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# **The Sword of the Lord and of Gideon**

**# 728-B**

**Series: God's Living Legends (Part 1)**

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# The Sword of the Lord and of Gideon

Some of the Living Legends we have been studying of late are men and women whose lives rate relatively low on the Biblical scale of recognition, don't they? It does, however, seem to add an atmosphere of mystery to their lives as their stories unfold. I think that it is safe to say that many of us have never really studied or known who Othniel was before. And what about Ehud? Eglon? Shamgar? Deborah? Barak? Some of these rate a higher level of visibility in God's land of legends than others, but none of them seems to be a household word. Yet, as this lesson of Israel's next judge begins to unfold, we see again a more familiar name. Hence, this is a more familiar story. As we pass through the annals of Biblical history, alongside the names of men like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and Joshua, there stands the name of our Living Legend of the hour. His name is Gideon.

Gideon's life and his story, though both seem relatively brief, are well-known to most of us and even to most of our children. One interesting insight into Gideon's life at the outset, however, might be a gentle reminder that the memories we have of Gideon are not emblazoned on history's pages because of what he did, but rather because of what God did with him and through him and even in spite of him. What is more amazing is how God chose to do it. So the bottom line of Gideon's life is glory to God. Let's pay close attention, then, because that is the inscription God wants to engrave across the finished work of each of our lives as well.

Gideon is listed in God's hall of heroes in Hebrews 11, so his name rightfully deserves legendary status. But, as with us, the glory in his story resounds to the praise of our God and God's seemingly slow and awkward ways to victory. This lesson is entitled, "The Sword of the Lord and of Gideon."

## I- GOD'S KIND OF CIRCUMSTANCES

As our last lesson faded into a conclusion of praise to God, we had walked with Deborah and Barak through an exciting

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encounter with Satan's Sisera. In this case, we read that God "discomfited" the enemy. The enemy happened to be the Canaanites, who had mightily oppressed God's children for 20 years. The Bible says that God sent them confusion and thus set the stage for Deborah, Barak and ten thousand ill-equipped Israelis to utterly destroy Sisera's Sanctimonious Sea of Military Mighty Men. The final blow was at the hand of Jael, another relatively unknown heroine of history who "pulled up stakes" at exactly the right time. She paid a short but deliberate visit to the enemy's temple and made a deep impression, to say the least. So Sisera was slain, Barak was boisterous and Deborah was delighted. She was so delighted that she called the jubilant Jews together and penned a pattern of praise to her triumphant God. She and Barak formed a dynamic duo, delivered a descriptive duet and led the whole nation in giving glory to God for what He had done.

Once again, while Deborah lived, the people obeyed. We read in verse 31 of chapter 5,

And the land had rest forty years.

Unfortunately, the pattern of temporary trust fades once more into a ridiculous rebellion. When Deborah and Barak were dead, the inconsistent Israelis jump on the Disneyland Dipper, their roller coaster of experience, once again. At least, like some of us, they were consistent in their inconsistency. Our story takes up in Judges 6:1. By now the words are so repetitious that we could take and make a chorus out of these and let the rest of them be the stanzas. Let's read on,

And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD:  
and the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian seven  
years.

And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel: and  
because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them  
the dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strong  
holds.

And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites  
came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east,  
even they came up against them;

And they encamped against them, and destroyed the  
increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no  
sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass.

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For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it.

And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the LORD.  
(Judges 6:1-6)

This was the same song, fourth verse. The children of Israel turned their backs on God and turned their eyes to the gods of this world, and God relinquished control of them once again. This time God gave them over into the hands of the Midianites. Now just imagine the horror that followed. The children of Israel lived in utter fear. This passage says that they were holed up in mountain caves. Like hunted animals, God's people sought refuge from their hated oppressors; but the Midianites hunted them down, destroyed their crops, stole their sheep, their oxen and their donkeys. So defenseless were the Jews against their foes, that verse 5 says that the enemy was like an army of locusts turned loose on the land to destroy it. So numerous were they, verse 5 goes on to tell us, that they were "without number". There were too many of them to count. Israel was thrown into a state of total poverty. Their condition, from all human viewpoints, was one of total hopelessness. What a shame that they needed a backdrop such as that to recognize their need. What a shame that we need such a backdrop, but so often we are so spiritually self-sufficient that only circumstances that create an atmosphere of hopelessness can create an attitude of dependence. Finally verse 6 ends with, "and the children of Israel cried unto the Lord." Verse 7 continues,

