

Called
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Judges 6:1-4; 7-16

Opening: We have a natural, human tendency to compare ourselves with others. Why does comparison to others usually NOT turn out well? Can you think of two extreme results that can make it a bad thing?

We all compare ourselves to others. Sometimes we compare ourselves to someone else and feel a little too good about ourselves. We call that pride. In most cases we look at someone else's abilities, accomplishments, or confidence and think, *"I'll never measure up to them."* That is insecurity. Either way, the comparison is focused on people and not on God.

Repeatedly in scripture, God called ordinary people and equipped them for His calling. In our text today, God called an ordinary man to an extraordinary task and the man's first reaction was, *"Surely you don't mean me! I am the least qualified person for that!"*

The Point: God calls ordinary and often unlikely people to accomplish His purposes, and He equips those He calls. Certainly ability is important, but His calling isn't just about our ability; it begins with our AVAILability.

Last week in Judges 2 we learned about Israel's "cycle of sin" that was repeated over and over in this time of the Judges. Israel would: Forget God → Choose Sin → Face the Consequences → Turn Back to God → Experience God's Rescue (when He provided a "Judge" to deliver them → Then, sadly, they would Drift Away Again repeating the cycle. Verse one of Judges six reads like a headline in the news:

(NLT) — 1 The Israelites did evil in the Lord's sight. So the Lord handed them over to the Midianites for seven years. **2** The Midianites were so cruel that the Israelites made hiding places for themselves in the mountains, caves, and strongholds. **3** Whenever the Israelites planted their crops, marauders from Midian, Amalek, and the people of the east would attack Israel, **4** camping in the land and destroying crops as far away as Gaza. They left the Israelites with nothing to eat, taking all the sheep, goats, cattle, and donkeys.

- Often, difficult circumstances in our lives are not due to anything we did or didn't do. It's part of living in a fallen world. God will use the difficulty to grow our faith.
- Sometimes, though, difficult circumstances are due to our disobedience to God and He uses difficult circumstances as loving (but hard) discipline to correct us.
- That was Israel's problem. They "did evil in the Lord's sight," so He punished them by turning them over to evil "marauders" called the Midianites.
- We might call the Midianites "terrorists" because they terrorized the Israelites by sweeping in to steal and destroy their very ability to feed their families.

- The people of Israel were so defeated they were hiding in caves.
- Those who abandon God and embrace sin can expect consequences.

7 When they cried out to the Lord because of Midian, **8** the Lord sent a prophet to the Israelites. He said, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I brought you up out of slavery in Egypt. **9** I rescued you from the Egyptians and from all who oppressed you. I drove out your enemies and gave you their land. **10** I told you, 'I am the Lord your God. You must not worship the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you now live.' But you have not listened to me."

- A loving Father explains why the child is being punished. This unnamed prophet of God spelled out HOW they had been disobedient. In our day, if we are a follower of Christ, God's Holy Spirit uses scripture to show us our disobedience.

11 Then the angel of the Lord came and sat beneath the great tree at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash of the clan of Abiezer. Gideon son of Joash was threshing wheat at the bottom of a winepress to hide the grain from the Midianites. **12** The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said, "Mighty hero, the Lord is with you!" **13** "Sir," Gideon replied, "if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? And where are all the miracles our ancestors told us about? Didn't they say, 'The Lord brought us up out of Egypt'? But now the Lord has abandoned us and handed us over to the Midianites." **14** Then the Lord turned to him and said, "Go with the strength you have, and rescue Israel from the Midianites. I am sending you!" **15** "But Lord," Gideon replied, "how can I rescue Israel? My clan is the weakest in the whole tribe of Manasseh, and I am the least in my entire family!" **16** The Lord said to him, "I will be with you. And you will destroy the Midianites as if you were fighting against one man."

- An angel of the Lord came to deliver God's calling to Gideon. I want to look at these verses a little out of their order for a purpose.
- Let's begin by looking at things from Gideon's perspective; his doubts.
- Verse 13: What doubts did Gideon reveal?
- *"God, if You're really with me, why am I going through this? Everyone talks about the amazing things You've done, but I don't see them in my life. It feels like You've left me on my own."* Have you ever asked God questions like that?
- Notice, the angel never condemned Gideon for asking honest questions.
- Verse 15: Let's look at Gideon's self-image problem. Why did he feel unqualified?
- *"Lord, You're looking for a hero, and that ain't me! I'm the runt of the litter, and I come from a family of runts! You need a champion and I can't make the team!"*
- The old joke: *"He doesn't just have an inferiority complex; he IS INFERIOR!"*
- Gideon seems to be a combination of Eeyore and the "Cowardly Lion."
- Question: Why would God choose someone seemingly unlikely and ill equipped?
- Scripture reveals this pattern of God sovereignly choosing to call the unlikely:
 - Moses questioned *"Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?"*
 - Jeremiah protested *"I am only a youth" and don't know how to speak."*
 - David was overlooked as the youngest son; God told Samuel He looks on the heart, not outward appearance.

