on a seemingly impossible journey with the Lord, but first he had to finish the task that God had given him.

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WEEK 1

Idol #1 Fear Judges 6:11-12

Proverbs 29:25 *“The fear of man bringeth a snare...”*

Before we can look at Gideon acting courageously we have to meet him as Scripture introduces him to us.

Gideon was an average Israelite, terrorized by a nomadic enemy, who, like grasshoppers, destroyed the resources of the nations they subdued. The Midianites, as they were called, were descendants of the Israelite patriarch Abraham through Keturah, Abraham’s wife after Sarah died. The name Midian means *“brawling or contentious”*, an accurate description of how they moved from city to city, plain to plain, and people to people consuming like locusts all that lay in their path.

The account of Gideon opens in Judges Chapter six with Gideon hiding while threshing his wheat. There was no valor or courage in his life at this time. He trembled as a coward in hopes of not being noticed by the enemy. As the curtain unfolds, Gideon demonstrates a life completely subdued by his father’s idols.

Gideon served the idol of fear. Gideon’s father, Joash, had given him every reason to be fearful. There were no acts of bravery from his father; rather, Dad abandoned the faith of the God of Israel to serve Baal. Worshipping the Lord God drew the ire of the enemy, so Joash removed the God of his ancestors, and constructed his own idol. Joash taught his family to be secretive and follow the path of least resistance. They couldn’t even prepare their meals without hiding.

Gideon’s fearful existence resulted in ordinary tasks being carried out in secret. Gideon was so overwhelmed by fear that God had to come to him in a place of hiding. Gideon hid behind a winepress under an oak tree. I am glad that God meets us where we are so that He can move us to a better place. A pathetic existence lives itself out behind a winepress under an oak tree.

Fear will bind your ability to serve God and narrow your vision, allowing you to focus only on your fear’s source. A life of victory with God means that we overcome fear.

1. What do you fear?

2. Is there a generational fear?

3. Why is it hard for you to overcome that fear?

4. What can you do to overcome that fear?

5. What might be your winepress or oak tree that you use to hide from what God wants you to do?

Idol #2 Human Reason Judges 6:7-10, 13

Isaiah 55:8 *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.”*

Gideon had accepted the idol of human reason from his father. Worshiping a God who could not be seen was too complicated for Joash. He liked worshipping something his mind could grasp. He made his own idol of Baal and grew his own grove of trees. This would be the religion and worship of his family and his town. Joash undoubtedly reasoned, *“I think this will work, this god makes sense.”*

When the angel spoke to Gideon, Gideon blamed God for everything that was wrong. *“If God had helped us we wouldn’t have these problems.”* Joash taught his son to blame God when things went wrong, even though he worshiped a different god. Gideon uses human reasoning to answer the dilemma that Israel found itself in oppression from the Midianites. He blamed God but did not accept Israel’s part in the wrong doing.

God where have you been? How can I trust you? Gideon forgot about God’s promises to Israel and missed the point as to why they were in captivity. God did not forget them, He was using the Midianites to punish them so that they would turn back to Him. Gideon failed to recognize God’s justice and his people’s failure. He comments, *“Why should I think you are going to help us now?”*

Mankind has married himself to the addiction of thought. *“I think”* pervades truth, replacing the idea *“I know”*. Every person must submit to some higher calling and higher authority. If we do not submit to what God tells us, then we are thinkers rather than knowers. Gideon wrestled with the words of the Lord, *“You are a mighty man of valor.”* Gideon shuddered at that thought. I think I am small, I think I am insignificant, I think I have little to offer. He told the Angel, *“I am the smallest person in the smallest house, in the smallest tribe of Israel.”*

Reasoning with God is the oldest trick in the book. Abraham tried reason when he said, *“How can I have a child I am one hundred years old and Sarah is ninety.”* Moses tried reason when he told God, *“I am not a good speaker.”* Israel reasoned with God when they said, *“The land is full of giants.”* In every case, what they thought eventually was dwarfed by what God knew. God knew Abraham would have a child with Sarah. God knew Moses could lead his people out of Egypt. God knew that the children of Israel would be given the land. And God knew Gideon would lead the people to victory over Midian.

