

Gideon's Call and Commission

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[0:00] Good morning. As has been said, I am not Pastor Andrew.

! Pastor Andrew spent the week, as John was just praying there, Pastor Andrew spent the week! investing in the teens in their mission trip to Skyview Ranch.

And as he was doing that, then I have the opportunity to bring the word this morning. So we look forward to hearing the report.

In our family, we got maybe a little bit of a sneak preview with our son Ethan being on the trip. Got to see some of the pictures and hear some of the stories, but neat to hear how God was working.

So all that to say, my name is Andy Manwiller.

My family and I, we've been coming for about 17 years here to Maranatha. My wife and I have been married for 26 years, 9 months, 26 days. We have 4 awesome kids.

[0:58] It is so much fun. But I love reading, listening to God's word. I love teaching and sharing what God is teaching me. So I'm thankful for the opportunity to share this morning.

So let's go ahead and pray again. You can never pray too much. And as I pray out loud, you pray quietly, as Pastor Conner used to say. You can multitask during the message. You can listen and you can pray for me.

And we'll dig into God's word together. So let's pray. Thank you, God, for your word, that it is truth.

And we pray this morning that you would sanctify us through your truth.

May your words be many and mine be few. And I just pray that this would be a sweet time of digging into your word together. That we would leave here changed by the singing, the fellowship, the word, just this opportunity to be in your house.

Thank you, God, for the freedom we have to do this. May we not take it for granted and use it for the fullest for your kingdom and your glory. So take this time and use it in our lives. And equip us to go and be the church and do what you've called us to do this week.

[2:03] In Jesus' name, amen. Have you ever felt like God wanted you to do something that you didn't really feel capable of doing?

Or maybe calling you to do something that maybe you don't want to do, you're not willing to do.

Maybe it's sharing the gospel with someone. Maybe it's trusting in the gospel for ourselves.

Maybe you're playing the game and it's time to do business with God. Maybe it's getting to know our neighbors. Maybe it's serving in church somewhere. Maybe it's investing more in our families.

Investing in our relationship with our spouse. Investing into our children. Whatever it is, God calls us to do these things. God has things for us to do that, again, sometimes we're maybe not able to do.

Or maybe we're not willing. And today we're going to be looking at another example. One of the many examples. Last week we looked at Barak and he seemed a bit unwilling. If you go with me, I'll do this.

[3:07] Today we're going to look at another judge. And just part one, I believe in two weeks, I think Pastor David is going to be preaching part two of Gideon. But we'll see Gideon's fear, his apprehension.

And maybe we can identify with that. And then God can use that to open our eyes and challenge us to grow and serve him even with things that we don't think we can do. Or things maybe we're not willing to do.

So the background, we're going through Judges this summer. And just a reminder of it, one of the saddest verses in the Bible is in Judges 2.10. So if we look at Judges 2.10, it says, I mean, this is crazy.

This is, you read through the Pentateuch, Genesis through Deuteronomy, and even Joshua. And you see what God had done, bringing them out of the land of Egypt and doing all these miracles.

And then that generation didn't pass that on to their children. It's been said that Christianity is never more than one generation away from extinction. All it takes is one generation to not pass on the truth.

[4:23] And Christianity goes away. Now, God will not allow that to happen. His word is true and he is always at work. But we need to be passing that on. And so from this, all those great things God had done, and then a generation rose up that wasn't taught, wasn't told these things.

And then we see there's this cycle. And verses 11 through 15 kind of give us that cycle. Pastor Andrew and others have kind of talked us through this. But look at verse 11.

And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals. There's this cycle of when we forget God and we turn to sin and we run from him.

And we see this cycle happening over and over. We've already seen three iterations of this. In chapter 3, in Judges 3 verse 7, it says, And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.

They forgot the Lord their God and served the Baals and the Ashteroth. That's the setup where the people turned away from God. God brought pain into their lives.

[5:28] They called out to him. He rose up a judge. In this case, it was Othniel. And he delivered them. And this cycle that happens over and over again.

And this was the first iteration of that. Look at verse 12. And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. And he strengthened Eglon. And this was the setup.

There's this cycle. How many times did the Israelis have to go through that cycle? How many times do I have to go through that cycle? Chapter 4 verse 1. And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.

After Ehud died. They were following a person rather than God himself. The people would turn away from God. And God would bring pain into their lives. God brings pain into our lives for our good.

With my children. There's not much better in life than being a husband and father. Being a dad is so fun. It is so cool. But sometimes that does mean teaching and training and disciplining my children.

[6:29] Not just trying to zap them when they do something wrong. But when they sin, when they disobey, they're hurting themselves. They're setting themselves up for worse failures. And I want to bring pain into their lives.

As I've heard it said, turn up the heat. To get their attention. To turn them back to what is right. To me. But ultimately to God himself. And that is what God is doing. God's discipline is always for our good.

