

Mighty Warriors

God as mighty warrior is one of the communicable attributes of God. He becomes the mighty warrior within us.

“The LORD will march out like a champion, like a warrior he will stir up his zeal; with a shout he will raise the battle cry and will triumph over his enemies.”

— Isaiah 42:13 (NIV)

“The LORD is a warrior; the LORD is his name.”

— Exodus 15:3 (NIV)

(This is Moses’ song after crossing the Red Sea—God revealed as One who fights for His people.)

“The LORD your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”

— Zephaniah 3:17 (NIV)

Judges 6:1-6 The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord, and for seven years he gave them into the hands of the Midianites. ² Because the power of Midian was so oppressive, the Israelites prepared shelters for themselves in mountain clefts, caves and strongholds. ³ Whenever the Israelites planted their crops, the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples invaded the country. ⁴ They camped on the land and ruined the crops all the way to Gaza and did not spare a living thing for Israel, neither sheep nor cattle nor donkeys. ⁵ They came up with their livestock and their tents like swarms of locusts. It was impossible to count them or their camels; they invaded the land to ravage it. ⁶ Midian so impoverished the Israelites that they cried out to the Lord for help.

The situation the Israelites found themselves in was very severe for seven years they had been subjected to poverty and starvation due to these nomadic raiders, the Midianites and also the Amalekites they raided them annually like swarms and locusts destroying crops and stealing livestock from the Jordan river to the Mediterranean coast. The Israelites would end up living in cliffs off hills abandoning their homes and becoming cave dwellers there was great loss of livelihood as they sheep and donkeys was stolen they would end up harvesting in secret for example we see Gideon threshing wheat in a hidden winepress instead of an open elevated threshing floor just so that his harvest was not stolen. Imagine how traumatic this must have been for families and children growing up in this environment.

Before Gideon was approached by God there was an unnamed prophet who rebuked the children of Israel. It’s interesting that often when we cry out to God, He sends some form of message that challenges us at a heart level. **We want breakthrough but God is interested in who we are becoming.**

Judges 6:7-10 ⁷When the Israelites cried out to the Lord because of Midian, ⁸he sent them a prophet, who said, “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I brought you up out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ⁹I rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians. And I delivered you from the hand of all your oppressors; I drove them out before you and gave you their land. ¹⁰I said to you, ‘I am the Lord your God; do not worship the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you live.’ But you have not listened to me.”

Because the children of Israel continuously broke covenant with God and ended up serving the fertility gods of the Canaanites God would hand them over to the enemies. It's interesting to me how Gideon would have to deal with this root issue his fight against the Midianites was not merely a physical battle, but it had to start with a radical form of spiritual renunciation.

Throughout Judges we see this:

The Cycle of Sin

Sin - idolatry

Servitude – Oppression by enemies

Supplication – Crying out to God

Salvation – God sending a deliverer

Judges 6:11-16 ¹¹ The angel of the Lord came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. ¹² When the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, he said, “The Lord is with you, mighty warrior.”

¹³ “Pardon me, my lord,” Gideon replied, “but if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our ancestors told us about when they said, ‘Did not the Lord bring us up out of Egypt?’ But now the Lord has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian.”

¹⁴ The Lord turned to him and said, “Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian’s hand. Am I not sending you?”

¹⁵ “Pardon me, my lord,” Gideon replied, “but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.”

¹⁶ The Lord answered, “I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive.”

When God calls you, He always confronts your identity. The result of such encounters is often some form of identity dissonance. **Identity dissonance is the psychological friction and discomfort a person feels when holding conflicting aspects of their self-concept, or when their deeply held values clash with their current behaviours.** It frequently happens during personal transformation, career shifts, or cultural transitions when past and present identities collide.

Often there's dissonance between one's calling and one's current reality. Gideon stated that he was from the weakest clan and he was the youngest in his father's house this became an argument that exalted itself above the knowledge of God. We can call it a stronghold in his mind or a debilitating rule. What's the equivalent of this for you? Many people don't pass this level. Many remain in this state of dissonance for years. It's important to resolve inner conflict and dissonance because in many ways this is double mindedness. He is always calling us out of formulae and default pseudo identities to what he has authored about us.