1. Do you believe God can do great things through you?

2. Do you believe God wants to use you?

3. What can you see God using you to do?

4. How do you reason with God?

5. What are some thoughts you think that are not God's thoughts?

6. What is the thing you are reasoning with God about that you just need to believe Him in?

WEEK 2

Idol #3 Insecurity Judges 6:14-16, 27

Philippians 4:13, *"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."*

Parents teach more through actions than they do through words. This commonly known truth explains Gideon's insecurity. Joash (Gideon's Father) had many servants and controlled the local place of worship, however, he communicated to Gideon that they were small, insignificant people. Gideon's ability to exercise greatness had been veiled by the position in which Joash placed the family. Gideon had inaccurately portrayed himself to the angel. He told the angel his heritage was from a little tribe, and he was nobody in an insignificant family. He conveyed exactly what had been passed down to him. Gideon was insecure about who he was because his father had given him that idol. Why lie? Why would you want to be insignificant?

Gideon's insignificance was idol induced. There was no merit to his claims of insignificance. People that believe they have nothing to offer, offer nothing. The angel told Gideon he was a mighty man of valor. In any equation of life, my abilities plus me equal little or nothing. But when the equation is put together correctly, God plus me, this equals unlimited potential. When we evaluate our ability to do great things and remove God we will accomplish nothing. But when we are ready to hear and do what God says then we can accomplish anything God wants.

The message from the angel was pretty clear; Gideon was going to lead the people to victory over the Midianites. He was to squash the grasshoppers. Gideon was not satisfied with what he had been told, so he wanted proof. What greater evidence is needed than the Angel of the Lord speaking with you?

In his insecurity he asked the angel to give him a sign. Gideon secretly prepared a meal and set it before the angel. He set the meat inside bread and accompanied it with a nice hot broth. The angel told him to remove the meat from the bread and to pour the soup on the rock. When Gideon did as told, the angel stretched out his rod and touched the food, a flame consumed the meal and the angel disappeared. The angel's actions left Gideon standing alone with his jaw dropped to the ground, finally understanding what was happening. Gideon acknowledged, *"I have seen an angel of the Lord."* He was now beside himself, undone.

Gideon desired a sign and got a three dimensional demonstration. He had been in conversation with the Lord's angel: there was no doubt.

1. Has God ever spoken to you and His messages fallen on deaf ears?

2. What insecurities do you have?

3. What excuses have you given to God as to why you haven't been able to serve Him?

4. What might be something you can ask God for that will be your fleece?

5. What lies have you told God to show that you are not able to accomplish the task?

6. How has God spoken to you that you have not trusted to be true?

Idol #4 False Religion Judges 6:17-24

Amos 5:21 *"I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies."*

Gideon gained the courage to stand upright after his encounter with the Angel of the Lord. He brushed the rock gently with his hand to discover there was no residue; God had completely accepted the meal offering. The rocks were not hot to the touch; the acceptance of the sacrifice defied the laws of physics. Gideon quizzically looked to the sky and muttered toward Heaven, *"Now What?"*

God could have started Gideon off with any task to prove himself, but there was only one necessary task. Gideon had to go to his father's place of worship and tear down what his father had built with his own hands. He had to destroy the place his father had turned into a holy site for Baal.

Joash was one of God's people. Joash was supposed to serve the one and true God of Israel, but instead he got caught up in the worship of this false god. Gideon's statement about God ignoring Israel and putting them into subjection to a vile enemy was completely inaccurate. It was people like Joash who were responsible for Israel's oppression by the Midianites. If they were going to trust other gods, then let those gods save them. The time for delivery revealed itself, and the people still trusted the wrong god. Gideon had to break the cycle of idol worship to prepare for the victory.

Gideon had a perverted view of religion. God was someone or something he could question or even shake his fist at. The false religion of his father had confused Gideon as to how he should talk to God. As Gideon understood the messenger better, he was more capable of accepting the message.