Whether it's discipline that comes because of my own sinful responses. Or sometimes he just brings pain into our lives. Because of the circumstances around us. And so God is always trying to get our attention.

That's kind of the main point we want to look at today. That God is with us. We'll see how we should respond to that then. And God is always working. Am I working with him? So this cycle, we've already looked at three different cycles.

Starting in chapter 6. So today, again, we're going to go through all of chapter 6. I've got 40 verses and 32 minutes. Here we go. I'll try not to go too long. But that's all right. Verse 1.

[7:34] Here's the setup for Gideon. The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. And the Lord gave them into the hand of Midian seven years. This is now the fourth time in the book where we see this cycle happening.

And this time, the pain is Midian. It was kind of fun. I'll try not to take too much time on this. It was kind of fun just looking up all the times Midian appeared in the Old Testament. Who is Midian?

Midian was actually a son of Abraham by Keturah in Genesis 25.

After Sarah had died, he had another wife and he had Midian. Midian moved east. He's connected with Moab and the Ishmaelites.

And they were often kind of a thorn in Israel's side. God used them often to bring discipline, pain, discomfort to turn their attention to God. The traders who sold Joseph into slavery in Genesis 37.

It's the Ishmaelites, but the Midianites are also mentioned there. It's almost synonymous a little bit. So again, they're connected in that way. When Moses killed a man, he tried to deliver God's people in his way instead of God's way.

[8:40] He fled and he fled to the land of Midian. And his father-in-law was the priest of Midian. If you remember the story of Balaam and the donkey, the donkey that talked, the Midianites were a part of the group that wanted to have Balaam curse Israel.

And when that didn't work, Balaam was sneaky. It's fascinating if you read through it. Balaam then had them sneakily introduce sexual sin into the nation of Israel to try and undercut what God was doing.

And it was actually a Midianite woman that was brought into the camp. I hadn't noticed that before. And putting that together, that was in Numbers 25. And Moses ultimately was told to take vengeance on Midian.

So there's this give and take. And God used these people in the lives of Israel to bring pain and to draw him back to him. Does God sometimes bring challenging people into our lives to point us back to him?

How do I respond to that? So let's see what happens. So there's the setup. Again, the people turn from God. God brings pain into their lives to draw them back to him. Verse 2.

[9:50] And the hand of Midian overpowered Israel. And because of Midian, the people of Israel made for themselves the dens that are in the mountains, and the caves, and the strongholds. So because of the oppression, they're trying to survive.

And it's kind of fun as you read through Scripture. When in 1 Samuel, 1 and 2 Samuel and such, when David is running from Saul, he hides out in the caves and the dens.

And I think this is kind of where those came about. It's kind of cool. As you look through that, like he didn't make them himself. They were already there. But anyway, Scripture ties together. And just dig into Scripture. God's Word is the foundation, not just for an academic exercise, but to know the God of the Word.

Anyway, I just thought that was kind of neat. So they're hiding. They're trying to find these secret places so they're not found. Why? What was happening? What was Midian doing? Let's look at verses 3 through 5.

For whenever the Israelites planted crops, the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the east would come up against them. They would encamp against them and devour the produce of the land as far as Gaza and leave no sustenance in Israel and no sheep or ox or donkey.

[10:58] For they would come up with their livestock and their tents. They would come like locusts in number. Both they and their camels could not be counted, so that they laid waste the land as they came in.

We can't even imagine this. We can't even fathom this. We live in such peace and prosperity. Yes, things are hard. Yes, circumstances. And you could point to all kinds of things going bad.

But can you imagine living in this, where it's not just like, oh, prices are up or whatever like that. Like people are coming and stealing, and there's literally nothing left. This discomfort, we can't even fathom this.

God actually calls us, back even from Genesis, we are called to bring order out of chaos. We did a work, a connect group work study, and we talked about this one of the weeks that I taught. And God, one of our jobs in life is to bring order out of chaos in your home.

We have to bring order out of chaos because chaos happens naturally, but we bring order. That's part of being good stewards of this world and bring order out of chaos. But these people were destroyers. They were disruptors.

[12:02] May we not be destroyers and disruptors, but may we be bringing order out of chaos. And they were suffering these consequences, these people coming in and just causing chaos in their lives to an extent, again, that we can't even begin to fathom.

And we don't have time to dig into it, but I'd encourage you sometime to read through Deuteronomy 28, and it's paralleled in Leviticus 26. Deuteronomy 28 is really clear.

It's really cool. God says, God gives some blessings if they obey. God's rules and guidelines are always for our good, okay? God's rules and guidelines are always for our good, even if it doesn't feel like it.

And he says, if you obey me, you'll have blessing. Now, we are not, we are under a different covenant, but the concepts are true. The Proverbs, these things are generally true. And he would say, if you obey, this is what's going to happen.

