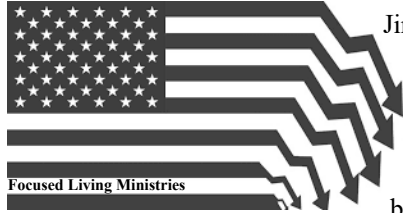


THE MAKING OF A MAN #8 Gideon



Jim Black, in his sobering study, *"When Nations Die,"* identifies ten reasons that destroyed great civilizations of the past. 1) Lawless corruption in leadership; 2) Loss of economic discipline; 3) Rising bureaucracy/government size; 4)

Decline in education; 5) Eroding cultural foundations (marriage & family); 6) Loss of respect for truth/traditions/morals; 7) Materialism ; 8) Rise in sexual immorality; 9) Decay of religious belief ; 10) Devaluing human life. Tragically, the USA is the first nation in history where all ten are present in one society at one time! **What practically can God's men do to break these patterns in order to reverse course? Where is God calling us to put our hope?**

The book of Judges describes 7 cycles when Israel caved to these same factors and lost their country (3:7-11; 3:12-31; 4:1-5:31; 6:1-8:28; 10:1-5; 10:6-12:15; 13:1-16:31)! But in His awesome mercy, God raised up Gideon to break these cycles and lead his people back to God.

REST _____ (People walked with God in security)

REBELLION _____ (Relapse and fall into sin/idolatry)

RUIN _____ (Become enslaved by the treachery of sin)

REPENTANCE _____ (Cry out and turn hearts back to God)

RESCUE _____ (God offers salvation to His people whom He loves)

RESTORATION _____ (God raises up a leader to deliver and rebuild)

Where are **you** personally in this cycle? Your **church**? Our **nation**?

(Judges 2:8-15; 17:6; 21:25) How do these verses perfectly describe the core cause and inevitable results behind each of these destructive cycles in Judges as well as the real cause of the problems in our culture? **Where do you think we are as a nation in these patterns? Where are your eyes?**



(Judges 6:1-6) We pick up Gideon's (Lit. 'hacker, hewer, i.e. lumber jack') story as Israel feels the consequences of their rebellion against the Lord during the 4th of these seven hellish national cycles. What effective chisels was God using to get the people's attention in order to change their hearts?

(Judges 6:7-10) What aspects of His character was God trying to teach His people which they had forgotten?



(Judges 6:11-16) Gideon was an unlikely, unexpected leader (like us) who was so **fearful** of the Midianites that he secretly threshed dusty wheat in the bottom of a windless wine press where he could hide instead of sifting on top of a hill where the wind could blow the chaff away (6:11). He was also **insecure** lacking confidence as the youngest man in a small tribe (6:14-15).

But when God wants to change a nation/city/culture, He starts with a **WEAK** (broken) man (Jud 6:6; Ex 3:1-6; John 18:25-27; 1 Cor 2:1-5; 2 Cor 12:7-10; 1 Tim 1:12-16) who is **AVAILABLE** to His call (Jud 6:14-16), **FOCUSED** on His character (Jud 6:18-22), **OBEDIENT** to His word (Jud 6:24-29) and willing to **TRUST** regardless the cost (6:30) and in spite of the circumstances (Jud 7:1-23). **Where do you see God chiseling these qualities into your life encouraging you to step up as a man like Gideon? When God get's your attention... Pay attention!** How specifically did God get Gideon's attention? Yours?

(Judges 6:12) At first, Gideon was anything but the "valiant warrior" God called him to be! But God always sees what a man can be if he is courageous enough to trust Him as He turns him from wimp to warrior (Ex 15:3; Josh 5:13-15; Zeph 3:17; Rev 19:11-16; Rom 8:34-39). Are you willing to be a "Gideon" whom God uses to break the downward cycle of our nation? What encouraged your heart from this Irish Elk video? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bZiBnegXqlg&t=295s>

(Judges 6:18-23; Gen 12:7-9; Ex 3:1-10; 33:7-34:8; Is 6:1-9; 66:1-2; Matt 28:16-20) Once God gets Gideon's attention through the chisels of adversity (6:1-6), exhortation (6:7-10), personal encouragement (6:11-2), a call to action (6:14) and promises (6:16) what is the very first thing he did in response (6:17-24)? Why is worship one of the very 1st things God looks for in a man He can use?