We find Joash establishing false ideas about God, enabling worship to a false god, and entertaining others to be part of his religion. Idols are anything that takes the place of the true God. Submitting to any idea, practice, tradition, or way not consistent with God's stated Word is idol worship. False religion will work itself out in our lives through legalism, liberalism, and lethargy.

The false religion of legalism finds its piety in following rules and standards to gain favor with God. Gideon was a mighty man of valor because God had stated that fact. Gideon obeyed God, not to gain favor with God, but to follow the leading of God in His life. Legalism has ensnared many Christians today, who believe if they do certain things then God will love them more. This form of religion is as harmful as Baal worship. God desires our obedience, not so we can gain favor with Him, but because we have favor with Him. Legalism builds a structure of faith that man can look at and say if I do "x" "y" and "z"

then everything is good. The problem is God is not looking at the outward appearance He is looking at the heart (1Samuel 16:7). Legalism has deceived many into thinking their dress, hair, refusal of certain activities has set them on a higher plane with God. This is a false religion.

The false religion of Liberalism does not follow the full authority of Scripture, therefore picking and choosing what is necessary to follow and what is not. Liberalism conceals holiness and misuses liberty. Joash brought Baal to his family and people so that they could have a religion that suited their needs and made sense. Liberalism attempts to do the same by making religion acceptable to every opinion, which eventually leads to an absence of truth. Liberalism does not take God at His Word, rather it uses words which God has said for their own benefit. God will not tolerate any kind of faith that uses Him. He demands that we bow to Him. Israel was a conquered people because they were liberal in their worship of God thinking it could be done according to their own desires.

Lethargy has no place in the life of a true worshiper of God. Any religion that allows for lethargy has disassociated the sacrificial work of God for mankind from man's responsibility to live for Him. Laziness has no place in God's work. Only a false view of God would promote a lethargic spiritual life. To sit and do nothing scoffs at the work of God. Bogus faith is a stationary faith. A belief that pretends to hold to the right things but continues to sit on its backside scorns God and proves to be counterfeit. God is calling Gideon to action and as long as he hides behind a wine press under an oak tree he will be mired in his lethargy.

1. Do you struggle with a false view of God?

2. Is your religion keeping from God or drawing you closer to Him?

3. Do you struggle with Legalism, Liberalism, or Lethargy?

4. Is there a family idol that you struggle with?

5. Why should you follow God?

WEEK 3

Idol #5 Addiction

1Corinthians 9:27 *But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection:*

Today many people struggle with the idle of addiction. Alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, sex, caffeine, food, internet, and television can be dangerous idols. There is no such thing as a recreational idol worshiper and there are no recreational addictions. To participate on a regular basis with destructive and sinful activity categorizes an individual as an addict.

Joash was addicted to Baal. There were other false gods that people worshipped: Molech, to whom they offered their children in a fire, Ashteroth, whom they believed would bring them fertility, or Dagon, a god of power. Joash worshipped Baal, who was contrary in every way to the God of his people. Baal demanded worship but offered no peace, represented power but gave no liberty, and promised happiness but supplied no joy. Joash is never recorded in the Scriptures as turning from his idol even after his son found great victory in the LORD God. Baal took but never gave. Our LORD gave to us and asks us to receive.

The idol of addiction always offers great expectations with an empty reality. Getting high appeases the senses for a few moments but leaves a devastating wake of destruction. The need for the next high becomes the driving force in the addict's life. They never believe there is anything wrong because they are just making themselves feel better. To lose touch with reality and escape troubles, burdens and life through the use of a drug is in direct contrast to the commands of Scripture to keep a sober mind. Unstable faith has half a mind that needs to get high and half a mind that wants to follow the Lord. We cannot ride the fence of following God and being addicted to a substance. God wants all of your mind all of the time.