But he also promised them, if you disobey, this is going to happen. And if you still don't turn to me, this is going to happen. And if you still don't turn to me, this, and if you read through it, it's fascinating to see the cycle, the downward, it's going to get worse and worse.

[13:07] And I think we're kind of in this. And as has been mentioned, like Pastor Andrew talked about, not necessarily looking forward to some of the end chapters, right? And just the horrid mess that is the book of Judges.

And that can be my life and your life if we don't heed the warnings. God keeps his promises. And that's also true of not just giving us the fruit of the Spirit and love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

But it's also that he will bring pain into our lives to draw us to him. Again, God's goal in his rules, his guidelines, and the circumstances he brings is always to turn our attention to him.

So may we fix our eyes on him. So what happens here? So we got the setup. They turned from God. God brought the Midianites. Things are bad.

Verse 6. And Israel was brought very low because of Midian. And the people of Israel cried out for help to the Lord. This is what we should do. Do we allow difficulties in our lives, whether brought about by our own sin or just because we live in a broken world, do we allow those things to turn our attention to God?

[14:14] 1 Thessalonians 5:17 says to pray without ceasing. And the idea there is just being in that constant attitude, that mindset of prayer, that whenever something good happens, our first response should be, thank you, God, for this.

And as soon as something bad happens, our response should be, God, what do you want me to learn? God, how can you show your glory? How can I make you look good in this? What do I do? Our first response should be to turn to God.

And that's what the people of Israel finally did. May we be quicker to turn to him in our circumstances. So that's the background.

What does God do when the people turn to him? Let's read verses 7 to 10. When the people cried out to the Lord on account of the Midianites, the Lord sent a prophet to the people of Israel.

And he said to them, God sent a prophet.

[15:29] God reminds them of what he's done for them. He reminds them of how they've been rescued from slavery. He shows them how they've fallen short of his glory and how they've disobeyed him.

And that the goal, again, is always obeying his voice. God's rules, his guidelines, his directions, his instructions, his tasks are always for our good and his glory.

He sent a prophet. Today, he's given us his word. He's given us pastors and teachers. He's given us the church. I am so thankful for this church.

This is our church family. And we have pastors who preach the word to us faithfully. Pastors and leaders who invest in our lives. God has sent us his word.

Am I listening? Am I listening? Not just going through it rote. Like, oh, I read my Bible today. Check the box. Oh, I went to church today. Check the box. But no, are you here to listen? Are you here to hear from God and his word?

[16:33] When you read the Bible, do you read it on a regular basis? And do you listen? Listen, God is giving. God is calling to us all the time. But am I listening? Is my heart hard?

Or am I listening? Tom Zentz, a few weeks ago on Memorial Day, talked about how we need constant reminders. May we humble ourselves to recognize, I need these reminders. I have been brought out of the house of slavery of my own sin.

I am a slave. I'm either going to be a slave to sin or a slave to God. You tell me what you think is the better taskmaster. I want to be a slave to the God who loves me and has my best in mind for my good and his glory.

May we be reminded of the truth of the gospel and live in it every day. So that's the background. It's verses 1 through 10. The next section, and that was, if you're following along, I don't have my slides up there.

That's all right. I'll tell you what the blanks are. Cycle of apostasy was the first one.

A-P-O-S-T-A-S-Y, if anyone wants to spell it there. The second one is Gideon's call.

[17:35] Gideon's call. So we have the background. The people called out to God. And God sent them a judge. Someone to deliver them. And here is the call.

And we're focusing on his story today. Verse 11. So there's this guy, Joash. He's from the tribe of Abiezer, which is in Manasseh. We'll see that come up later. And the angel of the Lord. I'll let Pastor Andrew go into all the theological details of who the angel of the Lord is. But for now, this is God speaking to Gideon. And where's Gideon? Gideon is scared. He's hiding. He's trying to provide for himself and his family.

He's in the wine press. So that was a place that was lower, underground. And they would, like, the threshing of the wheat, they're throwing it up. And the wind would blow away the chaff so that you have just the good stuff left.

[18:42] But he's in a pit trying to hide. And so it's hard work. He's scared. He's hiding. He's still trying to provide for his family. He's trying to make it through. Do we find ourselves maybe sometimes in those circumstances?

Life is hard. And we just, Proverbs 37, try again. Psalm 37, 3 is a verse I want you to write down and think through as we go through this.

Trust in the Lord and do good. Gideon's doing that. We'll see his faith to a certain degree here in a minute. But Gideon's doing that. The angel of the Lord comes, hangs out under a tree. And then he speaks to Gideon.

Let's look at verse 12. And the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor. He's got the right guy? Gideon's hiding in a pit trying to do his work in a way that doesn't even work very well.

And he calls him a mighty man of valor. And he says, and this is key as well, The Lord is with you. This is a theme in the Old Testament.

[19:46] This is a theme throughout the whole Bible from the beginning to the end. The Lord is with you. So remember, God is with us today as well.

