

SERIES: Oddly Famous

MAN OF VALOR

Judges 6 & 7

Pastor Troy Dobbs | Grace Church

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Obviously, all of us need to grow in the area of godliness. No surprises there, right.

But specifically, we need to grow in godliness **when life is good.**

When life is difficult — we tend to be much more in tune with **our need for God.**

But,

- **when the sun is shining**
- **the bills are paid**
- **the kids are behaving**
- **business is flourishing**
- **the Vikings are winning**
- **it's easy to forget God... to become self-sufficient.**

And that's exactly the plight of the **Israelites** in the Book of Judges.

They became disinterested in God when life was smooth — and it got them into all kinds of trouble.

So God shook things up by rousing an enemy against them to show them that their **self-sufficiency is an affront to God.**

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.

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. (Judges 6:1-2)

God again used a foreign power to get their attention — and the Midianites overpowered Israel — literally forcing them underground.

And then every year around harvest time the Midianites would thunder into town on their camels to steal / plunder the crops of the Israelites!

³ For whenever the Israelites planted crops, the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the East would come up against them.

⁴ 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.

⁵ 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.

⁶ And Israel was brought very low because of Midian. And the people of Israel cried out for help to the LORD. (Judges 6:3-6)

Look at that phrase in verse 6:

Israel was brought VERY LOW!

God's people "finally" cried out to The Lord.

Now, why did they wait so long to turn to the Lord?

Because they're a lot like us — they waited until every possible option played out and they couldn't take it any longer.

Brokenness pushed them back to God!

7 When the people of Israel cried out to the LORD on account of the Midianites,

8 the LORD sent a prophet to the people of Israel. And he said to them, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I led you up from Egypt and brought you out of the house of slavery.” (Judges 6:7-8)

God then tapped a man named Gideon to be His leader.

11 Now the angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth 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. (Judges 6:11)

This is actually a super funny scene!

Even though I didn't thresh wheat as a summer job during High School — I do know it is to be done out in the open, **(where the wind can separate the wheat from the chaff)** not down in a winepress.

Gideon was in a winepress because he was scared out of his mind. He's living in fear. He's in hiding. He's paranoid.

Yet the angel of The Lord appeared to him and said:

“The LORD is with you, O mighty man of valor.” (Judges 6:12)

THE LAST THING Gideon was at this moment in his life was **a mighty man of valor. He was chicken little!**

And he says as much when he laments:

Why has this happened to us?

Why has God forgotten us?

I can't save Israel.

I'm the weakest in Manasseh.

I'm the runt of the litter. (v.15)

How's that for a positive self-image... 😊

But God says — no worries, I'm with you Gideon!

16 And the LORD said to him, “But I will be with you, and you shall strike the Midianites as one man.” (Judges 6:16)

But instead of Gideon rising up with courage knowing God was with him — he says: **Show me a sign that it’s you God!**

So God says throw some **bacon and eggs** on that rock over there and I’ll show you:

21 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. (Judges 6:21)

When God turns a rock into a stove so you can cook your breakfast — probably a sign it’s God, right.

Gideon then worshipped God! (v.24)

Later on that night: The Lord told him to destroy the shrines his father was using for idolatry.

Now, this looks like an act of bravery — but a deeper dive says otherwise:

27 So Gideon took ten 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. (Judges 6:27)

In the cover of night, yes Gideon obeyed God but did it so no one could pin it on him.

Then Gideon continued his fear-based leadership by asking for yet another sign: Lord if you really want to use me **I need a sign it's you.**

36 Then Gideon said to God, “If you will save Israel by my hand, as you have said,

37 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.”

38 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.

39 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.”

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

(Judges 6:36-40)

After the signs were confirmed, Gideon has 22,000 people show up to join him for battle.

But God throws a wrench in the plan.

He says, 22,000 is too many so tell everyone who's scared that they can leave.

And 12,000 people left — leaving 10,000.

God then said: Take the 10,000 down to the water:

“Every one who laps the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set by himself. Likewise, every one who kneels down to drink.”

⁶ And the number of those who lapped, putting their hands to their mouths, was 300 men, but all the rest of the people knelt down to drink water.

⁷ And the LORD said to Gideon, “With the 300 men who lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hand, and let all the others go every man to his home.” (Judges 7:5-7)

9700 people lapped water like a dog showing a lack of situational awareness.

So Gideon took 300 men into battle.

In Chapter 8 we learn the Midianite Army numbered 135,000 men.

That's 450 Midianites to every 1 Israeli soldier. Not good odds!

And that's not all — now the strategy **is to become a marching band.**

⁸ So the people took provisions in their hands, and THEIR TRUMPETS. And he sent all the rest of Israel every man to his tent, but retained the 300 men. And the camp of Midian was below him in the valley. (Judges 7: 8)

¹⁶ And he divided the 300 men into three companies and put trumpets into the hands of all of them and empty jars, with torches inside the jars.