Alcoholism deadens the senses temporarily but brings long term pain and grief. Alcoholism comes in different forms. There are those who are alcohol dependent. They drink it regularly, not necessarily daily. They simply need it. Then there are those who are alcohol abusers. They don't need it, they just like it. They don't get drunk often but when they do they tend to binge. The thing is when they use it they go numb. They drink hard because they enjoy the buzz. These people disregard the clear commands in scripture to not be drunk with wine. When we disobey God and continue with addictions we become slaves to those things.

Pornography may excite the senses for a minute but in the long run decency dies. Sexual sins are born out of selfish ambitions. There is pleasure in sin for a season but those who continue in sin prove they are not children of God (1John 3:6, 8 5:18). The sins of the flesh which we are identifying are all idols of addiction. Idols of addiction not only lie about results they leave individuals void of joy with a muddy morality.

Some are addicted to cigarettes, caffeine, a type of food, or even certain social media outlets. How do you know it is just something you enjoy or something you are addicted to? Do you lose sight of the things that are essential in your life, the real important things? Anything that pulls you away from God, Church, family, or friends may be showing itself to be an idol.

Addiction is not an incurable disease. It can be remedied by the help of the Lord Jesus Christ. Before the idol of addiction can be conquered it must be identified. All addicts must admit to bowing before the idol of addiction.

1. Do you have an addiction?

2. Are you willing to confess your addiction and own it?

3. What positive steps can you take to conquer your addiction?

WEEK 4

Identifying idols is very important, but that is just the beginning of gaining victory in our lives. The next step is tearing those idols down. Before you can begin focusing on tearing the idols down you must have clearly identified them. There are many idols in this life. Anything that diverts your time and attention from Christ is an idol. Be truthful with yourself before God. Identify your idols. Now, let's explore tearing these idols down.

Look back at how this Bible study opened and read that first paragraph again.

Tearing down Idols Judges 6:25-28

2Corinthians 10:4, *"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;"*

Gideon's process for tearing the idols down wasn't brash, but it was obedient. Gideon waited for the cover of night. He tied a rope around his father's idol and connected the other end to his father's bull. Gideon's mind raced as he started urging the bull forward. *"Dad is going to kill me. God said He is going to use me. God, as I pull this idol down I submit to You. My strength will have to come from You because I am in a position now where I am leaving everything I know to follow You."* Crash! The idol tumbled to the ground, breaking into pieces. Gideon picked up his axe and told his servants to join him in cutting down the grove of trees which for so long had provided a sanctuary for rebellious religious practice. He took the wood from the trees and stacked it on an altar he had made from loose rocks. He took the bull, killed it, and offered it as a sacrifice. Right then Gideon experienced a weight fall from his life. The idols of Joash had been broken, and submission to God had been built up in his life.

When dealing with tearing down idols there will always be an instrument the Lord will give to help you gain victory. Gideon used his father's bull and servants. God's Word will always be an indispensable tool. The Holy Spirit will be a constant voice. God will use sermons, Bible studies, books, and Christian leaders as valuable assets in tearing down your idols. Prayer is the one tool that must accompany all others as you go about tearing down the idols. God told Gideon that he must use his father's bull and today he tells us that we must use prayer as we go about the tearing down process.

In Gideon's case he had to make a real sacrifice with a valuable asset that belonged to his father. The task wasn't completed with removing the idol; sacrifice had to take place. To remove the idol and let the space lie empty is an open invitation for the idol to return. The only way to secure long term success is through sacrifice.

Gideon offered his father's bull as the sacrifice. He used the wood from the grove to burn the sacrifice. In order for victory to take full effect it is necessary to deal with the idol and offer a sacrifice in its place. If we remove idols but never offer sacrifice we will reinstate them. Gideon not only had to tear down the problem his family had, but make a statement about what was right. Even though he did it in the cover of night, he did it. He also left the burnt sacrifice in the place as a statement; Baal must be removed and God exalted for victory to be won.

Tearing down idols simply is not enough; God wants you to replace the idol with sacrifice to Him. For the liar, truth needs to be the sacrifice. For the addict they need to offer the sacrifice of satisfaction in the Lord. The fearful need a sacrifice of courage. The insecure need an understanding of God's plan as their sacrifice. The worshipper of false religion needs to offer a commitment to submit to God's Word alone.

