

STORYTELLERS
An Unlikely Warrior
Judges 6-8

I love to hear God's people share their stories! Stacy Dodd's story is just one of so many "God Stories" that we have at CHC. In this series that we are beginning today, we are going to hear a different story each week from one of our members. You will be blessed by the astonishing way that God has been working in the lives of people all around you! In this series, we will also learn true stories about some of the people that are presented to us in the Scriptures. You will be inspired, warned, and challenged by what you learn from these honest accounts.

Today, I want us to learn a story about the making of a warrior. The Bible is full of stories about war heroes. Some you may know the stories about Caleb, King David, Joshua, and Samson. Others may be less familiar to you: Abishai, Benaiah, and Joab. But there is one warrior in Scripture that has always intrigued me: Gideon. He is perhaps the most unlikely warrior of them all, and I love the way his story begins.

[Give the BACK STORY of what is happening in Israel during Gideon's time]

- *It is the period of the Judges.
- *The people are in rebellion against God and living like PAGANS.
- *They are under the oppressive rule of the Midianites. [Camel warriors!]
 - They are stealing their animals and crops and making life miserable
 - They show up during key harvest seasons to raid and pillage.
- *There is seemingly NO ONE available who can do anything about it!
 - God has a plan.

God often chooses unlikely warriors to do his work. Judges 6:11-12 NLT

-NOTE: These conversations with the Angel of the Lord = PRAYER!

11 Then the angel of the LORD came and sat beneath the great tree at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash of the clan of Abiezer. Gideon son of Joash was threshing wheat at the bottom of a winepress to hide the grain from the Midianites. 12 The angel of the LORD appeared to him and said, "Mighty hero, the LORD is with you!"

God proclaims what CAN be by virtue of his presence and calling!

The Lord is WITH you! [The Lord IS your strength]

-This implies that God has CALLED him! **[TAG! Stacy Dodd's amazement.]**

Mighty Warrior [Valiant = Courageous, virtuous]

A warrior can be a HERO or a VILLAN, depending upon whom he is fighting for! **What do God's warriors do?**

- *They are soldiers that OBEY the orders of God.
- *They STAND for what is right. **[God defines what is right!]**
 - They often stand ALONE
 - They are also the ones who go FIRST
- *They FIGHT for what is right.

... in their OWN life
 ... in the lives of OTHERS [May not make them POPULAR!]

God sees where we STRUGGLE the most. Judges 6:13 NLT

13 "Sir," Gideon replied, "if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? And where are all the miracles our ancestors told us about? Didn't they say, 'The LORD brought us up out of Egypt'? But now the LORD has abandoned us and handed us over to the Midianites."

*Fear [Hiding in a wine press]
 *Doubt and Anger [IF God is with us, then why . . .]
 *Inadequacy - **Judges 6:15 NLT**

15 "But Lord," Gideon replied, "how can I rescue Israel? My clan is the weakest in the whole tribe of Manasseh, and I am the least in my entire family!"

God sees what others miss. Judges 6:14 NASB

14 The LORD **looked at him** and said, "Go **in this your strength** and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian. **Have I not sent you?"**

*Burdens [Our questions reveal the FOCUS of our thoughts/heart.]
 *What questions are you asking? What burdens do they REVEAL?
 *NOTE: "With US. . ." [Gideon was burdened for his people.]
 *Passion [Our burdens are the BASIS of our passion]
 *Humility: He sees beyond our limitations. (**Judges 6:16** – "As one man!")

God often uses unlikely methods for preparing his warriors.

He teaches them to LISTEN for God's voice/direction [PRAYER]

-The Offering and the fire (Vs. 17-22)
 -The Fleece (Vs. 36-40)
 -The enemy's dream (7:9-11)

He commands them to TAKE A STAND before he empowers them to LEAD A FIGHT.
Judges 6:25-32 [Briefly tell this story.]

*Confirms core values: He took an unpopular MORAL stand!
 -After this, He FILLED Gideon with himself! **Judges 6:33-34 NLT**

33 Soon afterward the armies of Midian, Amalek, and the people of the east formed an alliance against Israel and crossed the Jordan, camping in the valley of Jezreel. 34 Then the Spirit of the LORD took possession of Gideon. He blew a ram's horn as a call to arms, and the men of the clan of Abiezer came to him.

