

10-6-19 OVERCOMING THE FEAR OF CAMELS – Judges 6 & 7

Once upon a time ... a long, long time ago (1175 BC)...the ancient tribes of Israel had turned their backs upon God and God's ways.

The tribes, particularly the tribe of Manasseh in the surrounding areas of Mount Tabor were being terrorized by the Midianites. The Midianites were the nomadic people living in the area we now know as Saudi Arabia.

The Midianites had so many people AND camels that the Bible tells us that they were 'impossible to count'. The Midianites would swarm in 'like locusts' and ravage the entire landscape – taking the crops during harvest season and taking all the Israelites' cattle, sheep and donkeys --- after 7 continuous years of these raids, the Israelite people were suffering from famine and crippling fear The Israelites had become so affected that they moved to caves and tried to preserve what they could in hiding ----

WHY? In part because the Midianites had a military asset that the Israelites did not know how to combat or stop --- THE CAMEL!

The CAMEL could travel quickly over all kinds of terrain and could cover more than a hundred miles in a day. This meant that the Midianites could swoop-in and take whatever they wanted from the Israelites and be out of range within minutes from the Israelites, who were mostly limited to fighting on foot with only wooden farm implements.

The CAMEL was certainly a game changer!

HOW could the Israelites overcome their fear of CAMELS?

Finally --- the Israelites 'cried out to God' (7:7) They had finally come to the place in their minds that they knew they could not deal with the problem on their own! In their minds, God needed to either overcome the power of the camels or God needed to show the Israelites how to survive in the context of this new reality...but either way, they were 'sick and tired of being sick and tired' and something needed to escape the oppression of FEARFULNESS.

First God sent a prophet or a voice to help the people see that they had turned their back on God AND were putting other gods, peoples, and priorities ahead of their allegiance to and reverence of the God who had already so remarkably loved them and provided opportunities for them.

Next, God wanted someone to lead the people and to show them the way --- God is truly determined to work in and through the lives of His people.

God chose to ask Gideon – to invite Gideon to join God in restoring and redeeming His people from their debilitating FEAR OF CAMELS.

Now, Gideon was the least of the sons of Joash, the head of the least family in the least tribe of all of Israel – Manasseh.

- Gideon did not have much confidence
- Gideon did not have much faith in God
- Gideon did not have much human help
- Gideon did not have much equipment or resources

And all of the sudden --- “the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon and said, ‘**The LORD is with you, mighty warrior.**’” Judges 6:12

I love how meek Gideon replied, “**Pardon me LORD** ... if God is with us, WHY HAS ALL OF THIS HAPPENED? ... God has abandoned us and given us to our enemies.

Before we see what happens next --- let's consider what we're looking at?

1. Israel was out of sync with God
2. While all people are exposed to and subject to the evils, dangers and hardships of a broken world, God does not expect His children to be overcome or consumed by the world or by fear.
3. HOWEVER, when we step away from God, we voluntarily step out of God's CARE ...
 - CARE of our SITUATIONS
 - CARE of our EMOTIONS
 - CARE of our SOUL
 - CARE of our CAPACITIES

WHICH GREATLY INCREASES OUR “NATURAL FEARS” & THEIR ASSOCIATED RISKS & CONSEQUENCES – and WITHOUT an awareness of God's PRESENCE or INSPIRATION -- **we are left to our own devices!**

4. Life is OVERWHELMING – SO, a KEY QUESTION = WHERE DO WE TURN FOR HELP? WHAT IS OUR LIFE-LINE for SANITY & WHOLENESS
 - a. Self-medicate? Numb the reality?
 - b. The 'fads' of the world?
 - c. The natural feelings of ANGER? DEFEAT? INADEQUACY? SELF-PITY? SELF-DEFENSE? TRANSFERENCE?