You may be holding back the victory of God in your life because you are clinging to your father's idol. You may be experiencing set back after set back because you are embracing the idols handed down to you by the previous generation. Tear that idol down! Offer sacrifice to God in its place! Face the consequences of obeying God and live in victory. Before Gideon could become great he had to be obedient. Before you will do anything great you must be obedient.

When Gideon woke up the next morning he was a different person. His life was no longer filled with idols; he was now victorious. Every person that has ever walked the face of this earth has an innate desire to be a victor. God wants to make you that person. Before He will, the idols must come down. Follow the example of Gideon and allow Christ to grant you the victory.

1. What specifically do you need to do to tear down the family idol?

2. What is the specific thing you need to sacrifice?

3. Is there someone you need to call, go to, or meet with to help accomplish this daunting task?

4. What specific action can you take to build up a sacrifice to God in the place of the idol in your life?

THE KEY TO GAINING VICTORY

Sacrifice Judges 6:29-32

Ps 51:17 *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart,*

Gideon was not only to tear the idol down, God demanded that He offer a sacrifice in its place. Idols that are removed need to be replaced. God said that Sacrifice needed to be built in the place of Joash's idol. Sacrifice is the KEY TO VICTORY over our idols.

The twenty first century culture has a hard time understanding sacrifice. The bull that Gideon offered was a healthy, vibrant, strong, living creature. Gideon slit the bull's throat causing it to bleed out, and once it was dead he skinned it and cut out the meat, kidneys, heart and liver. By the time the sacrifice was ablaze, the object of sacrifice was decimated.

The sacrifice was not complete until it had been consumed by the fire. Every part had to be offered to God and accepted by God for the sacrifice to take effect. In our culture sacrifice doesn't mean giving all, it usually means accepting less. Our culture defines sacrifice as giving up some or little, calling that surrender. The ancient meaning of sacrifice needs to be our practice.

Sacrifices carry three difficult parts:

First, sacrifice necessitates death. When an idol in your life is torn down, you have to kill it. Galatians 2:20, *"For I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I live, I live by the faith of the Son of God Who loved me and gave Himself for me."* If you allow the idol to have any life then it will take over again. As a Christian you are dead to all other gods and alive in Jesus Christ. He doesn't just make you alive to Himself, you are alive in Him. Jesus is not going to share the space of your life and so you need to make sure you are sacrificing your idol, making sure it is dead.

The second absolutely important act in sacrifice is brokenness. All sacrifices were prepared through a process of dismantling. The Levitical code required certain portions laid on the altar for specific kinds of sacrifice. Gideon had to break the sacrifice by cutting it into pieces and removing the skin.

When we are broken before God He can fix us. The great repairer of lives only fixes those who are broken. Jesus said that He came to save sinners, the sick, because the healthy have no need of a physician. When we are broken, God will put our life pieces in an order that will create a better picture than we could have imagined. He builds a masterpiece that bears His image instead of the mess of our design. If we aren't broken there is nothing there for Him to reconstruct. Allow Him to turn your life's script into an epic of His grace by being broken before Him.

The third aspect necessary for sacrifice is that it is totally consumed. Gideon's sacrifice was a burnt offering. Every part of the sacrifice would have been put on the altar and burnt completely. When sacrificing the idols in our lives we must offer whole burnt offerings to Him. If any part of the sacrifice is left for us to keep in our life, then the seed of that will come back stronger than ever. The fire of God's forgiveness will consume the idol as long as we keep it on the altar long enough for it to be consumed.

Gideon went in the dark of night, left the sacrifice for all to see, and waited for God to completely consume it. The men of the city knew who had torn the idol down because the sacrifice pointed to Gideon. He was completely free of his father's idol.

