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## Gideon: The Courage to Lead Beyond Comfort

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- “We live in an age of spiritually timid and lackluster men, for whom the very concept of bold leadership is anathema.”

-- Los Angeles Times, "Whatever Happened to the Public Heroes of Yesterday?"

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### **The Need for Heroes – Judges 6:1-3**

*And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years. And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel: and because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them the dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds. And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them;*

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### **The Need for Heroes – Judges 6:4-6**

*And they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it. And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the LORD.*

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### **The Need for Heroes**

- The Israelites had been oppressed for the last 7 years.
- A once-great nation now was powerless and insignificant.
- The nation had compromised with the world and other religions and lost the blessing of God.
- Instead of standing for right, they had become part of the “spit and whittle” club.

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### **THE KIND OF PERSON GOD USES**

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### **God uses unlikely candidates**

- Heroes seldom see themselves as heroes.
- Gideon was threshing wheat in a hidden place so that no one would come and steal the wheat.
  - Wanted to avoid conflict
  - Wanted to preserve what he had
  - Wasn't interested in having to act heroic that day

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### **God sees our potential**

- Judges 6:11-12 -- *And there came an angel of the LORD, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites. And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, **thou mighty man of valor.***

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### **God uses those who do not think highly of themselves**

- Judges 6:13-14 -- *And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, **if** the LORD be with us, **why** then is all this befallen us? and **where** be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.*

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### **God uses those who do not think highly of themselves (2)**

- Judges 6:14-15 -- *And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee? And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, **wherewith (how)** shall I save Israel? behold, **my family is poor** in Manasseh, and **I am the least** in my father's house.*

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### **God uses those who make worship their first priority**

- Judges 6:17-20


- Prepared a kid, unleavened cakes, broth (significant preparation – a meal)
  - Obeyed the instructions of the Lord
    - Put it on the rock
    - Pour it out
    - (Not what you usually do with a well-prepared meal; took humility to obey)
  - Recognized God – *Jehovah-Shalom*
- 13  **God uses those who make worship their first priority (2)**
- Recognized God – *Jehovah-Shalom*
  - Built an altar there to worship God
    - In a day and time when many had altars to other gods in their own back yard
- 14  **God uses those who get things right at home first**
- Obeyed God's instructions to begin by cleansing his own home (6:25).
    - His father had an altar to Baal and also worshiped Ashtoreth (fertility goddess – the meaning of the “groves”)
    - Tore it down at night to avoid conflict with his father's hired hands
  - Built a second altar to symbolize that worship to Baal was over!
- 15  **God uses those who value obedience more than popularity**
- His actions made the men of town unhappy – they were going to kill him.
  - Surprisingly, his own father defends him.
  - Gideon gets a nickname – Jerubaal (“let Baal plead against him”)
    - But Gideon was on God's side!
- 16  **God uses those who seek reassurance in Him**
- Better than having self-confidence.
  - Gideon's fleece-laying (6:36-40) is not to determine the will of God. It is to confirm the will of God.
    - He is not seeking knowledge of God's will.
    - He is seeking reassurance and encouragement in God's will.
- 17  **God uses those who find Him alone sufficient**
- Gideon and 32,000 men travel north toward the enemy camp of 135,000.
  - They stop at a spring to drink and prepare for battle.
  - God wants the glory and says that 32,000 is too many!
    - The fearful are told to leave – 22,000 go home.
- 18  **God uses those who are spiritually alert**
- Still too many for God, so He proposes a test.
    - God would only keep those who demonstrated the character quality of alertness and who understood that warfare was serious business.
    - Men had to keep one hand on sword, both eyes open and lap water out of their hand
    - Others sent home (too focused on themselves)
- 19  **God uses those without false bravado**
- Force cut to 300 men
  - Now God knows Gideon needs reassurance (7:9-11)
    - Gideon takes a servant and sneaks into the enemy camp
    - He hears soldiers talking of a dream; the enemy soldiers are frightened of Gideon! (This was a work of the Lord!)
- 20  **God uses those who use His battle plans**
- **Glorify God**
    - Use 300 men to surround enemy of 135,000
  - **Shine the light** -- Take pitchers off the lamps to shine 300 bright lights
  - **Praise God and call men to action**
    - Blow the trumpets (praise and call to battle)
  - **Destroy what hides the light** -- Smash the pitchers (will not hide the light again)
  - **Leave it to God** -- Enemy self-destructs (7:22)
- 21  **HOW TO LEAD BEYOND YOUR COMFORT**

22  **1 Corinthians 16:13-14**

- Instructions for becoming stout-hearted Christians:
- *Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity.*

23  **1. Be On Your Guard**

- Every verse of Psalm 119 refers in some fashion to God's Word
  - His testimonies, statutes, judgments, precepts
- Yet after 175 verses of adoring God and God's Word, note how the Psalm ends: *I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments.*
- The Psalmist says, "I have gone astray."
- We have 3 enemies that war against us.