He FORCES them to be DEPENDENT upon God for victory. Judges 7:2-8 NLT

2 The LORD said to Gideon, "You have too many warriors with you. If I let all of you fight the Midianites, the Israelites will boast to me that they saved themselves by their own strength. 3 Therefore, tell the people, 'Whoever is timid or afraid may leave this mountain and go home.'" So 22,000 of them went home, leaving only 10,000 who were willing to fight. 4 But the LORD told Gideon, "There are still too many! Bring them down to the spring, and I will test them to determine who will go with you and who will not." 5 When Gideon took his warriors down to the water, the LORD told him, "Divide the men into two groups. In one group put all those who cup water in their hands and lap it up with their tongues like dogs. In the other group put all those who kneel down and drink with their mouths in the stream." 6 Only 300 of the men drank from their hands. All the others got down on their knees and drank with their mouths in the stream. 7 The LORD told Gideon, "With these 300 men I will rescue you and give you victory over the Midianites. Send all the others home." 8 So Gideon collected the provisions and rams' horns of the other warriors and sent them home. But he kept the 300 men with him. The Midianite camp was in the valley just below Gideon.

*Absolutely REMOVES any sense of self-reliance/arrogance/manipulation

-Too many soldiers? [300 soldiers Vs. 120,000 enemies!]

-Remember God's MATH: **Judges 6:16 NLT**

16 The LORD said to him, "I will be with you. And you will destroy the Midianites as if you were fighting against one man."

He fills their hands with unlikely weapons! Judges 7:16-20 NLT [Summarize]

-Torch in one hand and a trumpet in the other! [During 10 PM Shift Change]

-God gets ALL the glory!

-This is how God still works! **2 Corinthians 10:3-4 NASB**

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, 4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.

***I WISH that this was how Gideon's story ended, but it does not end here.**

-Gideon allowed success to shadow his soul and stain his legacy.

-Gideon quickly lost his sense of DEPENDENCE ON GOD.

-Briefly review how Gideon changed after his initial victory **(8:1-21)**

Judges 8:22-26 NLT

22 Then the Israelites said to Gideon, "Be our ruler! You and your son and your grandson will be our rulers, for you have rescued us from Midian." 23 But Gideon replied, "I will not rule over you, nor will my son. The LORD will rule over you! 24 However, I do have one request--that each of you give me an earring from the plunder you collected from your fallen enemies." (The enemies, being

Ishmaelites, all wore gold earrings.) 25 "Gladly!" they replied. They spread out a cloak, and each one threw in a gold earring he had gathered from the plunder. 26 The weight of the gold earrings was forty-three pounds, not including the royal ornaments and pendants, the purple clothing worn by the kings of Midian, or the chains around the necks of their camels.

How can you KNOW you are losing a sense of dependence?

- *WE PRAY LESS. [Gideon never prays again after the battle!]
 - BUSYNESS is no excuse for PRAYERLESSNESS!
- *WE RESENT PEOPLE WHO DON'T SUPPORT US. **[It's all about ME!]**
 - Once Gideon tasted victory, he became a vengeful fighter.
- *WE MANIPULATE OTHERS FOR MATERIAL GAIN. [Was not king, but . . .]
 - He slyly asked for a tax tribute – Made him INSTANTLY RICH.
 - *Riches are not wrong; the LOVE of riches IS WRONG!
 - Are your RICHES a REPLACEMENT for God's provision?
 - He acted like a king by having many wives/concubines. **Judges 8:30 NLT**
 - He named his youngest son Ahimelech = My dad is the king. **Judges 8:31**
- *WE BECOME A STUMBLING BLOCK. **Judges 8:27 NLT**

27 Gideon made a sacred ephod from the gold and put it in Ophrah, his hometown. But soon all the Israelites prostituted themselves by worshipping it, and it became a trap for Gideon and his family.

- We confuse people's faith with our actions! **[My fear in ministry!]**
- Gideon's golden Ephod became an IDOL.
 - *Golden Ephod – Instrument for discerning God's will
 - *Was to be worn ONLY by a priest in the Tabernacle!
 - *It was a SNARE to Gideon's household.
- The people fell away from God DURING Gideon's "reign."

How can we CONSISTENTLY REMAIN DEPENDENT upon God in our lives?
We must learn to EMBRACE the troubles that make us dependent upon God rather than to RESENT them.

- *What is happening in your life right now that is making you afraid?
- *THAT may be your greatest ASSET for DEPENDENCE on God.

We must learn to CULTIVATE DEPENDENCE upon God during good times.

- *Embrace your INADEQUACIES and LIMITATIONS!
- *Choose to REST rather than living on the RAT RACE WHEEL!

Final word of encouragement:

Later failures in life DO NOT ERASE the value of former victories.

- God really did use Gideon. [He is in the HALL OF FAITH – Hebrews 11]
- Gideon had a CHOICE to make about his direction in life AFTER a victory.
 - SO DO YOU AND I!