17 And he said to them, “Look at me, and do likewise. When I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do. (Judges 7:16-17)

No disrespect, but I'd rather have some dudes with weapons — not trumpets and empty jars!

Gideon then rallied the troops:

Chapter 7:

18 When I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then blow the trumpets also on every side of all the camp and shout, ‘For the LORD and for Gideon.’”

19 So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, when they had just set the watch. And they blew the trumpets and smashed the jars that were in their hands.

20 Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the jars. They held in their left hands the torches, and in their right hands the trumpets to blow. And they cried out, “A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!”

21 Every man stood in his place around the camp, and all the army ran. They cried out and fled.

22 When they blew the 300 trumpets, the LORD set every man's sword against his comrade and against all the army. And the army fled as far as Beth-shittah toward Zererah, as far as the border of Abel-meholah, by Tabbath.

23 And the men of Israel were called out from Naphtali and from Asher and from all Manasseh, and they pursued after Midian. (Judges 7:18-23)

God sent confusion into the ranks of the enemy so that they began attacking each other.

When it was over, 120,000 Midianites had killed one another and the other 15,000 fled.

◀ OUTLINES ▶

So what is God saying to us today?

1. **God disciplines those He loves (v.2)**

When we sin and experience pain / discipline — it does not mean God does **NOT love us**.

The exact opposite is **TRUE!**

Listen to how the writer of Hebrews says it:

Hebrews 12:6-11

**6 For the Lord disciplines the one he loves,
and chastises every son whom he receives.”**

He says it's a proof of **LOVE** and son-ship.

7 It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

Father's discipline sons because they love them.

8 If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

No discipline reveals you are not a part of the family. I don't discipline my neighbor's kids — I discipline mine.

9 Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live?

In the end, the discipline of our earthly fathers led to our respect of them.

10 For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness.

Our parents disciplined us as it seemed best — but
God disciplines us for our good!

**¹¹ For the moment all discipline seems painful
rather than pleasant, but later it yields the
peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have
been trained by it.**

And yes, discipline seems painful — but it produces
fruit!

Don't miss that God's discipline is a feature of His love!

It allows us to get a taste of the consequences of our
sin so we'll stop sinning.

So please know the Father is always working for our
greatest growth and good. God disciplines us to train us
— to push us towards godliness.

Love doesn't allow His children to do their own thing or
go their own way.

◀ OUTLINES ▶

So what is God saying to us today?

2. God sees us in light of who we are becoming
(v.17)

Gideon had an awful self-image. But God saw him differently.

So when God calls Gideon a Mighty Man of Valor, God is not trying to be funny — He sees who Gideon is becoming.

God sees us with VISION — a vision of what we can do by His power.

So if you struggle with self-image — you need to know how God sees you! He sees you in light of His work in you — what you can do / can be with His help.

Be really encouraged by that!

◀ OUTLINES ▶

So what is God saying to us today?

3. God's presence should inspire our confidence
(vv.12,18)

It's amazing to me how many times God reminded Gideon that **He is with him.**

God's presence should inspire our confidence.

But Gideon underestimated this — and we do often times, too.

But as New Testament people, Christ's presence is in us — which always with us and should inspire CONFIDENCE in everything we say and do.

We are not alone in our hurt — pain — struggle.

God is with us — helping us — inspiring us — empowering us.

◀ OUTLINES ▶

So what is God saying to us today?

4. God wants us to rely on His Word, not signs.
(vv. 36-40)

Gideon's request that God fulfill a series of signs with a wool fleece **is a childish desire** for hard evidence.

His demands for extra signs are an indication of unbelief: yet God graciously accommodated him.

Today (and you know this) the greatest source of God's guidance for God's people is God's Word.

Unlike Gideon, we have God's complete revealed message to humankind in the Bible.

Unfortunately, we tend to share Gideon's tendency to wait for more confirmation when we should be obedient, immediately!

So if you want to have more of God's guidance, don't ask for signs — **study God's Word.**

Don't let a fleece substitute for the wisdom of God's Word.

◀ OUTLINES ▶

So what is God saying to us today?

5. God does not want us to be confused about Who is in control. (ch.7)

Why did God whittle down the army from 22,000 to 300?

Let me tell you why:

God Knew the pride and stubborn hearts of his people and how they would readily attribute any victory to their own strength if they were too numerous!

Listen, the attraction of idolatry is that we think we are in control. We can do it by our strength / ingenuity.

But God won't let that happen. God will not be robbed of His glory.

God uses tough times to get our attention — so He may be getting you today! As He does, remember He loves you and wants the best for you.

God confirms His priorities with His presence. And He wants you to live and lead with a confidence in Him.

And then — remember success is determined by God's power, not ours. He is our source of victory!