

It Matters – Shamgar

2/22/15

Judges 3:31, 5:6

Sunday AM

One Sunday, a pastor decided to visit the various S.S. classes where he was delighted to hear how well the Bible was being taught – that is until he visited the 6<sup>th</sup> grade boys' class who were talking about Jericho. Curious, the pastor asked the boys if they knew who knocked down the walls of Jericho. Immediately, two boys said, "Pastor, we don't know who did it, but it wasn't us! Surprised at their lack of Bible knowledge, he turned to the teacher and asked, "What do you think about their answer?" The teacher said, "Well pastor, I've known these boys a long time and if they say they didn't do – then I believe them!"

**While funny** – this story reveals something deeper. There are parts of the Bible we either don't know, have overlooked, or simply miss altogether – not b/c they're unimportant, but b/c they're unfamiliar. And yet, some of the most powerful lessons about life can be found in the lives of these obscure people who only get a verse or two.

**Well** – tucked away in just (2) verses in the book of Judges is a man named **Shamgar** – who's life speaks volumes about how to follow God when life doesn't go according to plan – whose life teaches us about the character quality of adaptability.

Shamgar's 43-words teach us that faith isn't about perfect conditions or full clarity, but staying anchored in God while responding to what's in front of us. In a constantly shifting world, adaptability isn't optional but essential.

**Adaptability** is the Spirit-enabled ability to remain anchored in God's truth while wisely adjusting our approach in a changing world. It's flexibility w/ faithfulness – movement w/out moral drift – so God's mission keeps moving forward even when life doesn't – building resilience, teachability, humility, and courage while guarding us from rigidity in difficulty and inconsistency under pressure.

And IT matters b/c life rarely unfolds the way we expect. Plans shift. Culture/society changes. Pressure increases. And in those moments, what determines our faithfulness isn't our ability to control the situation, but our ability to adapt w/out compromise.

In this way, adaptability is essential to character b/c it allows us to live our convictions consistently – even when the environment around us is unpredictable. And this is what we see in Shamgar in Judges 3 | 5.

*After Ehud came Shamgar son of Anath, who struck down 600 Philistines w/ an ox goad. He too saved Israel.*

Judges 3:31

*In the days of Shamgar, son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were abandoned; travelers took to winding paths. Judges 5:6*

In these 43 words we discover (4) essentials to living w/ the blessings of adaptability.

I **START** Where You Are

**Shamgar** was the 3<sup>rd</sup> judge of Israel who incidentally wasn't a Hebrew by *birth* but by *belief*. The phrase **son of Anath** is a reference to the Canaanite goddess of war revealing that he was a Canaanite who became an Israelite after putting his faith in God. Yet by the time we meet him, he was a farmer w/ an ox goad.

Likewise, from **Judges 5:6**, we get a glimpse into the kind of world Shamgar lived in. He lived in a time of chaos where morality was low, fear was high, and God's people had blended into the pagan culture around them

resulting in the roads being abandoned b/c travel was too dangerous – causing the Promised Land to feel more like an imprisoned land.

Bottomline – Shamgar lived in chaos. Morality was at an all-time low while violence/volatility ruled the day. Yet in the middle of it – Shamgar stepped up.

Which brings us back to **Judges 3:31** – *After Ehud came Shamgar son of Anath, who struck down 600 Philistines w/ an ox goad. He too saved Israel.*

**At some point**, enough was enough. And in the midst of the chaos, Shamgar took a stand. He didn't wait for better conditions, he stepped into his situation to do something about it. **He was a farmer who couldn't accept the status quo any longer.**

SEE – Shamgar refused to live in the land of **when-then** – *when things settle down, then I'll step up. When I have more time or feel ready – then I'll engage.* No. Shamgar stepped into his **Sacred Now**.

The **Sacred Now** is when conscience and conviction collide – and you realize this is your moment to respond to God. And this is where adaptability lives – not in waiting for perfect conditions, but in responding faithfully to present reality while remaining anchored in God's purpose.

Now – for Shamgar, we don't know if this happened in a single moment or over time, but we know this – Shamgar stopped waiting for tomorrow and chose to act today – and God used his obedience and courage to save Israel by taking out 600 Philistines.

**IT Matters** that we don't allow our circumstances to determine our faithfulness and that we have a realistic view of what's occurring in our world – and then, instead of throwing in the towel – we engage by starting where we are to take a righteous stand against the chaos of sin and immorality around us.

Such was the case when our church engaged the tragedy of human trafficking and **Wellspring Living** was birthed. Or the need for compassion for the medical needs around us and the **Healing Bridge** was birthed.

**Point** – frontline, culture engaging ministries are only birthed out of the collision of conscience and conviction where someone stands up and says enough is enough – I'm ready to be a part of the solution.

## II **BE** Who You Are

If *starting where we are* speaks to **location** – then *being who we are* speaks to **identity**. Before Shamgar lifted his oxgoad, he settled who he belonged to and who he would be – b/c *no one can adapt faithfully w/out being securely anchored.*

This is why the Bible gives us so little about Shamgar – his name, his father, his enemy, and a farm tool. ***This isn't a gap; it's the point.*** God isn't highlighting a superstar, but an ordinary man who refused to pretend by choosing to be fully available to Him.

