

## “The New Us: Setting the Vision”

Dr. Geoffrey Plummer  
Calvary Baptist Church

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### Scripture

#### Gideon’s Story from Judges 6-7

**Theme:** Trusting in God’s Vision with Faith

**Christ:** Gideon Not Responsible for His Success -> God Is!

**Storyline:** Gideon is a young man in Israel at a time when the Midianites and the Amalekites are attacking Israel at harvest time, stealing food and supplies, leaving the men fighting for their lives. Israel has resorted to living in caves. Gideon is hiding inside a wine press, when the Lord comes to visit providing a vision for Gideon’s future as the savior of his people.

#### The Storyline of Judges 6

As we pick up the story in Judges 6, Israel has been ruled over by Midian for 7 years. The Midianites and their allies, the Amalekites, were attacking Israel at harvest time and pilfering the land, leaving it barren. This was a nation-wide event, from Jordan to Gaza. Israel was driven into hiding, making their homes in the caves to avoid detection in order to survive the famine.

The faithful in Israel cried out to God and God sent a prophet who responded that they were under judgment because of the nations’ unfaithfulness.

The writer of Judges recorded that Israel had been “**brought low**” – it was a time of national despair (Judges 6:6).

When we first see Gideon in the story, he is threshing wheat - in a winepress. Normally, wheat would be threshed up on a hill where the wind would take the chaff away on its own leaving the wheat easily collected. Threshing wheat in a winepress make the work twice as difficult because there was no wind. Threshing in a winepress makes it worse because the wheat was not easily seen. My father used to like to shell and eat bags of peanuts. It’s like when you are shelling peanuts and dropping the shells and accidentally dropping the peanuts in the same bag. When you go looking for the peanuts, they’re tough to find among all those shells!

**Gideon’s** Weak, Fearful, Faithless

**Initial** No Self-Confidence, No Self-Respect, No Appetite for Conflict

**Character:** No Trust in God, No Hope for Change in His Life

Gideon's mental state matched that of Israel: he was brought low, as well. He was beaten down, depressed, and felt worthless to defend himself.

But something changed in Gideon's life: **Someone Set a Vision for him!**

- 1) God intervened...
- 2) Gideon found a purpose and a mission...
- 3) Gideon stepped up to lead his people...

**Gideon's** Successful Leader, Valiant Warrior

**Final** Called to Be Ruler of Israel

**Character:** Recorded in Hebrews 11 "Hall of Faith" -> The 1<sup>st</sup> Judge listed

### **How did this happen?**

From a weak man to a strong man; From a faithless man to a faithful one; and from a nobody from nowhere to a member of the Hall of Fame.

By studying Gideon's example, we see:

### **How God Can Use Ordinary People to Perform Great Works for Him**

Here at Calvary Baptist Church, what is God calling us to do this week, this month, this year or in this life for Him?

It does not matter how old you are...

It does not matter how gifted you are...

It does not matter if you cannot see your future out in front of you...

God can use you and, indeed, wants to use you to build His kingdom, strengthen His flock, and spread His message...

If you are raising children or grandchildren, teaching the next generation of believers, this message is for you

If you are feeling like you are not serving God as you should be, this message is for you

If you feel that you are not capable of serving God because of age, infirmities, or lack of knowledge, then this message is for you

In looking at the Gideon story, I find **FOUR GIFTS** God gave Gideon:

- 1) A Vision for His Future
- 2) A Prescription for His Weakness
- 3) A Promise of His Presence
- 4) An Assurance through His Signs

With these FOUR gifts, God developed a fearful man into a fearless warrior... God developed Gideon into a leader, and we can follow this pattern to develop our leaders, still today.

In fact, the Gideon story is the center lesson when I teach leadership training in the church.

Sometimes, I can even get these into leadership lessons in business, too.

### **A Vision for His Future: Judges 6:12-13**

Gideon needed a vision of hope. He was in a hopeless state; weak, beaten, defeated, powerless. Have you ever been bullied by someone? Made to feel insignificant, weak, or worthless?

Verse 12: The Angel of the Lord shows up – a visit from the Pre-Incarnate Christ

“The Lord is with you, O’ valiant warrior!”

Gideon’s reaction: “Yeah, right...! Sure, I am...! You’re mocking me...!”

Verse 13: “Where have you been, God?”

Gideon blamed God for his plight.

“O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, ‘Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?’ But now the LORD has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian.”

Gideon gave the “Woe is me” reaction. God has abandoned me.

### **God showed up many times in the Old Testament:**

In a **VISIT** to Abraham in **Genesis 12**: Promised Land, Seed, and a Purpose

In a **DREAM** to Joseph in **Genesis 37**: Promised to Rule and Provide, and a Purpose

By a **PROPHET** with **Jeremiah 29**: Promised a Future and a Hope and a Purpose

In **Isaiah 6**, the great King Uzziah dies and there is a national mourning going on. Isaiah is mourning the fate of his people as well as himself. What happened? God showed up and Isaiah was given a vision of the Lord God sitting high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.

