

Series: **Leadership Sermons 2023**

Today's Title: ***"All In"***

January 8, 2023 – *Judges 6*

---

**Objective:** To help people increase their commitment to God – to be 'All In' for Him and the mission He's given us.

---

## **Annual Report Summary**

### ***Opening prayer***

Commitment is a big word.

It's a word we often use without regard to it's meaning.

Instead of true commitment – many people say they're committed, but what they actually live out is they're committed – as long as it's convenient.

**Convenience does not really align with commitment.**

The old story / question that centers around a bacon and egg breakfast – and asks:

*'Who's more committed: The chicken – or the pig?'*

So many of us think of commitment like the chicken – not like the pig.

What are the areas of your life where you have a 'pig-like' commitment?

*Are there any?*

We are 1-week into the New Year.

Did you make any commitments – any resolutions?

How committed are you to make those into reality?

In June of last year, I went to the doctor – and when I stepped on the scale, I was confronted with a number I didn't like.

A number I wasn't going to accept.

I made a commitment as I left the doctor's office – a commitment to lose weight.

***But how?***

***How would I make that happen?***

I decided to change my lifestyle – and utilize the Intermittent Fasting way of eating.

My fast is usually from 8:00 p.m. to 12:00 p.m. the next day – a 16 hour fast.

This was a huge commitment for me – because breakfast is one of my favorite meals.

I don't fast on Sundays – or on days I have a breakfast appt – but most every day – I have committed to this change in my lifestyle.

I have lost about 3" in my waist – and the number on the scale is one I can live with.

**To do this – I had to be 'All In'.**

I couldn't do this if convenience was my level of commitment.

I had to 'burn the ships' if this was going to work.

Around September and October of last year I started to think and pray about our church – I had conversations with Pastor Joseph and Pastor Scott – conversations with the staff.

I was thinking about what lies before us – and my mind kept going to this idea of commitment – of being **'All In'**.

- If we are really going to invite people to join us at church.
- If we are going to change the culture here to an *'invite culture church'*.
- When we put 3, 4, or 5 names on post-it notes before Easter – and really talk with those people and invite them to an Easter service – we must be **'All In'**.

Take a step back with me – in your minds – and consider how God has blessed our church – especially over the past 5-6 years.

It seems He has been preparing and positioning us to be used by Him for something special.

**I believe one of the things He's been preparing and positioning us for is to plant a church.**

Planting a church will require a great deal of work, struggle, and sacrifice.

Will you say 'yes' to God as He leads?

Will you be **'All In'** with His plan to reach people with the gospel?

When I decided to ask Kim to marry me - I had to be **'All In'**.

**My first 'All In'** action was moving to Arizona.

**My 2<sup>nd</sup> 'All In'** move was taking my savings and buying an engagement ring.

**My 3<sup>rd</sup> 'All In'** was taking Kim's parents out to dinner – and because I was so nervous – I waited until the very end of dinner – to ask their permission to marry their daughter.

To which Lew said, *"No deposit, no return!"*

**My 4<sup>th</sup> 'All In'** was making reservations at a nice restaurant – and after dinner – at the top of the Butte where the restaurant was - getting on one knee – and saying, *"Will you marry me?"*

To which she said, *"Are you serious?"*

There are lots of moments in life – that you need to be **'All In'**.

Doing something ½ hearted just doesn't cut it.

But it can be intimidating – overwhelming – like too big of a step – to make that commitment – to cross that point of no-return.

To burn the ships.

If you were to Google: Verses that say **'All In'** – or do a concordance search of **'All In'** – you won't find any verses.

Not even in 'The Message' or the New Living Translation' – do we find the phrase **'All In'**.

But the idea – the picture and example of people being **'All In'** for the Lord – is all throughout the Bible.

## PEOPLE IN THE BIBLE WHO WERE 'ALL IN' –TO THE PLAN AND CALL OF GOD

- **Noah** was 'All In' when God told him to build the ark.
- **Abraham** was 'All In' when God told him to sacrifice his only son.
- **Joseph** was 'All In' when God told him to forgive his brothers who assaulted him and sold him into slavery.
- **Moses** was 'All In' when God told him to go to Pharaoh and tell him to let the Israelites go.
- **Rahab** was 'All In' when she hid the Israelite spies and risked her own life and the lives of her family.
- **David** was 'All In' when God told him to fight the giant Goliath with only a slingshot and a few stones.
- **Esther** was 'All In' when Mordecai told her to go to the king to save her people.
- **Daniel** was 'All In' when God told him not to bow down and worship other idols.
- **Mary** was 'All In' when the angel told her she would give birth to God's Son, Jesus.
- **The disciples** were 'All In' when Jesus asked them to leave everything behind and follow Him.
- **Paul** was 'All In' when God told him to deliver the good news of Jesus to the Gentiles.