And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD because of the Midianites,

That the LORD sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage;

And I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drave them out from before you, and gave you their land;

And I said unto you, I am the LORD your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not obeyed my voice.  
(Judges 6:7-10)

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Here, then, is the first of many times where the Scripture records that God sent a prophet unto Israel. This prophet is not named. We know nothing about him *except that God sent him*. In reality, what more do we need to know? His message was as powerful as his calling, for he only spoke the Word of God. He begins in verse 8 as he says, “Thus saith the LORD”. That one phrase established the finality of the authority of his message. God said it, and he was but an amplifier playing the message God had placed in his heart. His message is but a reminder of everything God had done and God had commanded. His was the kind of message we all love to hear. It was quick and to the point. He said here is the message from God,

I brought you up, I brought you out, I delivered you, I drove them out, I gave you their land, I told you I AM the LORD and I told you not to go near their gods. You didn't do it. Let us pray.  
(Judges 6:8b-10 paraphrased)

### II- GOD'S KIND OF MAN

So much for God's kind of circumstances. He waited for a time of total helplessness, then responded to an attitude of total dependence. Here come the judges once again. Once again, God sends a deliverer. Here comes God's kind of man. We will look at God's perspective of Gideon in verse 12 and Gideon's perspective of God in verse 13. We will look at God's response to Gideon's perspective in verse 14 and Gideon's perspective of Gideon in verse 15. We will then look at God's final response to Gideon's response in verse 16. Let's begin reading in verse 11,

And there came an angel of the LORD, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winneps, to hide it from the Midianites.

And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.  
(Judges 6:11-12)

Now God's perspective of Gideon was the same as God's perspective of us. He sees us as what we can become once He has control of our lives. Jeremiah 29:11-13 is a passage that we all ought to have memorized. It says this:

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

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Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.

And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. (Isaiah 29:11-13)

God says, “When I look at you, I think of a man or a woman who will be somebody special some day, if you seek Me with all of your heart.” Here was Gideon threshing grain a little at a time, flailing it instead of treading it, because that was all he could do. He was down by the winepress where his enemies might not find him. He may well have felt like a coward, cringing in fear of the enemy. But the angel looks down the road at Gideon, filled with God, and says, “The Lord is with thee, you mighty man of valour.” That was God’s perspective of Gideon. So to God, Gideon was a hero in the making. Now listen to Gideon’s perspective of God. It is not too encouraging.

And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. (Judges 6:13)

Gideon’s perspective of God was not quite so positive as God’s perspective of Gideon. It never is. God’s anointed deliverer fires back three somewhat sarcastic statements that literally reek of bitterness. Statement number one is, “*If the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? Woe are we.*” It is much like Rebekah’s statement back in Genesis, “If it be so, then why?” In other words, “What kind of God would let this happen to His children?” Statement number two is in a similarly bitter vein, as Gideon replies, “*And where are all the miracles our parents told us about? I haven’t seen any miracles. What makes You think I can expect one now?*” Statement number three is a sum total of the first two as Gideon says, “*Besides, the Lord has forsaken us.*”

Basically this “man of valor” as God saw him had a very weak impression of his God. He says, “What kind of God would do this? What makes you think He can do miracles? He has abandoned us anyhow.” That was Gideon’s perspective of God. If you and I were God, we would have turned to the angel and said, “Scratch Gideon. He has a bitter and faithless spirit. We can’t use him.” Not our God. God saw that bitterness as a tool to develop a man whose faith had been borne out of the reality of unbelief. This

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unbelief would be destroyed in the crucible of experience. God saw the makings of a man of faith. God responds to Gideon by simply ignoring his accusations. He exchanges them instead for a promise.

And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee? (Judges 6:14)

God said, “Here is a promise. You go in My strength and you will save Israel.” Now we see Gideon’s image of Gideon in verse 15 as we see that not only was he bitter, but his self-image would fit in a thimble and still have room for his thumb.

