



God's Call To The Small

Sermons Presented By Stephen McIntyre
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I would like to share with you about God's call to the small. God has many problems. Did you ever think about that? I invite you to turn in your Bibles to **Judges Chapter 6**. Here we find that Israel has prospered for forty years (**Verse 1**). There was food on the table, and the oxen were not in the repair shop and things were going smooth. The kids were behaving. But again the Israelites did evil. They got out their idols and dusted them off and started bowing down to them. And so, times got hard. Their investments went south, and the kids started misbehaving and their enemies came in like a herd of hungry locusts. Finally the people cried out for help.

God had a problem. You see, God serves as the chairman of the nominating committee in heaven. God needs to choose deliverers, and the pickings were pretty slim. He needed to find a qualified leader to rescue His people from the Midianites. And so, God did a talent search. He came up with a whole country full of nobodies. There was nobody qualified. Yet God had to choose somebody. And so God chose a farm boy and made a nobody into a somebody. And God is good at that. And I just really feel that God has selected you and I in that same way.

GIDEON WAS THE UNLIKELY HERO

Gideon was just like you or me. He was ordinary and average. God specializes in making a specialist out

of somebody who is a nothing. Our God does not start looking in Hollywood or on Parliament Hill . God scouts in the backyards of life and He finds leaders.

God found Gideon. The miracle is that Gideon became one of the top heroes of all Israel. Before we start reading in **Judges 6**, let me read you in the hall of fame over in **Hebrew 11**. Here's what it says about our subject for today. **Hebrews 11:32, "And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets."** These were God's heroes. And Gideon was one of those heroes.

What do we see in Gideon?

1. Gideon was a Coward. Judges 6:11, "Now the Angel of the Lord came and sat under the terebinth tree which was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress, in order to hide it from the Midianites.."Why was he threshing wheat in a wine press? He was doing that because he was fearful. He was a coward, maybe, he was afraid. Verse 2 says God's people were living in caves, mountain clefts, and crude hidden shelters. Sounds like the time of trouble doesn't it? It was not good.

He is afraid of his cousins. His cousins were the Midianites. And who were the Midianites? They were cousins from Abraham's other wife, Keturah(**Gen 25:1-2**). The Midianites had afflicted God' s people for seven long years (1198-1191BC).They more or less held them captive. They had big impressive camels. These were awesome and the people of God were afraid. The Midianites were a rich people because each camel wore expensive necklaces around it's neck (**8:21**). They liked to decorate up their tanks.

The entire nation was frail, frightened, and fettered. And so was Gideon. But heaven can't use stealth Christians to do spiritual warfare. He had to come out and stand publicly for God. Gideon needed to take his stand and so God had to do a little molding and fashioning of this leader to make him into a good leader.

The numerous nomadic bullies used to come by every year, swoop down on Israel, seize their crops and take their food, their grain, their meat, their animals and take them off. And, anything they could not remove, these nomadic tribes would burn so that there was nothing left behind. Scorched earth would be about it. They left behind a lot of suffering, a lot of starvation and a lot of fear about the next time they would return.

So Gideon was hiding down there inside of that winepress. Winepresses in those days were carved out of stone. They would find an area that they couldn't plow. It was stony and rocky and they would carve out a winepress, fill it full of grapes, tramp down on those grapes. The juice would come out and go into a lower area which was called the wine vat. And that's where Gideon was. He was in the bottom of the vat, in the bottom of the barrel, striking the wheat with a stick, working as quietly as possible. He's afraid. He's scared to death. Suddenly he hears this booming voice from up above, he looks up and there is this stranger and he thinks, "Oh no! They've got me. I've had it. The Midianites have come." But it's not the Midianites. It's an angel. Imagine the rush of adrenalin he felt when the Angel suddenly broke the silence. The Angel came directly to Gideon's hiding place. Can we be found hiding in a winepress today? Remember that God knows where you are. Never forget that.

What else do we see in Gideon?

2. Gideon was Common. **Judges 6:15**, **"So he said to Him, "O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house."** He was probably the youngest. His dad, Joash, and other sons were not there apparently. The other boys were not even at home because they had all been captured by the Midianites on previous raids. Only Gideon the youngest was left. Gideon says to God, "You have the wrong address! I am a nobody. Don't pick me. We are poor. I am the runt of our family, the youngest." And yet it is the helpless that God is most able to help.