The world will talk about self-authorship but as biblical Christians we embrace God's story about us and we renounce the enemy's story.

- What are my default narratives?
- What railway track am I flowing with without questioning its assumptions?
- What was Gideon's trajectory going to be outside of this encounter?
- Common debilitating rules:
 - People like us don't do great things.
 - No one from my family has ever done that.
 - Because I come from a broken home, I won't thrive.
 - My upbringing has capped my destiny.
 - I have to stay small so others feel comfortable.
 - I must not outgrow my family's expectations.

Judges 6:17- 24 ¹⁷ Gideon replied, “If now I have found favor in your eyes, give me a sign that it is really you talking to me. ¹⁸ Please do not go away until I come back and bring my offering and set it before you.”

And the Lord said, “I will wait until you return.”

¹⁹ Gideon went inside, prepared a young goat, and from an ephah^[a] of flour he made bread without yeast. Putting the meat in a basket and its broth in a pot, he brought them out and offered them to him under the oak.

²⁰ The angel of God said to him, “Take the meat and the unleavened bread, place them on this rock, and pour out the broth.” And Gideon did so. ²¹ Then the angel of the Lord touched the meat and the unleavened bread with the tip of the staff that was in his hand. Fire flared from the rock, consuming the meat and the bread. And the angel of the Lord disappeared. ²² When Gideon realized that it was the angel of the Lord, he exclaimed, “Alas, Sovereign Lord! I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face!”

²³ But the Lord said to him, “Peace! Do not be afraid. You are not going to die.”

²⁴ So Gideon built an altar to the Lord there and called it The Lord Is Peace. To this day it stands in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

You will be persecuted for tearing down altars, but your nation and family need this for their salvation.

Judges 6:25-30 ²⁵ That same night the Lord said to him, “Take the second bull from your father’s herd, the one seven years old.^[a] **Tear down your father’s altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole^[b] beside it.** ²⁶ Then build a proper kind of^[c] altar to the Lord your God on the top of this height. Using the wood of the Asherah pole that you cut down, offer the second^[d] bull as a burnt offering.”

²⁷ So Gideon took ten of his servants and did as the Lord told him. But because he was afraid of his family and the townspeople, he did it at night rather than in the daytime.

²⁸ In the morning when the people of the town got up, there was Baal’s altar, demolished, with the Asherah pole beside it cut down and the second bull sacrificed on the newly built altar!

²⁹ They asked each other, “Who did this?”

When they carefully investigated, they were told, “Gideon son of Joash did it.”

³⁰ The people of the town demanded of Joash, “Bring out your son. He must die, because he has broken down Baal’s altar and cut down the Asherah pole beside it.”

Are there battles you are trying to fight at fruit level, yet God is calling you to deal with them at root level?

Confidently come out with who you are as a Christian, people will find out anyway.

Judges 6:33- 40 ³³ Now all the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples joined forces and crossed over the Jordan and camped in the Valley of Jezreel. ³⁴ Then the Spirit of the Lord came on Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, summoning the Abiezrites to follow him. ³⁵ 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.

³⁶ Gideon said to God, “If you will save Israel by my hand as you have promised— ³⁷ look, I will place a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said.” ³⁸ And that is what happened. Gideon rose early the next day; he squeezed the fleece and wrung out the dew—a bowlful of water.

³⁹ Then Gideon said to God, “Do not be angry with me. Let me make just one more request. Allow me one more test with the fleece, but this time make the fleece dry and let the ground be covered with dew.” ⁴⁰ That night God did so. Only the fleece was dry; all the ground was covered with dew.

Despite God having revealed himself very clearly to Gideon he still uses fleeces. This was a sign of lack of faith and God was still merciful toward him isn't it amazing how God still used him despite his lack of faith. It's interesting that he's actually celebrated in the hall of faith in Hebrews 11. Perhaps is one of those people who said I do believe help me with my unbelief, as we were taught by Shaun the other day. Nevertheless, the use of fleeces is not a biblical model and in the New Testament we now have different resources we have the word of God and we have the Holy Spirit in us. In Mt 12:39 He answered, “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.” and Mt 16:1-4 **The problem was not evidence—it was unbelief disguised as investigation.** Jesus describes people who ask for a sign as wicked and adulterous. **Their hidden rule was: “I will only obey God if He proves Himself according to my conditions.”** God had already told him that he would have victory. His sacrifice was consumed with fire and he had a theophany where God himself had appeared to him. **Are you still looking for a sign despite all the things God has already done in your life? What more do you need? In the Old Testament, spiritual adultery meant wanting God's benefits, while resisting His authority.** Key reflection:

Am I genuinely seeking God's will—or am I continually asking for new signs because I do not like the answer already given?