1. What aspect of Sacrifices is the easiest for you personally to embrace?

2. What aspect of Sacrifice is hardest for you to embrace?

3. Why might you find yourself resisting offering the sacrifice?

WEEK 5

The Proofs of Victory:

Proof #1 Taking a Stand Judges 6:31-35

Ezekiel 22:30 *And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land*

The morning after Gideon had offered his sacrifice, the men of the city were outraged. They banded together with steam rising from their heads in the cool morning air. The peace of the birds' serenade was interrupted by shouts for revenge. The mob quickly turned their accusatory finger and stuck it in the center of Gideon's chest.

The men of the city wanted to kill Gideon. When you obey God and your obedience causes conflict with those living in disobedience, you know you are victorious. Gideon could have been hanged that day by the angry mob and died in victory. Joash exercised restraint as he declared, *"Let Baal avenge himself, if he is a god let him plead against Gideon."* Gideon's actions had led his father to an important conclusion; the real God will take care of Himself. What good is God if he cannot avenge his own destruction?

Then Joash changed Gideon's name to Jerubbaal, *"let Baal plead."* Gideon was living in victory because Baal could not judge or plead against him. Gideon had torn down his father's idol and lived to tell about it. If he could do that, now he could follow through with the rest of God's plan.

Gideon was transformed from being scared, and in solitude, into a man of action. Gideon picked up a horn and sounded the call to Manasseh, his homeland, and the neighboring tribes of Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali. He had been hiding out in fear; now he stood and sent a message. He had been in solitude; now he called for men to meet with him. He had been satisfied but now he wanted change. This is the transforming work that God can and will do in your life. God wants us to live in triumph even before He gives us ultimate victory.

While the men came to prepare for battle, Gideon sought God's assurance. Often times we look at Gideon seeking a sign with the fleece as a lack of faith. I believe Gideon acted in complete faith. He had already called the men to meet with him. He had already taken his stand. He simply made sure God was standing with Him.

Gideon cast his fleece twice, but not until he had already started the work. Victory was promised, but Gideon reeled from the thought that it would come

from his leadership. God does great things, and He uses people to get them done. Gideon's question wasn't "if" God could give them the victory; it was, "Will you save Israel by my hand?"

Gideon's fleece stayed dry the first night and got wet the next morning just as he asked because God wanted to bolster Gideon's confidence.

As long as we stand in obedience, God will give us the encouragement that we need.

When we stand for God He always proves to be faithful. After tearing down the idols in our life and sacrificing to God in their place we can stand. When we stand, God will confirm His work over and over again. There is no sweeter place of peace, more complete life of stability, or greater hope for the future than standing for God.

Proof #2 Little is More Judges 7:1-8

1Corinthians 1: 27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

The trumpet sounded by Gideon was well received. As Gideon stood, several men from all over stepped out of hiding and met to engage the enemy in battle. Men with families left their homes to join arms. The call was brash and the attitude refreshing. Gideon had requested for men to gather, and many stepped up to the challenge.

Thirty two thousand men stood before Gideon. Gideon was so grateful that an army had assembled, but before a prayer of thanks could be offered, God came to Gideon and said, "There are too many men. Tell those who are afraid to go home." A problem manifested itself to God; He didn't want the people to gain courage in numbers. Gideon obediently began the meeting with a simple announcement, "All those who are fearful and afraid may go home." Twenty two thousand men departed.

The balloon deflated quickly. Gideon must have looked as if he had been punched in the gut and had the wind knocked out of him. God desired to use men prepared for victory to fight. Those still bowing to the idol of fear would be worthless for this task. Gideon bit his lip ready for what might come next.

We live in a world governed by fear. People conduct business out of fear, go to church in fear, live their relationships in fear, and look to the future in fear. When there is victory to be won God will not use those who are serving fear.

More than two thirds of Gideon's army dissipated. Granted they were going to fight in a battle where they may lose their life, but God does not use the fearful.

In Revelation 21:8, there is a description of the people that will not be in heaven. I always associate the unbelieving as being the first type of person who will not be in heaven. The greatest characteristic of being lost should be unbelief. No, it is the fearful who top God's list. Fearful comes first, then unbelieving. God knew that those men who were fearful didn't have the fortitude to fight his battle. As long as fear possesses a spirit, victory cannot be theirs. God purged the fearful before they could poison the troops.

