

## **AWAKENED BY PURPOSE; FUELED BY FAITH** **THE CULTIVATION OF GIDEON**

**Key Verse: Judges 6:25-32**

**Key Thought: God Has a Plan for Your Life**

Two weeks ago, I introduced you to a man named Gideon. He was the man God chose to deliver Israel from the bondage of their enemies. Gideon did not appear to be a likely candidate for the “Deliverer of the Nation.” When Gideon appears, he is hiding from the Midianites to prevent them from taking the small amount of grain he possesses.

When the Lord comes to Gideon, He tells him that he is to be the deliverer of Israel. Gideon, like most people, immediately tells God why He is wrong. After losing the argument with God, Gideon finds himself worshiping the Lord and waiting for his orders.

As we continue to look at the story of Gideon, we will watch as the Lord prepares him for the mission that lies ahead. God brings Gideon along in a series of small, specific steps that will lead to Gideon achieving big things for the glory of God. In this passage we will watch Gideon take his first step of faith. We will watch him take a stand against the false religion that held his village and his family in spiritual bondage.

As we consider how God develops Gideon, we need to take a moment to consider our own lives. The Lord is in the business of developing us as well. In fact, the Lord’s intention in our lives is to transform us from lost sinners into the image of His Son.

Here is what the Bible teaches us about that truth.

***“Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” Ephesians 4:13***

*“For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.”*

*Romans 8:29*

Let’s join Gideon as he enters spiritual boot camp. What we learn from observing him can help us successfully navigate our own spiritual development. Today, I will speak about *The Cultivation of Gideon*.

## **I. THE COMMAND GOD DELIVERS**

1) **It Was a Specific Command** – When God speaks to Gideon, it is in the same night that He called him. When God’s puts His hand on a life, He does not waste valuable time. He calls people for specific tasks at specific times. When God calls, He commissions, and He sends the called ones out to do His will.

The Lord’s command to Gideon is very specific. He is told to take his father’s “second bullock”. Evidently, the first bullock had been dedicated to Baal, so the second one is the only one still clean. Gideon is to take that young bull and he is to use it to pull down his father’s altar to Baal. He is also to cut down the “grove” that stands by the altar.

Baal was the Canaanite god of fertility. The Canaanites believed that Baal was responsible for the success or failure of their crops and herds. They did everything in their power to worship Baal and ensure his blessings. The “grove” was a pole called the “Asherah pole”. Asherah was Baal’s female consort. Worshippers practiced vile sexual acts near the groves. They believed these acts would bring Baal’s favor upon them and their families.

God's command was very specific. He was to tear down the altar and then he was to build a new altar on top of the rock. Gideon was to build an altar to God, and he was to offer the young bull as a burnt offering to the Lord.

Since altars to Baal were built on top of prominent hills, this was an act that could not be hidden. Everyone would know what Gideon had done. If they didn't miss the altar to Baal, they would see the smoke from the altar on top of the rock.

In the same way, God's commands for our lives are not hidden in mystery. His commands for us are just as specific as the commands He gave to Gideon. To find His will, we simply need to read His Word, abide with Him in prayers and walk humbly with Him in His will.

***“Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will.”***

***Romans 12:2-3***

***“He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.  
And what does the Lord require of you?  
To act justly and to love mercy  
and to walk humbly with your God.”***

***Micah 6:8***

There are times when God will place a specific call on your life. When He does, He will let you know. He will speak through His Word, through His Spirit and through His church to reveal His will for you. Until He does that, just keep walking with Him, worshiping Him, talking to Him, listening to Him, and telling others about Him. When He wants more, He will show you!

Gideon was to build his altar and make his sacrifice on top of a hill, because God did not want what He was about to do to be hidden away. In the same way, God wants our worship of Him and our service to Him to be done out in the open for all to see. We must never be ashamed of Him and of what He calls us to do. Many are in our day. Very few are vocal and visible in the worship and work for the Lord. May He help us to honor Him by the way we worship and the way we work.

**2) It Was a Spiritual Command** – God had two purposes in issuing this command to Gideon. First, God intended to demonstrate His superiority over Baal. Gideon would topple Baal’s altar and Baal would be powerless to stop it from happening. Second, God wanted Gideon to know that God would be with him, regardless of the opposition he faced. This was a small step for Gideon, but it proved to him that God would never forsake him when he was doing the Lord’s will.

God is still accomplishing those same two objectives in our lives. Every time He gives us a command to obey, and we carry it out for His glory, He shows a lost world that He is God and that He is worthy to be worshiped. And every time He uses us to accomplish His will, He reminds us that we are not alone. He reminds us that His hand is on our lives for His glory! That is what makes serving Him so special. I don’t have to know what I am doing I just have to do what He tells me, and He takes care of the rest. When that happens, He is glorified, and I am encouraged!