And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house. (Judges 6:15)

“They had to build another rung at the bottom of the ladder for me,” Gideon said. You might compare that statement with Moses’ in Exodus 3:11 or Saul’s in I Samuel 9:21. You say, “Why does God so often pick men who have no self-confidence? Why so many weak self-images in God’s garden of giants? Why doesn’t God choose men who think they can?” You know the reason. *His strength is made perfect in weakness* (from II Corinthians 12:9). The man who thinks he can will conspire with God to help Him out. God doesn’t need helpers. God needs empty vessels to fill with Himself. God didn’t disqualify Gideon for having a bad self-image. There is nothing wrong with a bad self-image so long as it leads to appropriating the image of God. To God, Gideon was a mighty man of valour. To Gideon, he was from the least of the families and he was the least of the least in his family. God knew that. That is why He called him. That is why He called tiny little Israel. He said that they were the least of all the nations. Gideon said, “I came from a family of nobodies and I am the least of them all.” God once again didn’t bother to console Gideon and remind him of what a neat guy he was. Instead, God simply reminds him of His promise of greatness.

And the LORD said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man. (Judges 6:16)

Gideon looked in the mirror and saw nothing. God looked at Gideon and saw a mighty man of valour. God sees in you a mighty man, a mighty woman, before whom one day the enemy will not be able to stand, because God sees what you will become



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in Jesus Christ. So what if you are a nobody? So was Ehud. So was Othniel. So was Shamgar. So was Deborah. God is in the nobody business. He buys them with His Son and makes them into the real somebodies of a spiritual kingdom.

### III- GOD'S KIND OF PATIENCE

The situation was hopeless. That is God's kind of circumstances. Gideon was helpless. That is God's kind of man. But how do you turn a doubting, bitter, insecure young man into a mighty man of valour? That, my friend, takes God's kind of grace and God's kind of patience. Now we see Gideon's cry in verse 17, a cry of faithlessness,

And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then show me a sign that thou talkest with me.

Gideon was still stuck on complaint number two. Remember? He hadn't seen any of those miracles that Mommy and Daddy claimed God did from time to time. There had been no seas parted for him. There had been no plagues stilled for him. There had been no water flowing from a rock for him. He had never seen manna and never had quails fall from heaven. He had never seen God destroy a nation the way Barak did. All he had ever seen was oppression and persecution. The silence he had heard from heaven had been deafening to his ears.

So Gideon makes God a deal. He says, "I will believe you if you will show me a sign. Prove to me that you are the one you say you are." In the next six verses, Gideon receives the first of many signs from God. Gideon, first of all, tells the angel to check in at the Ophrah Hilton and take it easy for a while. Meanwhile, he runs to the kitchen to whip up a going away present. The angel agrees. Gideon soon returns with a roasted young goat, some unleavened bread, and a pot of soup. The angel thanks Gideon, then puts the goat meat and the rolls on a nearby rock, pours the soup over the meat and then the angel touches the first TV dinner with his staff, and presto, whammo, fire comes out of the rock and consumes the whole nine yards. God had just invented the first microwave oven. Gideon was so impressed that he fell on his face in fear that he had seen God so intimately. In verse 23, the Lord comforts him and promises him that he will not die, having seen God at such close range. Gideon then builds an altar. Verse 24 tells us that it still stands in Ophrah.

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Now that Gideon had a fresh encounter with God, God tests his faithfulness as He so often does. God reveals His power and we are impressed. Then He tests our newly experienced vision of Himself by creating a situation in which *our experience has to be exercised into faith*. In verses 25 and 26, God tells Gideon to go out to his father's pasture, tear down the altar to Baal, take one of his dad's young bullocks and make a sacrifice to God. The wooden image of Astarte was to be chopped up and used for firewood. That is the best thing to do with the world's idols anyhow.

Gideon did just what God commanded. He did it at night because verse 27 says that he thought he had a better chance of avoiding a riot. So the next morning the local "gallop" poll was released, and Gideon was voted the least popular guy in town. He was the guy who had made a bonfire out of Baal. Verse 30 tells us how our Living Legend was announced as the winner of the loser award. The grand prize was a free trip to the undertaker at Ophrah.

Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son, that he may die: because he hath cast down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the grove that was by it.

And Joash said unto all that stood against him, Will ye plead for Baal? will ye save him? he that will plead for him, let him be put to death whilst it is yet morning: if he be a god, let him plead for himself, because one hath cast down his altar.

Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, Let Baal plead against him, because he hath thrown down his altar.

Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel.

But the spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered after him.

And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh; who also was gathered after him: and he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali; and they came up to meet them.

And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said,

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Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said.

And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water. (Judges 6:30-38)

So Joash, apparently under conviction for building an altar to Baal in the first place, regains his backbone and says, “You want to kill my son to defend your god? If he is a god, he ought to be able to defend himself.” Poppa gives Gideon a new nickname, “Jerubbaal”, meaning “let Baal plead for himself”. The battle lines are now drawn, and God has goaded the enemy into action. Our still uncertain hero offers God another deal. He inaugurates the term, “putting out the fleece”. This literally means to ask God to prove Himself. He tells the Lord, “God, I will put a fleece of wool on the ground and if you really want me to take on this gang of awesome adversaries, You let the dew come in, let the fleece be wet and the ground be dry. Okay? Lord, if you do that,” bargains our reluctant field general, “then I will believe You really want us to tackle that legion of locusts out there.” Sure enough, when morning comes, the ground is dry and Gideon wrings a whole bowl of water out of a fleece. Case closed. Well, almost.

Gideon had enjoyed the Mickey Mouse microwave show so much that he believed that every time God wanted him to do something, He owed him a sign. The problem was that Gideon did not need a sign. He had the word of God. God had already told him what to do. God had told him to go. However, God is so patient with Gideon and God is so patient with us. So Gideon “puts out the fleece” and God lovingly gives him another sign. The problem is that Gideon goes into the “sign” business. Our faithless hero now cries, “Lord, I will put out the fleece again. This time, let’s reverse the deal. Wet ground, dry fleece. Let’s try that one, Lord.” That is the problem with asking for signs. It gets to be a game and God becomes the object of our entertainment. But He is so patient that He often obliges our miracle-minded mentality. In this case, He did. The fleece was dry, the ground was wet. Gideon is finally satisfied that God meant what He said in the first place.

IV- GOD'S KIND OF ODDS

So we have seen God's kind of circumstances, God's kind of man and God's kind of patience. Now enter God's kind of odds. Number one on God's list of all-time favorites is "Mission Impossible". This, of course, is the part of the story that is the most familiar to most of us. Gideon gets up at sunrise and gathers together 32,000 Israeli infantrymen, and he prepares to tackle his ominous oppressors. But in verse 2 of chapter 7, God calls General Gideon on his hotline and says, "Big Boy, you have a minor flaw in your battle plan. You are over-staffed."

And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.

Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand. (Judges 7:2,3)

Enter God's kind of odds. We will take a look at God's objection, God's reason and God's solution. God's objection is simply that Gideon had too many troops. God's reason was also simple. He said, "If you go in there with 32,000 warriors, you might think that *you* won the battle. You are not in the business of delivering God, Gideon. God is in the business of delivering you. I'll tell you what, Gideon, send home everybody who is afraid, everybody who is here by duty, not by calling." That took care of 22,000 of the 32,000. I think you know where we would have been, right? You can almost see Gideon begin to panic now as the ranks were evaporating. He must have figured, "Let's see God get Himself out of this one. What is He going to do with only 10,000 troops?" We see what God is going to do as we continue,

And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go. (Judges 7:4)

The test that God gave them concerned how they drank the water. Those that lapped water up like a dog were put in one category and those that got down on their knees to get the water,

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He put in another category. Those that lapped like a dog turned out to be 300 men. God says to Gideon, “Okay, there are our troops.” So God gives man the option to retreat and then He exercises His option to select the troops. While I doubt that His method of selection would be bought by our selective service system today, it served God’s purposes, and all He had left were 300 men.