But this is fascinating, right? He calls Gideon a mighty man of valor. Was Gideon acting like it? No. He was not acting like it. But God saw something in him.

Or more likely, God saw what he was going to equip him to become something more than he is now. The world will tell you, Look within yourself.

Follow your heart. Lies. Don't believe it for a minute. But God saw something that he was going to do in Gideon. And so, you know what? Gideon couldn't do this.

Gideon didn't even want to do this, as we'll see necessarily. But God is calling in him. God was going to work in him to will and to do of his good pleasure. It's a verse we're going to look at at the end.

[20:44] God sees things that he's going to do in us. He calls us to do things that we're not doing right now. He calls us to be things that we aren't right now.

And let's see how Gideon responds. Verse 13. And Gideon said to him, Please, sir, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us?

And where are all his wonderful deeds that our fathers recounted to us, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? But now the Lord has forsaken us and given us into the hand of Midian. Okay, I definitely read that with a certain tone. That's how I think he said it. You might think differently. But clearly, regardless, he clearly doubted.

But the fascinating thing is he knew the truth. He knew the stories of what God had done. While Judges 2:10 was true, apparently his father had passed some truth on to him. We'll be talking about his father more here in a minute.

[21:41] But he heard the stories. He knew of it. But the fact is, he didn't see it right now. His circumstances and his feelings did not match the truth that he knew.

Can anyone else identify with that? Because I can. I don't know. I have struggled with a lot of things in the last year, several years.

But God is so good. But circumstances and what I know to be true don't always match. Does that mean that I'm disqualified? Does that mean that we're disqualified if we have doubts?

If we're with Gideon and we doubt? And maybe even we say these things to God, maybe even with a tone? Well, see, the answer is no. Gideon poured out his heart.

He shared what he thought. David, in the Psalms, pours out his heart. Some of the Psalms are hard to read. It's okay. The key is he's going to God. He's responding to God and his work in his life.

[22:41] So verse 14. Gideon says, yeah, whatever, whatever's going on. But verse 14, Did he answer Gideon's question?

No, he didn't. Which sounds a little bit like Job, right? Job did not get direct answers. If you remember last summer when we went through Job, the main point of that when we got to the end was just trust God.

Fix your eyes on him and do what he's calling you to do. Trust him in the midst of your circumstances. And Gideon gets a similar answer. He gives Gideon a task. He says, go and save your people.

But more importantly, it was God who was telling him to do this. God gave him clear instructions. Has God given us any clear instructions? If you open your Bible, can you find some clear instructions?

Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church. Don't focus on her part. Focus on yours. That's not today's topic though. Children, obey your parents. Fathers, bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

[23:54] Speak the truth in love. There's so many instructions we have been given. We have been given tasks and therefore are good. They're not easy. We don't always feel like doing them. They don't always work the way we want.

But God has clearly given us tasks. And even the Great Commission, God has clearly given us that task. Our main goal in life is to glorify God. And one of the best ways we do that is by going as we go into all the world, preach the gospel, make disciples.

We have been clearly sent to do this. What was Gideon's response? And Gideon said to him, please Lord, how can I save Israel?

Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh and I am the least in my father's house. Again, he's responding honestly and it may be factual.

He's hiding in a wine press using it for a task that it's not designed to do. His family apparently is small in the tribe. I'm just going to take his word for it at that point. But Manasseh is a small tribe.

[24:57] In fact, half the tribe's on the other side of the Jordan, if you remember. Half of them settled over there. So it's a smaller, they took a lot of land, but so he's struggling. He's looking at it. How can I do this? It's an honest assessment.

But where's his focus? His focus is still on himself. His focus is still on who he and his family are on their own without God. Moses did this when God called him.

If you read through Exodus chapter 2 and 3, you'll see Moses throws up five excuses and God sometimes doesn't even directly answer them. It's all about God focusing on him.

Giving excuses. May we not give excuses. And again, it could be, I think God is revealing how empty Gideon is. How needy Gideon is. He doesn't see God working.

We saw that in verse 13. And he knows that he's not sufficient to do these things. God brings us to our lowest point so he can fill us with himself. Because it's God who gets the glory, not us.

[25:59] And God can use us. We can do great things for him. But it's not in our own strength. And sometimes God needs to bring us to the end of ourselves. Would it be better to humble ourselves before the Lord and he will lift us up as James said rather than having him humble us?

That God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble again in James. So God is revealing his need. And so what happens here in verse 16?

Again, the focus is not on Gideon.

The focus is not on his family. The focus is on God himself. God has called him to do this thing.

Again, this is a theme throughout the whole Bible including in Revelation. One of the best parts of being in heaven forever is God's presence with us in an even more tangible way.

God will be with his people and he will be our God and he will be with us. It's I will be with you.

Whatever God is calling you to do, whatever hard things are happening in work, I've talked to many of you about my work, right?