- Amos was a herdsman and fig farmer when God called him to prophesy.
- Paul called himself *"the least of the apostles"* unworthy to be called one.
- Mary was troubled by the angel's greeting and needed reassurance.
- The disciples were ordinary fishermen when Jesus called them.ⁱ
- If God only chose the naturally gifted who "look the part", what could go wrong?
- Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 1:25–29 that God chooses the "foolish," "powerless," and "despised" to display His power and ensure that "no one can boast" in His presence. Gideon was certainly qualified for that!
- God chooses and equips unlikely, unqualified people, so He gets the glory for what is accomplished and so those He calls don't start thinking it is about them!
- Now let's look at how the angel of the Lord spoke to Gideon's doubts:
- Verse 12: *"Mighty hero, the Lord is with you!"* At first, that sounds ridiculous! Gideon certainly didn't see himself that way. But God wasn't describing Gideon's present circumstances—He was declaring what God would make him.
- When God calls us, He doesn't just see who we are; He sees who we can become through His power.
- How would God accomplish this big change in cowardly Gideon?
- Verse 14: *"Go with the strength you have...I am sending you."*
- God's presence and power would multiply Gideon's small strength for the task.
- I love the old song, *"Little is Much When God is In it."* The second verse asks, *"Does the place you're called to labor
Seem too small and little known?
It is great if God is in it,
And He'll not forget His own."*ⁱⁱ
- Verse 16: *"The Lord said...I will be with you. And you will defeat the Midianites."*
- *"You let me worry about your ability, just give me you AVAILability!"*
- So, what happened? Did Gideon overcome his doubts? Did say "yes" to God? You'll have to come back next week to learn "the rest of the story."
- I want to make two final observations about how God calls people.
- There is an old cliché in the church: *"God doesn't call the equipped; He equips the called."* But doesn't God also call people He has already been equipping?
 - Moses had leadership training in Pharaoh's court.
 - David learned courage and leadership as a shepherd.
 - Paul had exceptional theological training.
- God equips those He calls, but sometimes He has been equipping them long before they realize He is calling them. The danger is assuming our talent-not God's power-is what accomplishes His purposes.
- A second point: If you feel God's calling, make sure it's a "long-distance" call!
- We need to be available, not ambitious. Many of the people God called in Scripture were simply being faithful in their daily responsibilities when God interrupted their lives. They weren't chasing God to bless their ambition.
- Here's another sign that it may be our ambition and not His calling. God ordinarily works through the gifts He has given us. Someone who cannot carry a tune is probably not being called to lead worship. Could God work a miracle? Of course. But ordinarily, He uses the gifts He has already given.

- Our goal isn't to persuade God to bless our ambitions; it's to discover, be available, and faithfully follow His calling.

So, What's the Takeaway?

- So, what have we learned from Gideon's calling by God?
- God calls ordinary and often unlikely people to accomplish His purposes.
- We tend to compare ourselves with others. God sees who He wants to make us.
- When we ask, "*Am I enough?*" The answer is, "*God will be with me and HE is always enough! His 'power is made perfect' in our weakness.*" (2 Cor. 12:9)¹
- God's calling isn't based only on our ability—it begins with our AVAILability.
- Our weaknesses don't limit God; they give Him room to display His power.
- God calls us to trust His presence and power more than our own potential.
- We must not ask God to bless our ambitions but to reveal His calling.
- If the calling is from God, He will equip us and the outcome will be His glory.
- What is God calling you to do? Ask Him to reveal it then be available for His equipping to accomplish it.

ⁱ References: Exodus 3:11–4:17, Jeremiah 1:4–10, 1 Samuel 16:1–13, Amos 7:14–15, 1 Corinthians 15:9, Luke 1:26–38, Matthew 4:18–22

ⁱⁱ https://hymnary.org/text/in_the_harvest_field_now_ripened

¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (2 Co 12:9). (2025). Crossway Bibles.