Now I don’t know what must have passed through the minds of the 31,700 as they were trudging home. I sure don’t know what went on in the minds of the 300 who looked around to see that they were all that were left. But I *do* know what passed through the mind of God. He wanted to get the numbers down where nobody in his wildest imagination could attribute this victory to anybody but God. It was a battle of three hundred men against a legion of locusts. It was an army of men too great to count, against a handful of Hebrews and a God who had never lost a battle He intended to win. My friends, whenever those kinds of numbers begin to surface in your life, get ready for a victory celebration. *Those are God’s kinds of odds.* Now get ready for Act V of the drama of Gideon and his God. Get ready for “God’s kind of battle plan.” Let’s review the story by looking at a summary of the events.

### V- GOD’S KIND OF BATTLE PLAN

1- God takes 99% of the troops out to avoid the temptation to shift the glory from God to man.

2- God encourages His leader in verses 9-15. God gives him another sign, one he didn’t even ask for. Gideon leaps with enthusiasm and hustles back to his 300 hand-picked soldiers.

3- God divides the troops into three groups.

4- God passes out His arsenal of divine destruction. “Okay gang, does everybody have a trumpet?” God asks. “A what?” they answered. “Everybody got a trumpet?” God replies. “Yeah, we’ve each got a trumpet,” came their puzzled reply. “Everybody got a pitcher and a torch?” God inquires. “Yeah, we’ve each got a pitcher and a torch,” they respond. Wouldn’t the enemy laugh if they saw what Gideon’s Gang was bringing into battle? Once again, the enemy always seems to forget that God doesn’t use the world’s firepower to defeat His foes. He uses things that are weak and foolish and are of themselves useless to bring to nothing the

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legions of hell that surround the camp of the church of Jesus Christ.

5- In verse 17 the troops are ordered to play "Follow the Leader." Gideon says, "You do what I do and you do it when I do it." Each man had a trumpet, an empty clay pitcher, and a torch lamp. They divided into three equal groups at equal distances around the camp. Now just imagine yourself snoring away in that camp down there. At the exact time that God prescribes, they all blow their trumpets. Can you imagine waking up in the middle of the night to hear 300 trumpets all around you? Then they broke their clay pitchers all at one time. It must have sounded like an atom bomb. Then they all held up their torches in one hand. It probably looked like the world was on fire. They held the trumpet in the other hand and with one voice, 300 strong, they shouted, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." We would have been petrified. So was the enemy. The Living Bible says,

Then they just stood and watched as the whole vast enemy army began running around in a panic, shouting and running away.

For in the confusion the Lord caused the enemy troops to begin fighting and killing each other... [That is what they always do.] (Judges 7:21,22a)

6- Gideon calls for men from Naphtali, Asher and Manasseh. They seize the fords of the Jordan River once again. They complete the task of destroying the enemy once again and bring home the heads of two kings on a platter.

Now we will stop the story of Gideon there for now, but oh, what a God we have. How strange and how wonderful are His ways. Isaiah says that they are higher than ours. You ask, "How much higher?" Isaiah answers, "As much higher as heaven is above the earth." Because His purposes are higher, His ways are different. They are so different, that to the world they seem clumsy, slow, awkward, outdated, antiquated, unworldly and unlikely to succeed. That, my friend, is what God's ways are all about. Come to understand His ways and your whole philosophy of spiritual warfare will change. Come to understand His ways and you will be able to rest and even sort of chuckle as the world, even the Christian world, grossly underestimates what your God is about to do. The key to being spiritually changed by the story of "The Sword of the Lord and of Gideon" is coming to fully grasp that our God marches to a different drummer than the world.

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It was He who composed the original score. You begin to get in step with the music of His heartbeat and you will never feel out of tune again.

### VI- GOD'S KIND OF LIFE

We might close this lesson by adding a sixth point to our outline. We will call it "God's kind of life". I believe we can reach seven conclusions from this story.

- 1- God's view of circumstances is different.
- 2 God's view of us is different.
- 3- God's kind of odds are different.
- 4- God's kind of timing is different.
- 5- God's kind of tools are different.
- 6- All of God's ways are different.
- 7- All of God's ways are perfect.