[27:09] God is with you wherever you are no matter how hard it is, no matter what is going on, God is with you. You are not alone. You also have the body of Christ but God is with us.

And he says you're going to strike the Midianites as one man. You'll have victory as I am with you.

We have been given tasks as well. Again, family, church, all these different things.

I do want to just talk very briefly about Matthew chapter 28, the Great Commission. We tend to focus on the fact, go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

Don't forget the end. Behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. God is with us. We tend to also forget verse 18. Let me read that one. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Go therefore. God is the one who has called us to these things and who is sufficient for these things. Nobody, but God is and God will work through us.

[28:12] Like Gideon, we need to get our eyes off of ourselves and on to God when God says, I will be with you. Let's go and take steps of faith, trust in the Lord and do good.

After this, we'll see how Gideon responds just like any of us would do. More doubt. But God is so gracious. Look at verses 17 and 18. And he, Gideon, said to him, If now I have found favor in your eyes, then show me a sign that it is you who speak with me.

Please do not depart from here until I come to you and bring out my present and set it before you. And he said, I will stay until you return. This is again the setup for the next paragraph.

He's asking for a sign. Verse 19. So Gideon went, Gideon went into the house, prepared a young goat, unleavened cakes from an ephah flour, the meat he put in a basket and the broth he put in a pot.

He brought them to him under the terebinth and presented them. Gideon wants to show hospitality. Gideon wants to show his hospitality by providing a meal. And what happens here?

[29:18] There's more. What does the angel of the Lord do with this? The angel of God said to him, Take the meat and the unleavened cakes and put them on this rock and pour the broth over them. And he did so. Then the angel of the Lord reached out the tip of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened cakes and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened cakes.

And the angel of the Lord vanished from his sight. It's kind of like Elijah pouring water on the sacrifice. But that happened after this, so I can't use that as an illustration.

But Gideon probably had in mind, he knew the scripture, he knew the stories. Back in Leviticus 9, verses 23 and 24, I don't have time to look at that right now, but you can go look that up later.

Back in Leviticus 9, 23 and 24, when Aaron, the priest, was consecrated and they made a sacrifice, the glory of the Lord appeared to the people and fire came out and consumed the offering.

God had appeared to him and fire came out and consumed the offering. God was there. God was present. And so what was his response? Look at verse 22.

[30:25] Then Gideon perceived that it was the angel of the Lord. And Gideon said, Alas, O Lord God, for now I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face. What was me?

There is humility here. He recognizes that in God's presence, he is nothing. And this happens throughout scripture. Job, when God confronts him, he puts his hand over his mouth.

He repents and dust and ashes. Moses, at the burning bush, he takes his sandals off because he's on holy ground. Isaiah, when he sees God, says, Woe is me, for I am undone.

I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips. We see this again in a little bit with Samson and his parents. The only valid response to realizing God is at work is to humble ourselves, to recognize who we are and who God is.

Do we turn our attention to him? Do we allow our circumstances to point us to him? How does God respond to Gideon's recognition? Verse 23, But the Lord said to him, Peace be to you.

[31:29] Do not fear. You shall not die. When all this is going on, my circumstances are out of my control. When I am lost and I am undone and I'm seeing God working, God brings peace.

So often throughout Scripture when an angel appears to a person, he says, Peace be to you because they're ready to freak out. When Jesus appeared to the disciples after he rose from the dead, he said, Peace be to you. He said it like two or three times because they needed it.

I need that. I get so anxious. I don't know about you, but I'm getting older and so like feelings are bigger now. It's like this is weird. I shared some things that are going on and at least two people said to me, Oh, you're telling me you're in your 40s.

Okay, message received. Life changes and sometimes it's hard and sometimes it's good, but regardless of where we're at, God is in control and if I fix my eyes on him, there is peace.

God's kingdom is not of this world. He does not promise a nation to rise up and that's like the Jews thought they were going to rise up and take out the Romans. That's not what God promises us. His kingdom is not of this world, but it is of the heart and what God promises us is not comfort and ease and riches.

[32:46] It's not what he promises. He promises us love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

That's the fruit, the evidence of the spirit of God working in us and that is so much better than anything else whether we have great riches and great things or we have not. The kingdom of God is of the heart and as we rest in him, he gives us and brings us peace.

We need that. We need to fix our eyes on God himself. And so what happens when Gideon realizes this in verse 24? Then Gideon built an altar there to the Lord and called it the Lord is peace.

To this day, it still stands in Ophrah which belongs to the Abiezrites. Another good response to realizing that God is at work is building a reminder. We are forgetful people.

Again, Tom Zent shared that with us on the Memorial Day service and it's been said from the pulpit many times, I am a forgetful person. We are forgetful people. I need reminders. Do you have any reminders of when God was working in your life?

[33:56] We have black lava rock out in front. We've chosen that as our landscaping because you don't have to do it every year. But my wife has taken some rocks and painted them white and written on them things that God has done.

