

The Giant of Overwhelming Odds Transcription

The Giant of Overwhelming Odds - Judges 7:1-15 - Skip Heitzig

Turn in those Bibles to the book of Judges 7. Judges 7. Seventh book in the Old Testament. Just so you know, this little film that we show every week, this wasn't done in some Hollywood vault. This was done by our own staff. Our own team did this. They did such a good job at this media. Judges 7.

So there's this Amish family, and they went to the city for the very first time in their lives. And they ended up at a mall. So, they were completely overwhelmed by the sights, the sounds, the crowds, the stores, the lights. And they, in the mall, came to an elevator. And they watched as the elevator doors opened and an elderly woman stepped in, and the doors closed and it went up and it went down. And then, when it came back down, the doors opened and this young beautiful woman stepped out. And so, the little boy said, "Papa what is that?" And he said, "Never mind son. Just go get your mama quick."

I don't know what you feel like or how you react when you are feeling overwhelmed by something, but chances are you've used that word in the past year, year and a half, two years. With the events that have occurred in our world, you have perhaps felt overwhelmed. That's the word a lot of people have used.

One news source said people are feeling more stressed, anxious, and overwhelmed than ever before. And one of the reasons why it feels or seems overwhelming to us is we start thinking, well, we didn't see that one coming. We didn't see coronavirus shutting down the world, and the economic freefall. And if that happened, what else could happen? What does the future hold for us?

In ancient times, when they drew maps out, the map makers, the cartographers, they would draw what they knew. And so they would draw the land masses and the lines for the countries, that's what they knew. But when they were writing down or drawing what they didn't know, they would, at the edge of the map, simply write these words. "Beyond here, there be dragons." And to use our own little analogy, we might say, beyond here, there be giants.

We don't know what the future holds, but we know that God's got it covered, and I want to talk to you about that today. We have been studying standing up to giants. We began with the giant of conformity, and we saw how Daniel didn't bend, that he refused to indulge himself in the delicacies of the king. He didn't conform to the culture. We looked at the giant of silence, how John the Baptist stood up and spoke up against the abuse of hypocrisy of King Herod, Herod Antipas. We looked at the giant of apathy, how Nehemiah had a pretty cushy job and he decided that he would leave his comfort zone and be involved in God's work. We looked at the giant of fear, how David took on the whole Philistine army, and, in particular, that intimidating NBA guy named Goliath. We looked at the giant of self, and we saw that Esther put her life on the line to save the Jewish people with the words, "If I perish, I perish."

Today, we want to look at another giant. And I'm calling this the giant of overwhelming odds. What do you do, how do you act, how do you calibrate, when the odds just seem overwhelming? When the news that comes to you is just so devastating, so intimidating. Now, let me just sort of set it up, and I'm going to give you the numbers of the army, and I'm going to count on you to remember these. In fact, I'm going to test you during this message.

So, the Israelite army-- under a guy by the name of Gideon in chapter 7 of Judges-- the Israelite army has 32,000 men. The enemy army-- the Midianites-- has 135,000 men. So, he is outnumbered four to one. So how many people are in Israel's army? No, 32,000. We'll get this. Don't worry, by the end you will have this memorized. 32,000. How many are in the enemy's camp? 135,000.

So, that's what we're up against. Gideon is facing not a giant, but a giant army. He is outnumbered, which is precisely the position we find ourselves in as believers today. We are always outnumbered. You know that, right? That is our MO. That's how we operate. That's our modus operandi. We are always outnumbered.

There's always more unbelievers than there are believers. There are always more faithless people than there are faithful people. But sometimes, we know that, and on top of that, we have family issues and health issues and economy issues, and it all piles up and we feel overwhelmed.

And I love David's prayer in Psalm 61, "When my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the rock that is higher than I." I want to show you how to get to that rock. I want to show you five keys to standing strong when the odds are against you, when the circumstances seem overwhelming. And here's what's great about this story. What's great about this story is it's not just a story of a man with a small army against a big army. It's a story of a weak man who leads a small army against a big army. He's a man of very frail faith. He's learning. He's growing in his faith. He's learning to trust God.

Chapter 7 of Judges is a battle scene. The enemy has come into the land. There's a coalition of tribal nations, Midianites, Amalekites, people from the East. They all band together, they come in, and they invade the land of Israel. So, I want to show you those five keys to standing strong.

Here's the first key. Your faith is gradual. That is, you have faith in God, but that faith grows. And God doesn't expect you to get all As on the first day of class for a test or a class that may take a year for you to sit in. Your faith, and the journey of your faith, is gradual.