1- I think, first of all, that we must all agree that God's view of our circumstances is different from ours. This is true because we view life from a physical realm and God views life from a spiritual realm. Because of this, we sometimes miss the point that what the world often views as tragedy, God's people come to see as triumph. To the world, death is a tragedy. To the Christian it is a triumph. To the world, life is judged by how good life's circumstances are. To God, life is judged by how much good life's circumstances have brought to your spiritual life. Therefore, the darkest of hours, from man's perspective, are often the keys that unlock the door of the Spirit to the best God has to offer for the Christian. When the world sees the Christian rejoicing amidst what it considers tragedy, it stands in awe of our God. That is because God's view of circumstances is different. The question is, is ours?

2- God's view of us is different. We may see ourselves with no self-image at all. The world says that is failure. God says that is the beginning of success. We may see our God as far away and absent without leave as Gideon did. With no healthy view of ourselves and no healthy view of God, life has no meaning at all. But our precious God looks at us and sees uncut gems waiting to be polished and placed among the crown jewels of eternity. He sees us as mighty men and women of valour just waiting for His touch to set us free. Come to see yourself as God sees you, beloved, and really begin to live because God's view of us is decidedly different.

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3- God's kind of odds are decidedly different. The world says if you outnumber them, you can outperform them. But our God has never been in the numbers game. He decided to use one life, His Son, to change to the world. He then chose twelve men to form His worldwide ministry of evangelism. Throughout history and throughout Scripture, He has always delighted in glorifying Himself through a committed minority. Oh, that the church of Jesus Christ would reawaken to that fact today. Man wants to fill auditoriums; God wants to fill hearts. Man thinks there is power in numbers; but God best shows His power through a handful of men with a heart full of God. God's kind of odds are different.

4- God's kind of timing is different. Chances are that the miracle you long for may come in the closing minutes of the eleventh hour. When all hope is gone, your Isaac may be born, your Jericho will fall, your Deliverer will come. God's clock, which ticks to the tune of character, moves interminably slow to the world. The world is rushing on its own way. That is because they are building buildings and God is building trees. Trees take years. The world thinks that God doesn't plan ahead or things would happen more quickly. But we know better. If our Isaacs had come one day earlier, God would have had to share the glory. God's goal is people, so God's timing is decidedly different.

5- God's tools are also different. Man uses that which is polished and perfected to glorify the tool. God uses that which is often seemingly shabby and unusable to glorify the Creator. He uses the foolish to confound the wise. The church has, by and large, forgotten that truth as it becomes immersed in the world it was sent to redeem through its very difference. It has adopted the world's ways as its ways, and now there is little room for a God of miracles to display His power. The church sometimes forgets and thinks that the way to win the world is with plans and programs and promotions and personalities. The church is using the world's philosophies and tools to try to win a confused world and join them or copy their methods. But God, my friend, is still using trumpets and empty pitchers and lamps and a message to change His world.

The trumpet is the body of Christ whose unity comes through diversity. At its sound, all of God's soldiers surface from everywhere to take on the enemy. One day soon, that trumpet will sound again and all of God's children will meet together once and for all for the great worship service of all eternity. The empty



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pitchers are the individual lives that make up the church. Unless they are empty, they cannot be filled. Unless they are breakable they cannot be used. But as God allows them to seemingly shatter beneath life's blows, the sound of their breaking causes a confused world to self-destruct. That is because as they are shattered to be re-formed, there is revealed the light that so shines before men that they may glorify our Father which is in heaven.

The light calls attention to the message. The message is: The Sword of the Lord and of Gideon. The Sword of the Lord and of John. The Sword of the Lord and of Susie. The message is personal. Each message is slightly different, but each begins with The Sword of the Lord. Each begins, the Sword of the Lord and...you. The message becomes a ministry and a confused enemy begins to destroy himself. God's tools are different. They are unpolished and often untrained, seemingly out of date. But always they are strong enough to win the conflict and always weak enough to cause the glory to be given to God. Perhaps where we have lost our way is forgetting that the purposes of God are not to call attention to the church, but the purpose of the church is to call attention to God. You don't do that with plants or programs, you do that with people, people who have been transformed by the touch of God.