So when you go out front out of our door, there's these bright white reminders of what God has done. It's just a small thing. I'm very good at forgetting them. I'm very good at walking right past them and not remembering them or letting them focus my mind on him.

But I have the opportunity. Do you have any reminders of what God has done in your life? So that when you face hard times, you can look back and see God has done this for me.

God has done this for the Israelites. God is going to take care of me now as I go forward. Setting up these reminders of who God is and what he's done. Jacob did this with his rock pillow.

The two and a half tribes at the end of Judges do this. They set up a reminder. Hey, we are a part of you. We need reminders. We are forgetful. Even Peter and Paul talk about reminding people of truths. I need these reminders and I'm guessing you do too.

[35:00] So we move into the next paragraph starting in verse 25. It brings us to the third point. So the first point, cycle of apostasy. Second was Gideon's call. The third is Gideon's first step. S-T-E-P, step.

So God's got his attention. He gives him his first task. Here we go. Verse 25. 25 and 26. That night, the Lord said to him, take your father's bull and the second bull, seven years old, and pull down the altar of Baal that your father has and cut down the Asherah that is beside it and build an altar to the Lord your God on the top of the stronghold here with stones laid in due order.

Then take the second bull and offer it as a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah that you shall cut down. His first assignment is to tear down the altar of Baal and the Asherah that his father had and replace it with an altar to God and sacrifice.

So Gideon's dad is an interesting character, isn't he? I think he clearly told Gideon about God because back when the angel of the Lord first appeared to him, he knew, where's all these things? I've heard these things, but where is it happening? So his father had told him, but yet, but yet he has an altar of Baal and an Asherah. He's two-faced. He's double-minded.

[36:18] I'm guessing he felt the cultural pressure and wanted to fit in, wanted to look good to those around him. After all, we're in the judges, right? And everyone was doing what was right in their own eyes. So I want to look good to as many people as I can.

Change starts in the home. It starts with me. It starts with my family and then God can use it from there. So first, what idols do I have in my life?

What idols are in my family's life? I need to tear them down and replace them with the things of the Lord. So may I ask you, what idols are in your life? What idols are in our lives that we can get rid of in my family?

Look around your house. What are some things that are idols? Look at your calendar. Look at your budget spreadsheet if you're as geeky as I am about that kind of thing. You can tell a lot about yourself.

There's sayings about that. You can tell a lot about yourself by your money, your time, what you watch, your calendar, things like that. So evaluate those things. What things need to be torn down and what altars to God need to be built.

[37:22] So what does Gideon do? Verse 27. So Gideon took the men of his servants, took 10 men of his servants and did as the Lord had told him. But because he was too afraid of his family

and the men of the town to do it by day, he did it by night.

So he obeyed, kind of. But he took a step of faith. God told him to do it. He took 10 people with him. God told him to do it. He didn't want everybody to know, so he did it at night.

But he took a step. Are we willing to take those steps? Like Nicodemus came to Jesus at night. So many other examples. People afraid but doing what's right.

Trust in the Lord and do good. What is a small step I can take? What is a small step you can take? And maybe, how can I do it boldly? Trusting in the Lord. But there are consequences.

It doesn't always go well. He was afraid of his family. And we'll see, rightfully so. Verse 28. And when the men of the town rose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was broken down and the Asherah beside it was cut down and the second bull was offered on the altar that had been built.

[38:28] And they said to one another, who has done this thing? And after they had searched and inquired, they said, Gideon, the son of Joash has done this thing. Then the men of the town said to Joash, bring out your son that he may die.

For he has broken down the altar of Baal and cut down the Asherah beside it. He took a step for God and now his life is being threatened. Sometimes things don't go as planned.

God's plans are not always ours and sometimes things get worse before they get better. But am I willing to follow and trust God anyway? The cultural response, kill him, cancel him, whatever.

It's pretty drastic. Most of us will not face death by standing up for God. Maybe we just get looked at funny. Maybe our families won't like to change.

Again, after all, he was afraid of the family. What happened? Dad, why do you want to meet together and do family Bible time at night? Why are you making me read the Bible every day? Why are we serving? I'd rather go play. Why is this happening?

[39:28] Our family might not like it. We might be made fun of. Maybe more serious consequences, losing our job. I'm pretty sure at this point we're not going to face death. The day may come. Are we ready for that? God is good and he's worth consequences for.

Am I willing to stand for God even if people don't like it? Luke 9, 23-26 is a good passage to read through as a reminder. Jesus said, take up your cross and follow me. Deny yourself and if you don't be ashamed of God before men.

So Gideon took this step of faith and what happened? The people didn't like it but look at verse 31. But Joash said to all who stood against him, that's Gideon's dad, Joash said to all who stood against him, will you contend for Baal or will you save him?

Whoever contends for him shall be put to death by morning. If he's a god, let him contend for himself because his altar has been broken down. Gideon took a step of faith secretly but his dad was impacted.