When Gideon had to cut down the size of his army, it's an example of how we need to be selective when it comes to who we're building with. It wasn't just about reducing the number of people but it was to do with sifting out those who were fearful and lacked courage. **God's strategy does not always need crowds. Sometimes it is better to have a few people who are full of courage and faith than crowds that are lukewarm.**

How do you establish yourself as a courageous leader? One of the key ways is to find out what everyone else is afraid of and make sure you have courage in that area. The Israelites at this time were hiding in caves.

Judges 7:7-18 ⁷The Lord said to Gideon, “With the three hundred men that lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands. Let all the others go home.” ⁸ So Gideon sent the rest of the Israelites home but kept the three hundred, who took over the provisions and trumpets of the others.

Now the camp of Midian lay below him in the valley. ⁹ During that night the Lord said to Gideon, “Get up, go down against the camp, because I am going to give it into your hands. ¹⁰ If you are afraid to attack, go down to the camp with your servant Purah ¹¹ and listen to what they are saying. Afterward, you will be encouraged to attack the camp.” So he and Purah his servant went down to the outposts of the camp. ¹² The Midianites, the Amalekites and all the other eastern peoples had settled in the valley, thick as locusts. Their camels could no more be counted than the sand on the seashore.

¹³ Gideon arrived just as a man was telling a friend his dream. “I had a dream,” he was saying. “A round loaf of barley bread came tumbling into the Midianite camp. It struck the tent with such force that the tent overturned and collapsed.”

¹⁴ His friend responded, “This can be nothing other than the sword of Gideon son of Joash, the Israelite. God has given the Midianites and the whole camp into his hands.”

¹⁵ When Gideon heard the dream and its interpretation, he bowed down and worshiped. He returned to the camp of Israel and called out, “Get up! The Lord has given the Midianite camp into your hands.” ¹⁶ Dividing the three hundred men into three companies, he placed trumpets and empty jars in the hands of all of them, with torches inside.

¹⁷“Watch me,” he told them. “Follow my lead. When I get to the edge of the camp, do exactly as I do. ¹⁸When I and all who are with me blow our trumpets, then from all around the camp blow yours and shout, ‘For the Lord and for Gideon.’

After victory

Judges 8:22-27 ²² The Israelites said to Gideon, “Rule over us—you, your son and your grandson—because you have saved us from the hand of Midian.” ²³ But Gideon told them, “I will not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you. The Lord will rule over you.”

I find it interesting that Gideon refused to be king. **What do you do after victory? How would you have responded to people who wanted to make you king?** Gideon didn't stretch the calling to something it was not intended to be. Perhaps he had now renewed his mind to accept that he was a mighty warrior but he knew where the limits were.

24 And he said, “I do have one request, that each of you give me an earring from your share of the plunder.” (It was the custom of the Ishmaelites to wear gold earrings.) *25* They answered, “We’ll be glad to give them.” So they spread out a garment, and each of them threw a ring from his plunder onto it. *26* The weight of the gold rings he asked for came to seventeen hundred shekels,^[b] not counting the ornaments, the pendants and the purple garments worn by the kings of Midian or the chains that were on their camels’ necks.

I wonder why he made this request. He didn't want to be king but perhaps due to fear of lack he wanted to guarantee wealth. The danger is that the sin of greed leads to other sins.

27 Gideon made the gold into an ephod, which he placed in Ophrah, his town. All Israel prostituted themselves by worshiping it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and his family.

Gideon still made a mistake although he was judged for 40 years during a time of peace he still made a gold ephod that became an idol. **“The ephod was meant to help people seek God—but when detached from obedience, it became something people sought instead of God.”**