God looked at the army and said, *"It's still too many."* The people were taken down to the water and told to drink. Those who were careless and stuck their heads in the water and lapped like a dog were separated from those who knelt and pulled the water up to their mouths. Three hundred men knelt, and these men were chosen as God's army. The careless were sent home.

When God looks to give victory, those who are careless show they are unworthy. Gideon's army started at thirty two thousand and ended at less than one tenth its original size as an army of three hundred. God is victorious in the small. His strength is more clearly seen in the little.

Today popular church movements are judged by how many people back the idea. The success of a church is gauged by how many people attend. The power of a conference is determined by the number of people in association. This is not how God dealt with Gideon. He wanted to do great things with the number of people who were prepared. God uses the little. If we are not little in our own sight we are too big for God to use and will once again be in the position of needing to tear down idols.

WEEK 6

Proof #3 Confidence Judges 7:9-15

Pr 3:26 *For the LORD shall be thy confidence*

In the night time after Gideon has sent home thirty one thousand seven hundred men God comes to Gideon. He tells Gideon to go down into the valley where the Midianites are camped and take in what is going on. He also tells Gideon that if it will help him be less afraid to take his servant Phurah with him. Much bravery was called upon to go down into the heart of the enemy and snoop around. Gideon does what God allows and takes Phurah with him.

God never asks us to do more than what we are able to do. Gideon has grown so much in such a short time. He has become victorious in his attitude and actions. He is still obeying the Lord even after the Lord trimmed his army down in size. The Lord is sending him to the valley to be strengthened and encouraged and so the instructions allow for a person of courage to go with him.

The world is need of Phurah type people, those who will go to the valley with us even when it is crawling with the enemy. These are the kind of people that we need to link ourselves to. The Lord knew just what I needed when He chose a wife for me. There have been many times in the ministry where God has sent us to the valley.

When they went into the valley they found the Midianites and the Amelakites with them were large in number. Their resources were abundant as they had stripped their enemies naked. Gideon and Phurah cautiously navigated their way into the rows of tents and anxiously listened for useful information. They over heard some soldiers talking outside their tent and gained insight as to how God had already won the victory. One soldier said to the other, *"I had a dream and saw a barley loaf come from the mountain and it fell on the tents of Midian and laid them flat."* The other replied, *"This is none other than Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel. It is in his hand that the Lord has given Midian and all the host."*

Gideon had to feel much better. The little guy hiding out threshing his wheat was striking fear in the hearts of the mighty army of Midian. They considered him a man of Israel. The description the angel had given Gideon, *"a mighty man of valor"* had been written on the hearts of his enemies. Victory had been given to Gideon and they hadn't even entered the battle. God in His unique sovereignty prepares the way for us.

Gideon was confident and ready for battle. His men were positive and secure when Gideon and Phurah shared what they had heard. Victory was theirs, now

they only needed to take it. The place they were at that moment is where God wants us to live our entire life. Victory is secured now we need only believe it and live in it.

God has written the final pages of human history in the book of Revelation to tell us that those who trust Christ win. The devil will be tormented forever in the lake of fire and evil will be done away with and death, sickness, and pain will be gone. God will make all things new and we will enjoy the splendor of Heaven. We are victorious!

Live in the victory that God has given to you as a Christian! There is no peace, joy, or spiritual rest in serving an idol. Tear down the idols, offer sacrifice, and take in the proof of God's working.

The Battle:

Judges 7:16-25

Three weapons of an unconventional nature were given to Gideon and his men. They were given a trumpet, a water pitcher, and a lamp. Gideon's men did not quit when they were given their weapons because they were not fearful. They did not gripe when told how to use them because they were aware of what God had already told them, they would win.