Would you or I choose Gideon? Sin infested his father's house (**Verse 25**). Look at this. You can read this in the book of Judges. There were idols there. Perhaps you've read this before. They were worshipping idols. Gideon's father was an idolater. He had an idol to Baal. He had an evil Asherah Pole, and they were active right in their own back yard in their own property. And these two gods were suppose to be the gods of peace, prosperity and safety. And yet the people were suffering under the scourge of the Midianites of difficulty, deprivation and distress. They were suffering from the very things the idols were suppose to be good at eradicating. Their false gods had utterly failed them. Yet they continued in idol worship! Although things were gravely wrong in Gideon's home, God knew Gideon's heart! Apparently God in His talent search looks for people who can be molded to forsake and stand up against sin - even in there own home!

4. Gideon was discouraged. Notice in **Judges 6:13** he complains to God, **"Gideon said to Him, 'O my lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us?'"** The Lord has abandoned us. Do you think he was discouraged? Absolutely. But Gideon was wrong. Had God abandoned His people? Does God ever abandon you? It is you who abandons God. Have you mimicked Gideon? You may say: "If God is with me, why am I almost bankrupt? Why did I fail my exam? If God is really with me, why are things going so bad? Why did I come down with this terrible condition that I have? Why am I in all this pain? Why are my kids going over fools hill? God has abandoned me!" The truth is that God has not forsaken us but God is searching for us - He is calling us to service for His kingdom and His Glory. Gideon problems eclipsed his view of God.

5. Gideon was devoid of the Holy Spirit. When the angel found him where was he? He was threshing wheat down inside the winepress threshing wheat. **Verse 11** says he was there to keep the Midianites from finding his wheat. Now, how do you thresh wheat? You hit it to take the chaff off of that precious grain. And then you throw it up in the air so the wind blows the chaff away and yet, he's down in the bottom of the barrel. Do you see what he's doing here? Gideon is working without the wind. What is the wind a symbol of? The Holy Spirit! - **John 3:8**, **"The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."**Gideon was trying to do it on his own power.

6. Gideon's Trust was defective. Look at the story of the fleece. The Midianites had fleeced his faith! Over and over he responds to God by saying: "But, but, but, what about.. How can I.. If, If.." Look at **Judges 6:36-38**, **"So Gideon said to God, "If You will save Israel by my hand as You have said 37 look, I shall put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said. 38 And it was so. When he rose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece together, he**

wrung the dew out of the fleece, a bowlful of water.” This should have made him jubilant!

But old Gideon still doubts. He thought, "Wool tends to absorb water. Let's reverse the test tonight. **Judges 6:39, 40, "Then Gideon said to God, "Do not be angry with me, but let me speak just once more: Let me test, I pray, just once more with the fleece; let it now be dry only on the fleece, but on all the ground let there be dew. 40 And God did so that night. It was dry on the fleece only, but there was dew on all the ground.** Can you learn anything of God's character here? Isn't God remarkable? God is able to help us and bend over backwards to help relieve our fears. Notice how patient He is!

Gideon did not throw out the fleece to determine God's will. A lot of people say, "Well, I need to throw out the fleece to figure out what I'm supposed to do." No, he already knew what God's will was. Why did he throw out the fleece? He put out the fleece to be reassured that God would go with him. If you want to know God's will just ask for it! He will reveal His will to you over time through precious things like the Scriptures. Just ask Him. God will enlighten you in His way and in His time.

I want to focus on what God saw in Gideon, not what we see. All I see is a coward and a discouraged man and a man who is not qualified. What did God see in Gideon? Obviously God saw more than we do. Would our church nominating committee ever choose Gideon. He didn't have any qualifications. But God did! God chose him. Why would God do that? **I Samuel 16:7, "But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have refused him (Referring to Eliab). For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."**

Now look at what God saw. **God saw The Seeds of Success** in Gideon.

1. Look at **Judges 6:12**. What is the very first thing the angel says? He calls him a mighty warrior. God saw a Mighty Warrior! At that point, was Gideon a mighty warrior? No. Maybe a warrior in the bud. That's about all. God sees a mighty warrior in Gideon. He wasn't one yet. But that's what God saw.

God sees the potential in each of us. God looks at what we might become and not what we are. God sees a mighty warrior in you!