Can you relate to Isaiah or Gideon? Have you ever felt abandoned by God? In despair, without a vision of where you are going in life? Have you ever blamed God for your circumstances?

These are the moments when God shows up! Sometimes He comes in prayer and sweet assurance. He also shows up in the person of another believer reaching out to you.

**My job as a leader is to cast a vision for all in the church.** To tell them, “This is what you can be for Jesus!” -> to paint that picture of a future life of service to the Great King of the Universe.

Think to yourself, now, who can I reach out to and share a vision of the future:

Perhaps you are a parent, and your child needs that vision of their future.

Perhaps you're a grandparent, and your grandchild needs that vision.

Maybe it's someone who may not have any encouragement from anywhere else.

Maybe it's someone who may not know the Lord loves them.

Someone, perhaps, a member in this church who needs that vision of future service or calling of God?

*God gave Gideon a glorious vision of his future...*

### **A Prescription for His Weakness: Judges 6:14-15**

The Angel of the Lord gave Gideon a vision of his future as a valiant warrior.

#### **Judges 6:14-15**

"The LORD looked at him and said, "Go in this your strength and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian. Have I not sent you?"

He said to Him, "O Lord, how shall I deliver Israel? Behold, my family is the least in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father's house."

Gideon's responded about his present circumstances. He was from the lowest family; he was the youngest son; and says, "Come on God, I'm beating out wheat in a winepress, man."

Instead of agreeing with him, **God responded in two ways**. God promised His personal provision and gave Gideon a prescription for his weakness.

God tells Gideon that he will be the savior of Israel...

God told him to Go with "all of your supposed weakness, all your warts...all your failings...all your inadequacy..."

**You will be My chosen deliverer of My chosen people!**

Can you imagine Gideon's reaction to this statement?

"Man, you think he's got the right dude?"

**How often has God reassured us of His provision?**

God understood Gideon's weakness...just as He did Moses' weakness...and David's weakness...and your weakness. He understands it all. He knows you.

He tells us to put on the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6).

He tells Timothy that God “gave us a Spirit not of fear, but of strength” (**2 Timothy 1:7**).

He tells us that we are the overcomers in Revelation (**Revelation 2-3**).

He tells us through Paul in that “power is perfected in weakness” and Paul said that he would rather boast about his weaknesses so that the power of Christ may dwell in him” for when I am weak, then I am strong” (**2 Corinthians 12:9-10**).

Paul did discuss his personal weaknesses in Romans 7... It takes a lot of personal strength to do that...

Gideon was familiar with Moses, the one slow of speech.

David, the runt of his family’s litter and a lowly shepherd, was chosen by God to take down Goliath.

Church, what has God asked you to do...where your response has been a listing of what you could NOT do, your lowly circumstances, and how inadequate you are for the task?

*God gave Gideon a prescription for his weakness...*

### **A Promise of His Presence: Judges 6:16**

God also gave Gideon a promise of His presence. While Gideon said, “where are you, God?” God’s response was: “Right here with you...”

The Angel of the Lord said, in [verse 12](#), that “**the Lord is with you**” but now He repeats that presence with a surety. Gideon can trust God at His word.

Verse 6:16

But the LORD said to him, “Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat Midian as one man.”

God said the His presence was sure and that Gideon would accomplish the task as leader of Israel. There is a **two-fold promise here**, really. God would be there with Gideon, yes...but that also Gideon would become the leader of his people.

**God would make Gideon the leader of his people!** This weak, faithless man would become the leader of his people.

God repeatedly assures us of His presence throughout Scripture:

**Isaiah 7:14** “A virgin will be with child and bear a Son named Immanuel” -> God with us.

**Isaiah 41:10** “Do not fear for I am with you. Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely, I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”

**John 1:14** This Word became flesh and dwelt among us...

**John 14:18** “I will not leave you as orphans”

**Matthew 28:18-20**

Jesus told the church to go make disciples, teaching them to obey all that I commanded you, and “[I am with you](#), even to the end of the age”

When the Lord led the Twelve, he didn’t give them some written instructions and then turn them loose, did He? He spent 3 years with them, lifting them up through many failures and weaknesses.

One of the most beautiful lines in Scripture about Jesus and the Twelve is in:

**Mark 3:14**

“He appointed the Twelve and called them to Himself so **that He might be WITH them...**”

When I teach leadership development from Gideon, I use the pattern that the Lord used here:

- He Gave a Vision of Success
- He Encouraged through Initial Weakness
- He Promised to be Alongside

[Who has God called you to cast a vision for, who you can encourage, and for whom you would stand alongside them and walk with them through the struggles and weaknesses?](#)

This is how you make disciples, isn’t it? You don’t just mention a few things about God, lead them through a prayer of salvation, and then walk away, do you?

No, we are called to make disciples over time. It’s a long-term commitment and we need to be invested in others’ lives until our life on earth is no more.

*God gave Gideon the promise of His presence...*

**An Assurance through His Signs:      Judges 6:17 – Judges 7:9-11**

Lastly, God gave Gideon assurance through His signs.