6- God's ways are different. You are wronged. The world says to fight back. God says to turn the other cheek. *That* is different. You are taken advantage of and the world says to demand your rights. God says to go another mile. *That* is different. Your mate rejects you or scorns your love and the world says to trade them in for a new model. God says to love them all the more. *That* is different. Your enemy tries to destroy you, and the world says to destroy them first. God says to love your enemies, pray for them, bless them and do good to them. Always man's ways and God's ways are opposite poles apart. Our ways please us. God's ways please Him. His ways are distinct and different. They are dynamic in their simplicity. They are devastating in their awkwardness. But they are always different.

7- All God's ways are perfect. What He has promised He will always perform, and He will do it more beautifully than you or I ever dreamed was possible. *But chances are that He will not do it our way.* Isn't it great that He doesn't? His ways are higher and nobler and grander than ours. We don't need to copy the world's

## The Sword of the Lord and of Gideon

ways to win the world; we need to learn God's ways and come to be in awe of their utter simplicity and their profound foolishness from man's perspective. God has the enemy on the run. Satan is confused, but not by our modern, fine-tuned army of saints, marching triumphantly from their elegant edifices modeled after his. No, the enemy is confused and frightened by that strange, straggly band of men and women who are circling the camp and, though divided in ways, seem united in purpose. The enemy is on the run because he has heard the strange sound of trumpets in the distance. He has heard the loud crash of empty pitchers fill the night air. He has seen the light surrounding him on the hillside and he is afraid. We may not know it, but the enemy knows that all we need to do to finish him off is, at precisely God's second in history, shout out in unison, "The Sword of the Lord and of Gideon. The Sword of the Lord and of Jesus." At that moment, the slow and awkward ways of God will bring, once more, total victory.

The Sword of the Lord and of Gideon

THE SWORD OF THE LORD AND OF GIDEON

The sword of the Lord and of Gideon,  
What a crude, outnumbered crew!  
Against a frenzied multitude,  
What could three hundred do?

But this was God's kind of setting,  
And these were His kind of odds.  
With the sword of the Lord and of Gideon  
The battle was already God's!

So look not at life through the eyes of the world  
Nor panic in life's crisis hours,  
For God sees life from a different plane  
His ways so much higher than ours!

His timing seems slow and awkward  
And, yet, with precision He moves,  
And just at the second to most honor Him  
Once more His great power He proves.

His tools seem unrefined and poor  
To encounter the world's elite,  
Yet from pitchers and lanterns and trumpets, still  
The enemy falls in defeat.

Oh, to see life through the ways of God,  
Oh, His perspective to see;  
Oh, to see us as God does,  
Men of valor one day to be.

Oh, to see life through the eyes of God  
His precious vision to heed,  
That the Sword of the Lord and of Gideon  
Is all we will ever need!

For Focus and Application

1- Reread Judges, chapter 6, verses 1-6. Try to imagine what it must have been like to be a child of the King, guaranteed to live in victory, living in utter fear and utter seclusion. Now compare that kind of life to the life of partial victory you have sometimes experienced in the spiritual realm. What are the common denominators? What was God waiting for? (verse 7) What is He waiting for in our lives?

## What's Your Plan?

2- Try to imagine yourself in Gideon's shoes. Judges 6:15 tells us what Gideon thought of himself. Why does this low self-esteem not bother God?

3- What Gideon said in verse 13 *did bother God, but He ignored it*. What was lacking in Gideon's life at this point? Paraphrase his three arguments with God. How similar are they to what you have either thought or said to God when He tried to challenge you or encourage you of His presence or promises?

4- Gideon's next problem had the same root cause but took a different form. He was willing to trust God, *but only if He continuously proved Himself by signs and wonders*.

5- What has "putting out a fleece" come to mean to believers? Why must it be used sparingly? What dangers lurk within its repeated use? Why do you think God honored his requests?

6- Perhaps there is some spiritual warfare going in your world or your life right now. Try to draw a parallel between how God fights battles and how the world does, using the story of Gideon. Why do we so often reject God's seemingly slow and awkward ways? Why does He insist on using them?

7- Review the seven principles that make up "God's kind of life" on pages 15-18. Try to write out a personal example from your own life that illustrates each of those truths experientially.

8- Spend time this week listing the wonderful ways of God and thanking Him one by one

that His ways are not as our ways, but as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways higher than ours.

(Isaiah 55:9)

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