

Unbelievable

Episode 3: The Incredible Shrinking Army

INTRODUCTION - Magic, Superstition, & Discernment

Matthew 12:38-39

THE STORY - The Flawed Faith of A Biblical Hero

Judges 6-8

- **Context:** Approximately 1400 BCE, after 40 years of peace, Israel again deteriorates in their relationships with God.
- **Those Nasty Midianites:** Each year at harvest time the Midianites would raid Israel's land and steal or destroy their produce and livestock, forcing the Israelites to hide in caves.
- **The Unnamed Prophet:** Because Israel cries out to God, an unnamed prophet offers them encouragement.
- **Gideon ("Jerubball"):** The son of Joash, a simple farmer who seems to have no military experience, is called upon by God to be the next "judge" of Israel.
- **The Angel of The LORD:** Gideon is visited by "the angel of the LORD" who addresses him as "O valiant warrior" (NASB) and gives him specific instructions, beginning with tearing down the pagan altar and idol which his father built.
- **The Fleece:** Because Gideon's faith needs bolstering, he devises a "test" for God, asking him to perform a double-miracle with his fleece. God complies.
- **The Shrinking Army:** In order to make it clear that his power is the source of Israel's victory, God has Gideon whittle his large army down to a mere 300 men.
- **A Strange Victory:** Gideon's 300 men defeat the Midianites through surprise and 'psychological warfare', driving them into a panic so they slay each other.
- **The Aftermath:** Gideon and his men pursue and slay the Midianites and their leaders, avenge his brothers' death, and he declines the Israelites' request to become their king, but does take on some aspects of kingship, such as riches and women. He uses the gold to make an ephod that, once again, ensnares Israel into idolatry.

LOOKING DEEPER - Reading Below The Lines

Take Out #1 - No matter how flawed it may be, God honours our faith.

Take risks. Ask questions. Make mistakes. But move forward!

Hebrews 11:32; Matthew 12:20

Take Out #2 - It is possible to honour our family members while we make different spiritual choices.

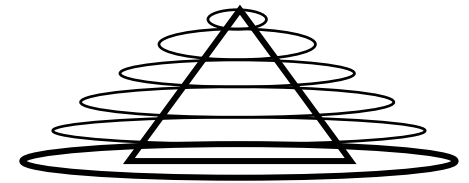
Gideon honoured his father, but tore down his pagan idol and altar. In the end, his father was moved to stand by Gideon.

Luke 12:51-53; 14:26

Take Out #3 - God's will is always near and clear to you.

If God wants you to know something very specific, he can tell you - he knows where you live. Otherwise, make wise choices based on what you do know and you will always be following God's will. We should live from the bottom up...

Marriage →
Kids →
Career →
Education →
Major Purchases →
Daily Decisions, Attitudes, & Actions →



1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; Hebrews 13:5; 2 Timothy 2:22

CONCLUSION - Finding And Following God's Will

Joshua 1:8

HOME CHURCH QUESTIONS

Warming Up...

1. After briefly reviewing this week's message, share one new thing you learned or one thing that most challenged, convicted, or encouraged you.

Look To The Book...

2. Read Judges 6. a) What verse stands out to you the most in this passage? Why? b) Notice the pattern shown in the end of chapter five and the start of chapter six. Also see the same pattern in 8:33-35. Do you ever observe a similar pattern in your life? How so? Why is that? c) WHO visits Gideon to give him instructions in this chapter (compare vv. 11, 12, 20, 21, 22 with vv. 14, 16, 23)? What are some things we might learn from this about God? About Jesus? d) Gideon is called upon to oppose his father's religious choices in the name of God. Have you ever had to stand for God in opposition to someone close to you? Gideon's father ended up defending Gideon, rather than attacking him. What do you think was going on within his father's heart? e) What lesson do you think is most important to take away from vv. 36-40?

So What?...

3. Notice that when God wants to breathe faith AND conviction into his people, he points out the ways he has helped and guided them in the past (6:8-10). If God wanted to breathe faith and conviction into you, what would he remind you of? Spend time thanking God for his faithfulness and his guidance.

Bruxy Cavey @ The Meeting House - Sunday, July 23 / 30, 2006