24  **The World (Seductive) calls us to disobey God**

- Barna Research reports that 9 out of 10 Christians are not changing the world around them; rather they are being changed by the world around them.
- We win the battle over defeating disobedience by **recalling God's Sacrifice.**

25  **The Flesh calls us to doubt God**

- Our attitudes, a critical spirit, doubt
- Win the battle over destroying doubt by **relying on God's supply.**
  - Moab is the result of doubting God.

26  **The Devil calls us to despair of God**

- 1 Peter 5 says: *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.*
  - But I heard a girl once quote it as: "because your ADVISOR the devil . . ."
- We overcome devouring despair by **remembering God's sustaining power.**

27  **2. Stand Firm in the Faith**

- In order to have faith IN God, we must first have a word FROM God.
  - The word translated "stand firm" in 1 Corinthians 16:13 means "Stand firm in the body of truth as revealed in Scripture."
  - Know your Bible; allow its truths to grip your soul.
  - How often do you spend time in God's Word doing this?

28  **Richard Burr, Developing the Secret Closet of Prayer**

- *Years ago I was privileged to fly with Strategic Air Command (USAF) where we engaged in in-flight refueling. It seemed that most of those missions took place in the early morning hours. Prior to takeoff, we would spend a protracted period of time being briefed on the weather, mission objectives, coordinates for refueling points, etc.*

29  **Richard Burr (2)**

- *It would have been unthinkable to go out on a mission without first being briefed by our briefing officer. We would have been court-martialed for such an act of insubordination! . . . But isn't it interesting how many of us go through our morning routine without spending any time with our Master -- our heavenly Briefing Officer -- for the "mission" of the day?*

30  **Richard Burr (3)**

- *Yes, we can pray at anytime throughout the day, but does it not make good sense to check in with Him before we plunge into our assignments of the new day? After all, who among us knows the "turbulence" or the "bandits" (attacks from the enemy) we may encounter, apart from the Almighty? Only He knows the phone calls we will receive, the mail that will come our way and the people who will cross our path.*

31  **3. Develop endurance**

- Courage is a mental willingness to ENDURE.
  - Big muscular men may quit a hard physical task in a few hours while some wiry guy goes at it strong all day. What is the difference? Attitude. A willingness to endure.
  - Winston Churchill said: "*Success is never final. Failure is seldom fatal. It is COURAGE that counts.*"
  - How willing are you to endure hardness for Christ's sake?

32  **4. Take vigorous initiative**

- This is the meaning of “*be strong*.”
  - Men, God especially demands that of us.
    - We are to be spiritually vigorous -- full of life.
    - We are to take the initiative in spiritual leadership in our families.
    - We are to find the new insights and share them with our families.
      - A young woman said she married her husband for life and then found out he didn't have any.

33  **4. Take vigorous initiative (2)**

- If you're going to lead, LEAD!
- Be strong and clear!
- Be an humble leader but not a reluctant one! (There is nothing spiritual about being a reluctant leader.)

34  **5. Do All in Love**

- Love is a choice that freely accepts others like they are and how they are and THEN seeks their good.
  - Example: The woman taken in adultery.
    - “Neither do I condemn thee” -- Christ accepted her.
    - “Go and sin no more” -- Christ sought her good.
- **It is more important to LOVE PEOPLE than to BE RIGHT.**

35  **6. Cry out to God for strength**

- Psalm 138:3 – “*In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.*”
- The word “cried” means:
  - to call, cry, utter a loud sound; **to call unto, cry (for help), call (with name of God)**
  - to proclaim
  - **to read aloud, read (to oneself), read**
  - to summon, **invite**, call for, call and commission, appoint, call and endow

36  **7. Put your trust in God rather than in yourself or others**

- Psalm 118:8 is the middle verse of the Bible:
  - *It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.*