2. I believe that God saw **Gideon was Hard worker**. Where was Gideon? He was threshing wheat. He had not given up-He was doing all he could. He was out there working instead of grumbling about how bad things were. He was doing something about it. His crop had matured early. He had planted his crops early and he had gotten them in and harvested before anybody else. He was a hard worker. He was aggressive. Instead of sitting by groaning over his plight, he did all he could. He was not lazy. God chooses busy people to be His leaders. Did you ever hear the expression - "If you want something to get done - Ask a busy person?"

3. **Gideon was Humble. Now, he was common, he was ordinary and he was humble.** In a chain, he would have been the weakest link. He was the baby of the family. In many societies the first born son has the most jurisdiction and the youngest the least. He was an unknown, he was inconsequential. His town was nothing. His family was not distinguished. His father was a nobody. They were the poorest folk in town. The Bible says he was the least, and he was the least of the least. And he was the person God

chose.

Gideon was hiding down in the bottom of the barrel. God's angel came along and found this young man down in the bottom of the lowest level of a stone winepress. What an unlikely candidate! Yet these things are the exact qualifications God is looking for in choosing His heroes. God looks for someone small enough and weak enough and then He makes them into his celebrities. **Luke 1:52, "He has put down the mighty from their thrones, And exalted the lowly."**

4. **Gideon was Willing to be used.** He didn't say, "Well, no, I will not do this." Gideon was yielded to God. True greatness is not based so much your IQ. It does not depend on your rank in society. It does not depend on your beauty or your wealth. It depends on your willingness and your connection with God. Success comes from quality of character and Godly commitment. **Judges 6:14, "Then the Lord turned to him and said, "Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?"** He was called, he was sent of God. Never forget that. Gideon knew that God had spoken to him. That means a lot, doesn't it. Simply go in your own strength and I will give you success. You become a success when you partner with God. When you have that relationship with God then you will be successful.

5. **Gideon was Obedient.** He Did exactly what God said. Once he was sure it was God talking to him, he began to act. **Judges 6:25, "Now it came to pass the same night that the Lord said to him, Take your father's young bull, the second bull of seven years old, and tear down the altar of Baal that your father has, and cut down the wooden image that is beside it."** They had a bull that was seven years old. For seven long years they had successfully hidden this bull from the Midianite scouts and managed to have it for work around the place. This is the identical same time that the nation had been suffering from the worst economic depressions ever. Don't miss the fact that God knows each animal in your barn. He knows how old it is. He knows your resources. And God simply asked that this prized asset be used to advance His kingdom. Gideon was willing and immediately obeyed. That's the type of a leader God chose. **Judges 6:26, "And build an altar to the Lord your God on top of this rock in the proper arrangement, and take the second bull and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the image which you shall cut down."**

Gideon did that. Gideon was not afraid to do God's will.

Gideon was afraid of what would happen, but his commitment to God was stronger than his fears of his friends. Gideon woke up ten of his trusted servants and obeyed God's command. He tore down the idol and burned the poles and sacrificed the bull. God looks for people who will trust Him and obey Him. **(Verses 28-32)**The next morning his father woke up to the noise of a rioting mob in his yard. The town men were there to demand retribution for the destruction of these idols. They wanted to lynch Gideon. When you obey God you face ridicule and trouble. Gideon's dad had to quickly decide between his idols and his only surviving son. He quieted the yelling mob and said: Don't attempt to defend Baal. If Baal is god, then don't take away Baal's right to punish Gideon. Let Baal defend himself.

6. **Gideon was responsible.** **Judges 6:12, 13, "And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him, and said to him, "The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor!"** Notice Gideon's response in **verse 13, "Gideon said to Him, "O my lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us?"** God says, "I am with you." And Gideon says, If the Lord is with us, then why has all this happened

to us?" See how he links himself with his people? He's responsible. He assumes personal responsibility for them.

7. The Holy Spirit empowered him. That's the reason for his success. **Judges 6:34, "But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon; then he blew the trumpet, and the Abiezrites gathered behind him."** How shocked he must have been when over thirty thousand men showed up to follow him. "I can't believe all these people came." But they were there. And God gave him success. Gideon was truly a man of God. If God calls you then God will empower you. You will be successful.

I believe today that God is an expert at taking ordinary people and making them into something extraordinary. The sky is the limit on what God can do with you if you are totally surrendered to His will. God is on a warrior search today. Has He called you to be a mighty warrior? You may say, "I'm not a mighty warrior. But you are in His sight, because if God taps you on the shoulder, if God calls you, God will also provide the power for you to become what He has selected you to be. When He comes your way, be a Gideon!