His father got his act together. He said, okay, yeah, that's wrong. I shouldn't have done that. Let me stand up for God now. Our steps of faith will have impact for others.

[40:39] As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. 1 Timothy 4.12 This is a good reminder that Gideon took the step of faith and his father, someone older than him, was impacted.

Do not let people look down on you because you're young but set an example for the believers in word, in, I don't have that one memorized very well. Word, spirit, faith, purity.

I butchered that one. Go look it up for yourself and see. But we can set an example for others and God will use that in the lives of others whether they're older than us or younger than us. Are we willing to humble ourselves and learn from people younger, older, and work together?

We'll talk about this in a little bit. We need all generations. We need gray hairs. We need young people. We need everybody together as the body. So again, this was a good response.

If Baal's God, let him deal with it. Kind of like Elijah. Elijah says, you know, how long will you limp between two opinions? If Baal's God, follow him, but if the Lord is God, follow him. Do you and I believe that the Lord is God?

[41:40] It's easy in this setting to say yes. Tomorrow, when we go to work, when we go to play, when we go to whatever, go to our homes, do we still believe that and is it still true and are we willing to stand up and say that even when it's not popular and may come with consequences?

Are we willing to follow him even if it's costly? So what happened? Verse 32, therefore on that day, Gideon was called Jerob Baal. That is to say, let Baal contend against him because he broke down his altar.

He didn't die. Again, he saw God, he didn't die. He was threatened, he didn't die. He was branded though. He was called derogatory names from then on. It's a small price to pay.

Don't worry about idle threats. Proverbs 26.2 says like a sparrow by flitting or a swallow and it's flying so a curse unfounded will not come to rest. I love that verse by the way.

I love barn swallows. They're my favorite birds. There's some out in the backyard. They just, they always are flying. You never see them land and just like that, these kind of curses, you're going to be called Jerob Baal. May Baal get you.

[42:43] It'll never land. I don't have to worry about it. I can trust my God and he will take care of me. So we move into Gideon's next assignment.

That's the next blank and I'm sorry, that blank is small. Gideon's next assignment. Write that in there as best you can and then Gideon is ready. Okay? Gideon's next assignment and Gideon is ready.

Let's see what happens. Verse 33. Now all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the east came together and they crossed the Jordan and encamped in the valley of Jezreel. He just faced his family.

He just faced his tribe and now the enemy is amassing. He handled, he weathered the last storm now comes the next one. The bad guys are joining together and they're hanging out in the valley of Jezreel.

We've got a standoff going. Verses 34 and 35. But the Spirit of the Lord clothed Gideon and he sounded the trumpet and the Abiezrites were called out to follow him and he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh and they too were called out to follow him and he sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali and they went up to meet him.

[43:49] Woohoo! We're getting the band together. We're going to go attack. This is good. The Spirit of the Lord. Notice that it was God working in him. We need to be open to God working and seeking in him.

Seeking out his direction, his will, being willing to submit to that. God was with him. He called out his family. He called out, and maybe that was an impact.

His dad stood up. His family joined him in this battle. As we take one small step of faith, there can be ripple effects. God can use that in bigger ways. And then he called out three more tribes.

He's ready for the big time. But then comes verses 36 to 40, which Gideon is ready was the second part of point four. Point five is, or is he?

Or is he? We see doubts surface again. Verses 36 and 37 says this, Then Gideon said to God, If you will save Israel by my hand, as you have said, behold, I'm laying a fleece of wool on the threshing floor.

[44:52] If there's dew on the fleece alone and it's dry on the ground, then I shall know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you've said. Gideon says, Whoa, whoa, whoa, slow down a second. This is great, but you know, I'm having doubts.

I'm not sure anymore. God, are you sure? He's asking for a sign and trusting God. Often, our biggest successes are followed by our greatest challenges and failures.

1 Corinthians 10, 12 says, Beware you who think you're strong, lest you fall. Be ready. Beware when you think you're strong. Don't continue in your own strength what God has begun doing in you.

Let him complete his work even when it's hard. Philippians 1, 6. He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it. Am I willing to trust him? When God starts working, am I willing to keep going in his strength and not my own?

Use the talents, gifts, abilities that he's given me but not do things in my own strength. Verse 38. So he does the fleece thing. I'm not going to go too deep into this and make things up.

[45:56] Let the main things be the plain things and the plain things be the main things. What happens here in verse 38? And it was so. When he rose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece, he wrung enough dew from the fleece to fill a bowl of water.

Then, so God answered. God is gracious. Sometimes he answers with the fleece. Sometimes he doesn't. Kind of like with Job. So what does Gideon do? Then Gideon, verse 39.

Then Gideon said to God, let not your anger burn against me. Let me speak just one more time.

Please let me test just once more with the fleece. Please let it be dry on the fleece only and on all the ground let there be dew.