The main reason the Baal altar had to be torn down was that it was a hindrance to God’s work being done in Gideon’s family, in his community and in his life. Until that pagan altar was destroyed and the people delivered from the power of Baal, God could not and would not move in power and glory.

The same is true in our lives. Until we take the initiative to rid ourselves of the things that hinder our walk with the Lord, we will never see God use us like He wants to.

*“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”*

*Hebrews 12:1*

By extension, that same principle holds true for the church. If we want God’s blessing and power to be upon us and what we do here, we must be clean and free from evil influences.

**3) It Was a Simple Command** – This was a command for Gideon to do something that he could do. This was a baby step to prepare him for what he could not do. Gideon had everything he needed to do what God was telling him to do; he merely had to do it. All he had to do was follow God by faith. God was using this simple command to prepare Gideon for something far more difficult. God was preparing Gideon to do things that were impossible. Gideon would have never believed God for the impossible, had he not seen the Lord first work in the possible. God uses the same strategy with us. When we are first saved, God gives us small tasks that we can accomplish.

**David** – Before he was called on to face Goliath, he first faced a lion and a bear! Those small victories helped to prepare David for the big battle that was just ahead!

**Abraham** – He was taught obedience by first leaving home to follow God. After a while, he was ready to believe God for a baby when he was 100! In just a few more years, Abraham would believe God for a miracle when he was commanded to offer Isaac as a burnt offering.

**Peter** - He denied the Lord the first time he was tested, but he learned to stand in faith and preach the Gospel in Holy Ghost power. Years later when it came time for Peter to die, he was ready to be crucified upside down.

As we prove faithful in the small things, God assigns us greater tasks. When we do those things by His grace, He leads us to do even greater things. That is how He works in each of our lives.

*“Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much.”*

*Luke 16:10*

Our problem is often that we do not do the small things He asks us to do, so we are never used by the Lord to do the greater things. When we will not pray, read the Bible, go to church faithfully, tithe, witness, or serve Him in all the many ways that are available, why should we expect Him to use us in great ways for His glory? He will never use us in great ways, until we first prove trustworthy in the small things of life.

## **II. THE COMPLIANCE GIDEON DISPLAYS**

**1) Gideon’s Faith on Display** – Without hesitation, Gideon did just as he was told to do. He had ten of his servants help him to tear down the altar to Baal and he cut down the grove. It was swift and complete obedience to the command of the Lord.

Would you be that willing and ready to do the Lord’s will? Would you jump when He calls and do exactly what He tells you to do without hesitation? That’s not how we typically respond is it?

Usually, like Moses, we make excuses why we can't do it. Or, also like Moses, we will suggest that the Lord find someone else to do it. Or, like Jonah, we run from the call of God, knowing full well that our disobedience dishonors Him, and that He will have His way in the end. May the Lord help us to develop a heart like Isaiah's. When the Lord issued His call in Isaiah's ear, Isaiah responded by saying, ***"Here am I; send me," Isaiah 6:8*** I can't testify for you, but that is where I want to be!

**2) Gideon's Fear on Display** – While Gideon demonstrated faith in doing what the Lord commanded, he demonstrated fear by doing what he did at night. He tried to hide his obedience to the Lord under the cover of darkness. ***Verse 26 says "he could do it by day"***. Gideon knew that his father, his brothers, and the rest of the village would be angry with him for tearing down the altar to Baal. He knew they would probably try to kill him for it. Gideon had faith, but it was small. He allowed fear to control his actions.

I am sure that most of us would be honest enough to say that we serve the Lord out of fear too. Oh, we have the faith to believe Him for what He wants us to do, but we fear our own failures. We fear the consequences of our decisions. We fear the people who know us and live around us. We fear our own inability. It is good that we have a realistic opinion of our own abilities, but we must never forget that success in the Lord's work is not our responsibility. Like David told Goliath, ***"The battle is the Lord's", 1 Samuel 17:47***. Success in the Lord's work is the Lord's business. Our duty is to submit to Him, allow Him to work through us, and He will accomplish His purposes, through us.

I've been preaching for a while now and still get terrified when it comes time to preach. I have never gotten used to doing what I am doing right now. However, I have reached the place where I think I understand my own limitations.

I am not capable of doing this thing He has called me to do, but if I will yield to Him, rest in His power, and allow Him to live through me, the task of preaching is accomplished. I think this was what Paul was talking about in *Galatians 2:20*, when he said,

***“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”***

That is the ultimate secret to success in spiritual service!