Jesus was asked about giving of a sign by the Scribes and the Pharisees in Matthew 12.

**Matthew 12:38-39**

“Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.” But He answered and said to them, “An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet;”

No sign would be given to these men...because their reason for a sign was evil.

### Judges 6:17-18

"So, Gideon said to Him, "If now I have found favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You who speak with me. "Please do not depart from here, until I come back to You, and bring out my offering and lay it before You." And He said, "I will remain until you return."

Gideon asked for a sign, for proof, that the Lord was who He said He was. He was testing the Angel of the Lord. The Lord patiently waited for Gideon to prepare an offering and lay it before Him. When the offering came, the Lord accepted it with his staff on a rock and fire consumed it.

### Judges 6:22-23

"When Gideon saw that he was the angel of the LORD, he said, "Alas, O Lord GOD! For now, I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face." The LORD said to him, "Peace to you, do not fear; you shall not die."

Gideon knows that this is the Lord in front of him...

Later that night, the Lord gave Gideon a job to do...

**First Assignment:** Tear Down the Altar of Baal and the Asherah

### Judges 6:27

"Then Gideon took ten men of his servants and did as the LORD had spoken to him; and because he was too afraid of his father's household and the men of the city to do it by day, he did it by night."

Gideon is young, and filled with fear... He is not only taking down the altar, but he is also putting himself into conflict with his entire town. God called him to challenge the pervasive belief systems of the community and to follow His direction.

Following the Lord's leadership sometimes brings conflict. Trust me; I have experienced that myself.

Gideon went by night, still fearful of what God called him to do...

Have you experienced that before...where God called you to do something, and you were a little fearful at stepping out? Perhaps, God called you to share your faith in Him with someone else, and maybe confront someone about their belief system? **How did you do in those circumstances? Did the Lord provide assurance that He was with you?**

**Larger Assignment:** Contend for God in Battle

Gideon's response: "Give me a Sign!"

## Judges 6:36-38

"Then Gideon said to God, "If You will deliver Israel through me, as You have spoken, behold, I will put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground, then I will know that You will deliver Israel through me, as You have spoken." And it was so. When he arose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece, he drained the dew from the fleece, a bowl full of water."

Further on, God calls Gideon to a larger battle: to command Israel's army in battle against the Midianites and the Amalekites. Gideon wants more assurance. He tells God his terms about the fleece...**in essence saying, "Show me you're with me!"**

The next morning, it was so...the fleece was wet, and the ground was dry. **"So, we're good here, right Gideon? Get to work and command the armies as I said you would!"**

### One More Time?

Well, maybe just one more sign to be sure...? Gideon is exhibiting **a very weak faith in God**...either that or he believes in incredible coincidences about the presence of morning dew...

## Judges 6:39-40

"Then Gideon said to God, "Do not let Your anger burn against me that I may speak once more; please let me make a test once more with the fleece, let it now be dry only on the fleece, and let there be dew on all the ground." God did so that night; for it was dry only on the fleece, and dew was on all the ground."

Is Gideon stalling? Perhaps, God will change His mind if I keep questioning Him...maybe I'll prove to Him that I'm not the man for the job?

How do you respond when God gives you a task to do? Do you doubt His direction, question His calling, and seeking sign after sign.

How is your faith? Is it strong?

Or I might ask: **Are you getting fleeced?**

God did not immediately consume Gideon for his weak faith, but instead, did as Gideon asked, and He provided another sign.

The fleece was now dry and everything else was wet. God continued to reassure Gideon that His initial vision for him as a warrior was real. He had faith IN Gideon...

*God gave Gideon an Assurance though His signs...*



So, the third sign is apparently the charm, and Gideon goes off to prepare his troops for battle. He first has 32,000 troops, but that is too many...

The Lord drops the number to 10,000 but that is too many...then the Lord drops the number to 300, and that is just fine.

As Gideon prepares to attack, the Lord does something amazing...he offers a sign...

### The Lord Offers a Sign

#### Judges 7:9-11

"Now the same night it came about that the LORD said to him, "Arise, go down against the camp, for I have given it into your hands. "But if you are afraid to go down, go with Purah your servant down to the camp, and you will hear what they say; and afterward your hands will be strengthened that you may go down against the camp."

Later on...after many victories...

### The People Want to Make Gideon King

#### Judges 8:22-23

"Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, "Rule over us, both you and your son, also your son's son, for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian." But Gideon said to them, "I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the LORD shall rule over you."

Gideon's response...not on my watch...we are ruled by the Lord. This is the reaction of a true, godly leader.

It is not about the personal credit...it's about the Lord's Glory.

So, church, this is the Lord's lesson for us today. This is the pattern of the Lord's leadership development program for His people.

- 1) You Cast a Vision
- 2) Support each other through any weaknesses
- 3) Promise your consistent presence
- 4) Give constant encouragement and signs of your support

And, afterward, you bring all the praise and glory to God for what He has done in the life of those you affect.

### What do we want Jesus to give us a vision for here at Calvary Baptist Church today?

#### Communion