To help us understand what it looks like to go ‘**All In**’ for Jesus – ‘**All In**’ for the mission of the Church – I want us to look at a man named Gideon – in the book of Judges.

**Turn to Judges 6 – p. 205**

**Context:**

Gideon lived about 40-50 years after Israel took possession of the Promised Land, but there were problems.

The main problem was Israel disobeyed God and failed to get rid of the people in the land who were polytheistic idol worshipers.

These people became the enemies of Israel – and fought against the Jewish people – and they conspired with Israel’s enemies.

One of Israel’s neighbors was the nation of Midian.

For years, Midian caused problems for Israel.

**Judges 6:1**

“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.”

At this time in Israel’s history, there was no monarchy.

Joshua – the nation’s leader after Moses’ death – has died.

There is no central authority – no civic government set up.

Israel was a theocracy – God was their authority and guide – but Israel had turned away from God – and they were rudderless.

The various regions of Israel fell into disarray – chaos – and the strongest ruled over all others.

During this period of Israel’s history, God raised up ‘judges’ – to give leadership to His people and to deliver His people from danger and oppression.

**God sees value where the world sees failure.** 6:11-12

As we just read, Midian was oppressing Israel for 7 years.

***This is where we are introduced to Gideon.***

***Gideon was one of the judges God raises up.***

But when we first meet Gideon – he is afraid – hiding in fear of the Midianites.

**Judges 6:2**

“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.”

Gideon is in hiding – living in fear like all of Israel.

**Judges 6:11**

“Now the angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth (oak tree) at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites.”

Since we’re not familiar with threshing wheat – or with winepresses – this verse might not shock us.

**But a winepress** has short walls – to create a basin - to hold the juice from the grapes.

**A threshing floor** is normally on top of a ridge – or out in an open space – because when you thresh wheat you rely on the breeze / wind to do most of the work.

You toss the wheat in the air – and the breeze blows away the chaff – and the heavier wheat kernels fall to the ground.

This doesn't work so well in a cave – in a winepress.

When we first see Gideon – he is not a brave man – he's not pushing against the powers oppressing Israel.

He is hiding in fear.

He's a coward!

He doesn't want to be seen – and he's hiding the wheat fearful the Midianites will steal it.

But what the Angel of the Lord says in the next verse is shocking.

**Judges 6:12**

And the angel of the LORD appeared to him (Gideon) and said to him, "The LORD is with you, O mighty man of valor."

Ha!

"O mighty man of valor" hiding in a cave - keeping his head down – out of sight.

Gideon was not an impressive person.

Nothing stood out – causing anyone to think he had what it takes to be a great leader.

**Spiritual work is not dependent on human skill.**



**God sees value where the world sees failure – or where the world sees average.**

This doesn't mean that human skill is not important – or it's never used by God.

*The spiritual gifts of knowledge and wisdom and their accompanying competencies prove their usefulness.*

However, we must never look at spiritual endeavors –

- The ministry of the Church...
- The Great Commission...

through the exclusive lens of human skill, ability, talent, resources, or experience.

It's really difficult to not use that lens – because these are the factors we use all the time in life.

Every day we're using our skill set, our abilities and talents, resources, and experience.

But relying on these – making these the 'trigger' mechanism for moving forward in ministry is the common practice in churches.

**But God is not limited by your abilities – or lack of.**

He calls Gideon, “a mighty man of valor” because God has a plan.

Gideon would become “a mighty man of valor” – but he wasn't one yet – nor had he shown signs of valor up to this point.

It's tough to be '**All In**' when it doesn't seem you have what it takes.

When the task before you is too big – larger than anything you've ever done before – it's tough to take that leap.

**God does big things with little people.** *6:13-16*

The potential for failure often drives the decision process.

- The fear / potential for failure keeps a man from getting on 1 knee with a ring in his hand.
- Potential failure keeps a student from trying out for the team.
- Potential failure may be keeping you from starting a business.
- It may keep you from serving in ministry.
- It may keep you from taking a bold step for God.
- It may keep you from sharing your faith with a family member, friend, neighbor, or co-worker.

We must always remind ourselves that God often uses people and circumstances that look bleak – or don't fit what the world values – and He does something amazing.

Paul talked about this – and in considering his own physical and spiritual weaknesses, wrote the Spirit-inspired words:

**2 Corinthians 12:9-10**

But He (God) said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities.

For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

Gideon’s focus was on his circumstances.

His focus was on what he didn’t have.

His focus was on his low stature in the culture.

**vs. 13-16**

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.”

And the LORD turned to him and said, “Go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian; do not I send you?”

And he (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.”