5. Desperation and life-threatening circumstances EITHER drive us CLOSER TO GOD or AWAY FROM GOD --- **What is your 'natural response'?**
6. NOTE: God's response – REMEMBER OUR PAST TOGETHER & HOW I HAVE HELPED YOU --- all I ask is your FIDELITY ... A RELATIONSHIP

STEP #1: HOW WILL YOU RESPOND WHEN GOD RESPONDS TO YOUR CRIES FOR HIS HELP? (Judges 6:11-24)

- YOU WILL BE ASKED TO ACCEPT YOUR PART IN GOD'S PLAN
- YOU WILL BE ASKED TO RE-AFFIRM YOUR ALLEGIANCE
- YOU WILL BE ASKED TO RE-AFFIRM YOUR WORSHIP
- YOU WILL BE ASKED TO RE-AFFIRM YOUR SACRIFICE
- YOU WILL BE ASKED TO RESPOND WITH AN ACTION OF FAITH

WILL YOU RECEIVE & ACCEPT GOD AS REAL?
 WILL YOU REVERE GOD?
 WILL YOU RESPOND TO GOD?

STEP #2: WE MUST LET GO OF AND EVEN DESTROY ALL THAT STANDS IN THE WAY BETWEEN US AND GOD.... (Judges 6:25-32)

- False gods?
- Family?
- Friends?
- Fears & insecurities, including our self-will?

STEP #3: TAKING THE NEXT STEPS – OBEYING—PREPARING TO FACE OUR FEARS & CALLING OTHERS TO JOIN YOU --- WHILE STILL AFFIRMING GOD'S DIRECTION ... (Judges 6:33 --- 7:22)

“Then the Spirit of the LORD came on Gideon, and he blew the trumpet, summoning the Abiezrites to follow him. He sent messengers throughout Manasseh, calling them to arms and also into Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali, so that they too went up to meet them.” Judges 6:34-35

NOTE: God is incredibly patient as we move forward with a pure & desirous heart --- GOD IS NOT TRYING TO TRICK US ...

STEP #4: TAKING THE BIG STEP OF FAITH – LISTENING TO GOD IN-SPITE of CONVENTIONAL WISDOM ... GOD GETS THE CREDIT (Judges 7:1-8)

The OPPOSING ARMY = 132,000++++
 Versus
 The ISRAELITES = 32,000

God tells Gideon --- TOO MANY! SO

GOD EXCUSES THE COWARDS – WITH NO FAITH -- minus 22,000!

GOD EXCUSES THE CARELESS – WHO DON'T CARE OR PREPARE -- 9,700

GOD ENLISTS THE COMMITTED -- the privileged 300

AND THE OPPOSITION SETTLES IN FOR THE FIGHT – “The Midianites, the Amalekites and all the other eastern people had settled in the valley, thick as locusts. Their camels could no more be counted than sand on the seashore.” Judges 7:12

STEP #5: AND THE BATTLE BELONGS TO THE LORD!!!!

- + A SURPRISE OFFENSIVE (NOT DEFENSIVE) --- TAKING IT TO THE ENEMY!!!!
- + WHOAAAAA!!! THE ENEMY IMPLODES & TURNS ON EACH OTHER!!!!
- + A MERE 300 OBLITERATE 132,000!!!!

SUMMARY:

Gideon moved from testing God to triumph with God.
 Gideon moved from weakness to strength
 Gideon moved from doubt to faith
 Gideon moved from vacillating to victory

GOD GAVE VICTORY TO GIDEON AS GIDEON RESPONDED IN FAITH & OBEDIENCE --- BOTTOM-LINE:

1. REVERENCE & AWE OF GOD --- DO YOU BELIEVE?
2. FAITH IN GOD – DO YOU BELIEVE?
3. OBEDIENCE TO GOD – DO YOU BELIEVE?

Drawing from the 23rd Psalm as inspiration: Dear GOD, I thank You that YOU ARE my shepherd. You guide me, You protect me, and you give me Your peace. You are the One who restores my soul. You know my weaknesses and the times I've caved in to fear. Now, in my weakness, I WILL CHOOSE TO RELY ON YOUR POWER for me to move from FEAR TO FAITH. As I turn my FEAR OVER TO YOU, use it for GOOD IN MY LIFE to remind me of my continual need for You. In Jesus' mighty name, AMEN