Shamgar didn't borrow someone else's armor or try to be someone he wasn't. He stood in a field as a farmer – w/ his ox goad in hand and God as his King.

Paul explained this well to the Ephesians – *For we are His workmanship created in Christ to do good works God has prepared in advance.* Ephesians 2:10

**That is** – we're saved by grace to serve by grace. We're the people of God called, gifted, and equipped by God to represent Him in everything we say/do.

It means allowing God to use **who you already are** in the moment He's already given you – living w/ an anchored identity in everyday spaces not trying to be someone else – but being who He's called you to be.

It's may not be flashy but it sure is faithful. It's the teacher who turns their classroom into a mission field; or the business person who treats integrity like it's a ministry; or the grandparent who turns their kitchen table into a mentoring session; or the student-athlete who decides to play for an audience of One.

**IOW** – God uses **who you already are**, in the place where you already stand – to meet needs you already see. This is real adaptability – not changing who you are, but allowing God to fully use who you are.

Meaning – God isn't asking us to trade our oxgoad for a sword or special ops squad, but to bring what we have – our wiring, story, and scars – and place them under His Lordship. So, stop waiting to become someone else and start surrendering who you already are – this is more than enough for God to use.

**Truth** – God isn't limited by our limitations. He's only limited by our unwillingness to trust and obey.

### III **USE** What You Have

Shamgar was fed up – and what do people most do when they get fed up? They complain and hope someone else moves. Not Shamgar. He stepped up and used what he had. But mind you. He didn't have a sword or a special ops team – he had an ox goad.

An **ox goad** was a *farming tool* used to guide ox when plowing. Spear on end – shovel on the other.

Of course, an ox goad wouldn't be the weapon of choice for anyone going into battle. But neither were a sling/(5) stones when David faced Goliath or the donkey's jawbone Samson faced the Philistines.

Remember when God called Moses. He asked, "Mo, what's that in your hand?" Mo said, "It's my staff". God said, "That'll do. Lay it down." And God turned into a snake and later used it to deliver the plagues, part the Red Sea, and strike water from a rock.

**SEE** – for Moses it was a staff. For David a sling – and for Shamgar an ox goad – b/c *little becomes much when it's surrendered into the hands of God.*

So, what do you already have that if surrendered God can use for His glory - an ability/talent, a keen mind, even a redeemed mistake or forgiven sin? Little can become much when it's placed in the Master's hands.

Other than a desperate conviction in his heart – the only thing Shamgar had to offer God was his ox goad. In anyone else's hand, it might've been a clumsy stick, but in his able hands – it was a powerful tool for God's glory and Israel's good.

Here's what I know. **Shamgar took what he had, offered it to God, and God used it for His glory.**

**IT Matters** we offer to God in full our ambitions, abilities, activities, and accomplishments – and that we use what we have to accomplish His will.

Shamgar started where he was... accepted who he was... used what he had... to **do what he could DO.**

### IV **DO** What You Can

**I think this is relevant.** Shamgar didn't spend his days talking about or hiding from the problems – he stood up w/ what he had to do what he could do. He was more concerned about pleasing God and returning the people back to the way of God than he was about living safely.

Shamgar shows us that we may not be able to do everything, but we can do something.

R.G. Lee who pastored Bellevue in Memphis said: What the church needs is more action – less faction. More workers – fewer shirkers. More backers – less slackers. More praying – less straying. More burden-bearers – fewer tale-bearers. More tongues of fire – less fiery tongues. More zealous effort – less jealous thoughts. More love for the Word – less love for the world. More seekers of grace – less seeking for place. More holiness of life – less bickering and strife.

Sadly, too many people live stuck b/w intention and action. We feel conviction, but delay obedience b/c we suffer the plague of paralysis of analysis.

**IT Matters** that we're more than hearers of the Word – but that we're DOERS of the Word.

In 2007, Joshua Bell, a world-renowned violinist participated in an experiment in D.C. During rush hour, he stood in a busy subway station and began playing. Now, he's not just any musician. Bell sells out concert halls where people pay \$100's to hear him play his \$3.5 mil. Stradivarius. But that day – he was just another guy in a baseball cap playing in the chaos. For 45 min. 100's of people passed by w/ few slowing to listen. A few tossed in a dollar or two. At the end, one of the greatest musicians in the world had earned about \$32. Same man. Same instrument.

**Point:** Most people miss the moment, but not b/c there wasn't something powerful happening but b/c they weren't paying attention. And this is too often how many of us live spiritually.

God is moving – and opportunities are in front of us. Moments are sacred. Yet too often, we're waiting for a different setting, a better time, or clearer conditions. We're living in *when-then*. Yet adaptability says: **God is at work right here – right now; and I'm in!**

So, don't miss your moment. You don't need a stage, or perfect conditions, or a different life. You just need to recognize what God is doing right where you are. B/c the same God who used Shamgar in a field is ready to use you in your world.

So, start where you are. Be who you are. Use what you have. Do what you can. And step into your **Sacred Now!**

**God isn't waiting for better conditions – He's waiting for willing people.**