(Judges 6:25-32) Where did God send Gideon for his **first battle** and his **first victory**? Why is this absolutely vital to understand as potential valiant warriors? Why must valiant warriors first experience victory in breaking evil patterns of sin in their own lives and at home before they can take on the destructive cycles of their culture? In what very personal area of a man's life did God command Gideon to start cutting down 'strongholds'? Why? (Hint: Baal = male god of porn. Asherah = female god of sex) How did Gideon's name as 'Hacker' and 'Feller of Trees' come in handy during this first assignment by the Lord? Why did Gideon take 10 men with him? What sexual 'stronghold' is God asking you to pull down? What 'ten men' will you take with you?



So far, in what specific ways does the story of Gideon overlap with yours? How can you most identify with him?

(Judges 7:1-25) When the Lord sees that we have experienced a measure of victory in the **little things** He then leads us to have victory in **bigger things** as our trust in His character and promises increases. Where have you seen this principle in your life? In what 'little thing' is the Lord testing you in hopes of victory?

(Judges 7:2-8) Before moving on, let's do some math. Gideon had passed his first test at home (6:25-32) so God sends him into a much larger battle with the Midianites whose standing army was 135,000 (8:10) and Israel had 32,000 men (7:3) ... a 4:1 ratio. But the Lord thought that even at that ratio His men might get cocky (Judges 7:2) so He thinned out the ranks by sending 22,000 home... a 13:1 ratio. But God knows that most men are prideful glory hounds so He reduces the number to 300 soldiers who alertly stood upright bringing the water to their lips while looking for the enemy rather than kneeling thereby taking attention off the mission (7:4-7). How would you feel about going to battle with a 450:1 ratio? Would you be peeing in your loin cloth or praying to the Lord? Where do you see/feel overwhelming odds in your family or culture? (Zech 4:6; Ps 20:7; 1 Cor 1:26-29; 2 Cor 12:9)

(Judges 7:9-15) God knew Gideon's fear, weakness and reluctance! So how did God once again encourage Him? How does the Father encourage you as you do battle daily against the seemingly overwhelming odds in our culture (Rom 8:15-39)? How did God get the glory in this situation (15)? Why is worship so vital? How does a man grow into a valiant warrior through heartfelt worship?

(Judges 7:16-25; 8:33-35) God used this unlikely leader to bring victory in overwhelming odds and continued to use him to point his nation to the Lord for another 40 years. But what happened after Gideon died and why is it vital for each of us to taking the initiative to **raise up** (Acts 6:1-8; Ps 78:1-8), **encourage** (Titus 2:6-8; Rom 10:14-15), **disciple** (Matt 28:16-20) and **train** (2 Tim 2:1-6) the next generation? Who are **YOU** personally mentoring in the Lord? Your children?



TAG TEAMS Which of the following principles demonstrated by Gideon's life point you to your need for Jesus and the power of His resurrection (Phil 3:7-14)?

1. When things go badly God has not abandoned you but is working powerfully to make you a warrior (Judges 6:13).
2. God can use any man who is willing to grow. He can change you from spiritual timidity, unbelief and self-centeredness to spiritual courage, faith, humility, and orientation to Himself and His plan. But this takes time. (6:25-27, 34-35; 7:1-8, 15-8:23).
3. When the will of God is clearly stated from His Word act on it. Do not test Him through neglect, avoidance or delay. Delayed obedience is disobedience (6:12-18, 27, 6-40; 7:9-15; 8:27). Believe God right from the beginning and therefore serve him faithfully by learning and applying His word.
4. The learning of a few spiritual lessons does not make us spiritually mature. Spiritual growth and health requires day to day learning and applying the Word of God (8:21-23; Heb 11:32-34).
5. Repeated spiritual failure does not disqualify you from important service for the LORD. Learn through failure and apply God's word (Heb 11:32-34).



When God gives you the help you've been looking for but you still choose to do things your own way!