We often look at ministry – at our Christ-given mission – and we see it through human eyes – eyes of flesh.

Gideon was looking at life and the terrible oppression he and his countrymen were suffering under.

He sees no potential in himself because he is toward the bottom of the social hierarchy.

He's the runt of the litter!

These thoughts are understandable.

Our circumstances tend to dominate our thoughts – and they can be very discouraging.

Our status – abilities – experience – knowledge – can lower our expectations – our hopes or dreams – as to what we can accomplish.

But these are the thoughts that run contrary to God's thoughts.

These are physical – earthly thoughts.

We need to include the spiritual truths – spiritual realities into our thought patterns. (e.g., Romans 12:1-2)

**We need to realize our inability does not limit God or what He can accomplish through us.**

These thoughts leave out the most important detail!

vs. 16 - And the LORD said to him (Gideon), "But I will be with you, and you shall strike the Midianites as one man."

**Until we realize we are inadequate in the mission, we will never realize God's adequacy to accomplish the mission through us.**

**The key to ministry / life success is not our ability, but God's presence.**

Just like when your kids were little – and they got to the age where they started dreaming – and those dreams scared them.

The world was all of a sudden, a large, scary place – and they couldn't tell reality from their dreams – and they were frightened.

And what did they ask you?

*“Mommy / Daddy – will you stay with me until I fall asleep?”*

*“Mommy / Daddy – can I come into your room and be with you?”*

They didn't ask you – or need you to stop their dreams. They just wanted to be with you – in your presence.

The same thing applies to our church – our ministry. God doesn't leave us alone – He doesn't abandon us to the work.

He is with us every step.

Look at Moses – when God gave him the mission to return to Egypt – where he was a fugitive – return and rescue “My people”, he made all kinds of excuses why he couldn't do it.

But God told him...

**Exodus 3:10-12**

“Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.”

But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?”

He said, “But I will be with you...”

God does big things with little people – because He’s with us little people.

**Moving forward in obedience, not confidence.** 6:36-40

Taking bold steps for the kingdom is not about being confident we can do it.

It’s more of an obedience issue than anything else.

Look with me at **vs. 36-40** – where we find Gideon’s favorite word: “if”.

Then Gideon said to God, “If You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said, behold, I am laying a fleece of wool on the threshing floor.

If there is dew on the fleece alone, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said.”

And it was so. When he rose early next morning and squeezed the fleece, he wrung enough dew from the fleece to fill a bowl with water.

Then Gideon said to God, “Let not Your anger burn against me; let me speak just once more. 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.”

And God did so that night; and it was dry on the fleece only, and on all the ground there was dew.”

God was gracious toward Gideon.

Gideon obeyed an earlier command to destroy his father's altar to Baal (vs. 25-27). He obeyed, but he was afraid, and he did this by the cover of darkness.

After that, Gideon gained some confidence, but taking down an altar was one thing.

Fighting the Midianites and their allies was another.

Twice Gideon sought a sign of confirmation.

God graciously gave him those signs.

**But we need to realize that our obedience is more important than our confidence.**

Gideon was too focused on his confidence.

We often make the same mistake focusing too much on our abilities and resources, instead of simply obeying God and applying wisdom as we move forward.

Let's make sure our 'yes' to God is not conditioned by our 'If'.

*'If you will do this, then I'll obey.'*

*'If you provide this job, then I'll tithe.'*

*'If you heal me, then I'll begin serving.'*

**Do you have any 'ifs' in your life when it comes to you and God?**

***Apply it...***

Being '**All In**' – taking the leap out of the plane – into the plan of God – can be a point of uncertainty.

We know when you are '**All In**' – when you say *yes* to God:

- *It may be difficult.*
- *It may be unpopular.*
- *It may be uncomfortable.*

But also rewarding and life-changing, right?

The most dangerous thing we can do as a church – is to think we can handle ministry.

To think that we have the resources – the people – the talent – the skills needed to accomplish something in the name of Christ.

If we think we've got it covered – and we are so capable to do the job before us – then we are indeed in a bad place.

The moment we try and do ministry apart from depending on God – apart from needing Him to move in our midst – we are doomed as a church!

To be '**All In**' has very little to do with what we can handle – what we think is possible.

*It has everything to do with our obedience to the mission – and God being with us.*



To be **'All In'** means you are confident that God is with us – and as long as He's with us – it doesn't matter how big or how daunting the task is.

Will you be **'All In'**?

**Colossians 3:17**

“And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

Not just at church.

But **'All In'** at home – in your marriage – with your kids – at your job.

**'All In'** – because God's already proven He's **'All In'** for you.

The cross is evidence of that.

Now...He's calling you to be **'All In'** with Him.

*Close in prayer*