Again, I'm not going to over-spiritualize this or make things up. You know what I think happened here? Gideon's first test, he was off a little bit, right? What happens if you put, if I put a t-shirt on my back porch at night and there's dew and then the sun comes out, the ground, the deck is going to be dry but the t-shirt's still going to be wet, right?

Oops. Hey God, I got that backwards. Can we try it again? I think that's all that happened here, right? Whatever. I'll let Pastor Andrew correct me if I'm wrong or he can go deeper if he wants but then he gives that clear sign.

[47:04] Okay, if I put the t-shirt out and now if the t-shirt's dry but they're still dew then God did something because that's what, you know, that's not what happens in the normal natural world.

So he asked for another go at it and God is gracious enough to answer. Look at verse 40. And God did so that night and it was dry on the fleece only and on all the ground was dew.

Sometimes God is gracious and gives us those answers. He gives us that assurance that we're following him and sometimes he doesn't. Am I willing to follow him and walk by faith even if I don't feel like it, even if my circumstances don't change?

Am I willing to follow him? So now Gideon is continuing to be humbled. He's amassing an army and in two weeks we'll see what happens in chapter 7.

But for now, so what? What's the takeaway? I go home this afternoon. I go to work tomorrow. I got all these things going on in my life. What difference does this make?

[48:11] I've heard it said God doesn't call the qualified but he qualifies the called. You might not feel like you can do what God has called you to do. And what God calls us to do is hard because our sinful hearts fight against it, whatever it is.

But God will work in us, again, to will and to do of his good pleasure. We'll look at that verse here in a little bit. But I want to encourage and challenge us. Are we taking steps of faith? What is God calling you to do?

To grow spiritually? Maybe to trust Christ as Savior? to lead your family? To invest and love your wife as Christ loved the church? To invest in your children even when it's hard?

To witness to neighbors, to coworkers? Maybe get involved in the church? May I just say, as my wife and I oversee the nursery ministry, we can always use nursery helpers, isn't this a blessing up here? The people who play?

Do you play an instrument? Come and join us. One of the principles of our music ministry here that Pastor John introduced in 2012 when he started was more is better. Maybe God is challenging you to say, hey, I play the whatever.

[49:15] Can I do that too? Serve with, there's children's ministries. I want to challenge you, wherever you're at, young people, serve. Get involved.

There's nursery opportunities, children's ministry opportunities. Get involved and serve. You guys do a good job of this overall. Maybe God is calling you to step up and do different things. For those who are older, it is not time to make way for the next generation.

It is time to serve with the next generation. May I encourage you and challenge you, don't check out. There's no retirement from the family of God. We need the gray hairs of which I'm now being. We need the gray hairs and the green horns. We need to work together to grow and sharpen and encourage each other. May this church grow and serve one another. So what is God calling you to do?

Again, maybe it's something in the church. Maybe it's missions. Who knows? Maybe it's something else. But are you willing to serve and get involved? Like Gideon, there's nothing special about Gideon.

[50:19] He was broken. He was small. But God was going to work in him. Two passages to look at and then we'll close in prayer. Philippians 2, 12 and 13. I've quoted this one a couple times, but you can see it for yourself.

Philippians 2, verses 12 and 13 says this, Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence, but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Excuse me. God is the one who works in us to will, to be willing to, to want to do what he called us to do and then to follow through and do it.

Will we rely on his strength to do it? So if you've never, if God's calling you to step up and do something, would you step out and do it? Trust in the Lord and do good, whether it's family, church, whatever it is.

And for those who have been serving for a long time, thank you. We need the faithful, people who have been serving and doing this for years and continuing to do so as an example and teaching and training the next generation and serving with them and bringing them up.

[51:30] But remember, it's not about you. And for us, let's not, let's not trust the older people. Let's trust the God that they are pointing us to because 1 Corinthians 1, 26 and following says, for consider your calling, brothers.

Not many of you were wise according to worldly standards. Not many were powerful. Not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise. God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong.

God chose what is low and despised in the world. Even things that are not to bring to nothing the things that are so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

It's all about God and His glory. It starts with me and my life, me and my family, me and my church and we can impact the world. What is God calling you to do? Will you take that step, trust in the Lord and do good?

And may we watch and see what God does for His glory. Let's pray. Thank you God for Gideon. Your patience with him. Thank you that you are patient with us. God, I pray that you would work in us today as we sit here and we're maybe riled up and we feel the call, the excitement.

[52:42] Lord, will you work in us to will and to do of what you're calling us to do? Lord, would you work in us? May we have strong, godly people in this church. May we have strong, godly families in this church.

May we be a strong, godly family who loves you, loves each other and shares the gospel with the world. Go with us and use us for your glory in every place that you have placed us with the real people in our lives.

Help us to invest for your glory and your kingdom. In Jesus' name, Amen. Thank you. You're dismissed.