They were given trumpets to make a great noise. When Jesus came down from the Mount of Olives riding triumphantly into Jerusalem in Luke 19 the Pharisees told Jesus to silence the people who were crying out "*Hosanna! Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord!*" Jesus responds in verse 40 that if they didn't cry out the rocks would. It is always man's duty to proclaim with a great noise the praise of the Lord. Romans 14:11 and Philippians 2:10 both tell us that every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord.

Gideon's men used the trumpet to wake up those who were asleep, confuse those who were awake and draw attention to the statement to follow the trumpets noise. They shouted, "*The sword of the Lord and Gideon.*" The people who were already afraid of Gideon were now reckless in their response. They could not see and they were under attack so they started killing anything they saw. In the process the Midianites and Amelekites killed off their own army. The trumpet sound preceded victory.

Someday a trumpet will sound and the dead in Christ will rise first and then we who are alive and remain at the coming of Christ will be caught up together to meet them in the air (1Thessalonians 4:16-17, Matthew 24:29-31). That trumpet sound comes before His return to claim His own and punish the world for its

wrong. The trumpet that Gideon's men sounded was the precursor to victory as well. Those trumpets were more valuable than swords because God was behind the trumpets. Those trumpets were more deadly than arrows and spears because they carried the noise of a victory that God had promised.

Does your life sound the trumpet call? Are you entering the battle with this world armed with a voice of testimony that will cause the evil enemy to flee? Are you proclaiming victory or living in defeat?

The water pitcher and lamp are both representative of Jesus Christ as the living water and the light of the world. The water pitcher though, was used to conceal the light of the lamp until the proper time. It was about three in the morning and the guard shifts were changing. Gideon told his men to spread out around the valley on the mountain tops. When he gave the signal they were to break the pitcher hold up the light, blow the trumpet and shout, "The sword of the Lord and Gideon." When the people in the valley heard the trumpet and looked up they were blinded by the light and were unable to discern friend and foe. They killed each other off. The lamp was not shown to give the enemy light but to blind them. John 1:5 tells us that the light shines in darkness and the darkness does not comprehend it. Sometimes the light blinds. Jesus came to His own and His own did not receive Him. The light when it is not received does not prove to be useful, to the contrary it proves to be confusing.

The water pitcher and lamp are useless weapons by themselves but when used according to God's purpose they became lethal. We are so focused on things of the earth and the stuff of this world that we often don't see the real tools God has given us to know victory. We have the light, as the Psalmist said, "*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.*" Jesus is the light of the world that lights everyone who comes into the world, and we are the light of the world because He shines His light on us (John 1:9, Matthew 5:14). We need to use our light as a weapon to invade the darkness. The lamp and the pitcher are unconventional but effective parts of the arsenal God gives.

The aim for us isn't knowing how to use these tools specifically but to understand that whatever God gives us, whether it makes sense or not, is to be used for His glory. Victory belonged to Gideon and his men before the battle started because God was with them. Gideon and his men had the fortitude to use the unconventional weapons as they were told, which made the source of the victory obvious, it was God's. God wants you to live a life of victory. Are you willing to be engaged in the battles of His choosing? His plans might not make sense to you but when we follow them we are always victorious. Be a mighty person of valor and allow your life to bring glory to the Lord Jesus Christ.

12TH STREET BAPTIST CHURCH



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making a difference

OUR DEACONS

Ray Berry

Don Kilburn

Robert Price

Clayton Hisler

Don Lewis

Bo Roberts

Phil Karr

Gary Stephenson

WORSHIP SERVICES

Sunday School 10am

Sunday Worship 11am

Wednesday Evening 6:30pm

- classes for all ages and nursery available -

WILL YOU ACCEPT CHRIST AS YOUR PERSONAL SAVIOR TODAY?

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

ROMANS 3:23

There is none righteous no not one.

ROMANS 3:10

*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

ROMANS 6:23

*But God demonstrated His love toward us, in that,
while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

ROMANS 5:8

**IF YOU HAVE TAKEN CHRIST AS YOUR PERSONAL SAVIOR,
PLEASE LET US KNOW OF YOUR DECISION SO WE CAN REJOICE WITH YOU**