### **III. GIDEON DEFEATS THE CONSEQUENCE**

Gideon’s actions caused uproar in the community. God was pleased by what Gideon did, but He was the only one! We need to be aware that there will be consequences for our actions. When we serve the Lord faithfully and obediently, He will be glorified, but those around us, who have not received the same call we have received, will not understand what we are doing. Let’s take a brief look at the consequences Gideon faced, knowing that we will face similar consequences when we faithfully serve God.

**1) The Enmity of The Locals** – When the men of the village saw that the altar had been destroyed, they demanded to know who had done it. It wasn’t long until they knew that Gideon had destroyed the altar and the grove. When they found out that Gideon had done this, they went to Gideon’s father and demanded that Gideon be put to death for daring to defy Baal.

We are deceiving ourselves if we think that everyone is pleased when we obediently serve the Lord. There will be people all around us who will not understand. Family will feel left out. Unspiritual people will feel threatened. Lost people will accuse us of promoting ourselves.

David faced opposition. Jesus faced opposition. Paul faced opposition. It stands to reason that we can expect it too.

Instead of giving in to those who oppose us, we must obediently follow the Lord despite all that some would do to stop us. Let us determine that we will be found faithful, regardless of what others do!

**2) The Enslavement of His Loved Ones** – Gideon’s father responds to the attack against his son. I love his response to these men. He basically says, “Will you intercede for Baal? Will you be his savior? If you are still foolish enough to serve Baal, you should be stoned to death as the Law commands! If Baal is really a god, let him come to his own defense. If Baal is real, he shouldn’t need you to help him.”

When Gideon took his obedient stand and honored the Lord’s will in his life, God used it to touch his family. The altar of Baal was on Gideon’s father’s land. It was his idol! When Joash saw the faith of his own son, and the inability of Baal to protect himself, he was converted. He was done with idolatry, and he was ready to follow the true and living God. In other words, Gideon’s faith was used to deliver his family from spiritual bondage!

The results of your obedience may not be so dramatic, but God will use your obedience for His glory. He could use your obedience to change your family, your church, or your community. As He has in the past, He might use the obedience of a single individual to change the world!

I have seen the salvation of one soul in a family change that entire family. I have witnessed as one after another of the members in that family came to faith in Jesus. I have seen God take small acts of obedience, like an offering or some act of kindness, and use it to change someone’s life. Who knows what He might do if you and I were totally obedient to His will for our lives!

**3) The Experience He Lacked** – One of the greatest benefits of this entire event was in the life of Gideon. All Gideon knew was that the Lord was calling him to do a great work. He was afraid and he was unsure how things would work out. As Gideon followed the Lord in this matter, he learned that God would walk with him, protect him, and give him victory. That information would serve him well as the tasks he would be called to do grew larger.

Gideon learned on that day that God was able. He learned that God was more powerful than the false gods of the pagans. He learned that God was greater than the enemy. He learned that God would keep His Word and that He would protect His servants. That was valuable information for a future deliverer like Gideon.

When we first start to follow the Lord by faith, we are a lot like Gideon. We are filled with doubts, and we are filled with fears. As God leads us along, step by step, and we see Him give victory after victory, we are developed in our faith, and we come to trust Him for even greater things in our lives. That is His plan for us, and it is a plan that works!

Some of you are much farther along than you used to be. You are willing to trust the Lord for more than you could have at first. You can believe Him for big things that you could not have trusted Him for when you were first saved. Where did this faith come from? It came from God. It came from seeing Him move the mountains, meet the needs, answer the prayers, and lift the burdens. It came from seeing His power at work in and around you. It came because He developed you step-by-step, day-by-day, and event-by-event. He hasn't finished with you yet! There is more training ahead for you. God still has some altars He wants to see torn down. He still has some work He wants you to do. He still has a plan, and He has made you a part of that plan.

Everything that God allows into our lives is a teaching experience. He uses all the events of our lives to teach us about His grace and His power. He uses the valleys and the mountains to train us for greater things. If we learn the lessons and walk in faith, He will use us in ways we never imagined.

**In closing**, I want you to see that God worked in Gideon's life to train him for a huge task. God cultivated Gideon so that He could use Gideon for His glory. Did you know that He is working in your life also? Did you know that everything that comes your way is part of the training process? How are you doing with your training? *Is there some idol in your life that needs to be torn down before God can use you like He wants to? Is there some fear that holds you back?* Are you willing and available to the Lord for His use? Is He speaking to you about His plan for your life? If He is, come to Him today. Place your will, your life, and your all on the altar and watch God use you in a great way!

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Place: FCA

Date: April 28, 2024

Time: 10:30am

After Service Song: Create in Me a Clean Heart