So look at verse 1. Judges 7:1. "Then"-- get this name, don't ever name your child this name-- "Jerubbaal"-- or, the Hebrew pronunciation, Yeh-ru-buh-al. Yeh-ru-buh-al. I'm not going to even pronounce it that way. We're Americans, so we're going to say Jeru-bale. So, "Then Jerubbaal, that is, Gideon"-- I'll explain that in a moment-- "Jarubbaal, that is, Gideon, and all the people who were with him rose early and encamped beside the well of Harod, so that the camp of the Midianites was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley."

What I want you to notice is the very first name we get for Gideon in chapter 7 isn't Gideon. It's a name with pagan ties. It's a nickname that his dad, who at one time was a pagan worshipper-- he worshipped like God, the God of Israel, and this god named Baal-- it was the nickname that his dad gave him. And it's there to remind us that Gideon, though he's going to be used by God, had the influence of paganism from his dad in the past.

Now, if you know your Bible, you know that Gideon is not just an Old Testament hero, but he makes it all the way into the New Testament. Do you know what book he's in in the New Testament? The book of Hebrews. So, the writer of Hebrews gives the Hall of Fame-- the Hall of Fame of Faith-- and he lists all these faithful examples, and he says, "And time would fail me to tell you about Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah." So, he begins not with faith, but he ends up in the Hall of Faith. Do you know how Gideon started? How Jerubbaal started? Fearful. That's how he began his journey of faith. He believed in God, but he was so timid. Let me explain.

When God calls him in chapter 6, it says that he was threshing wheat at the winepress. Now, we would just read that through and not maybe understand the background of why that is important. Nobody threshed wheat at a winepress because the winepress is down in the valley. The place you thresh wheat-- the threshing floor-- is on the top of the mountain. And the reason you do that is because the afternoon breezes carry the chaff away. So you take a pitchfork full of your grain, throw it in the air, the wind blows the chaff away, the grain falls on the rock. That's where you thresh wheat. He's not doing that. It says he threshed wheat in the winepress-- listen to this-- in order to hide from the Midianites. Does that sound like a man of faith? No, it sounds like a man of fear. A man of fear.

So, it's funny when the angel of the Lord shows up while he's throwing that stuff in the air, and he says, hey, what's up? That's kind of a paraphrase. And he says, you mighty man of valor. And I'm guessing Gideon is looking around, going, is there somebody else here that I don't see? Who's he talking to? He's talking to the man who would become a mighty man of valor, but was not at that moment. He began very fearful.

OK, forward a little bit more in chapter 6. In chapter 6, God comes to Gideon. He says, Gideon, your dad has a statue in his backyard of Baal. I want you to cut it down. I want you to kill it. Cut down the statue. Burn it. Get rid of it. What's interesting is that the name Gideon literally means hacker, or hewer, or one who cuts something down. So, God comes to Gideon in this journey of faith and he says, Gideon, it's time for you to live up to your name. Go cut down that cult object that your dad has been worshipping.

Now, why would God require that of him? Because he's about to lead an army, that's why. Before you can ever lead publicly, you've got to work on things privately. You've got to start in your own backyard. And so, he starts in his dad's own backyard. But even cutting down the statue, he wouldn't do it during the day. He did it at night, secretly.

So this is Judges 6:27. "Because he feared his father's household and the men of the city too much to do it by day, he did it at night." You can say, well, that's just practical. Maybe, but he's still scared. He started out scared, and God calls him to do something. He does it, but he's still timid.

Now, we come to chapter 7, and in chapter 7, he's going to lead this army. He's going to do these great exploits. We're told in Judges 6:34, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, so that's a good thing. He's got the Holy Spirit, he's empowered by God to do this. But even filled with the Spirit, he's still scared. He's still timid. He's still fearful. Because he says, you got to show me a sign. I need a sign that you're in this.

So, God gives him not one sign, not two signs, three signs. Sign number one, fire comes out of a rock and consumes the sacrifice. That's a pretty good sign. Sign number two, he takes an animal hide, a fleece, puts it out. The next morning, there's dew on the fleece but there's no dew anywhere else in the land. That's the second sign. Gideon didn't know if that was just a fluke of nature, so he wanted God to repeat it but reverse it. So He gives him a third sign. There's no dew the next day on the fleece but there's dew everywhere else. Three signs.

So, he believes, he acts, he's called upon to lead an army, but all the way along, he's still scared, and God has to confirm it. Here's what I want you to see. Hunting giants is a progressive skill. It's a progressive skill. You learn how to do it. And you learn how to do it gradually over time. Gideon started out fearful before he ever became faithful. I hope that encourages you. He started out fearful before he ever became faithful.

In Psalm 144:1, we read this. "Blessed be the Lord who trains my hands for war and my fingers for battle." You're in a learning process. You're in school God is teaching you through your life, through the trials, through the difficulties, in this journey of faith, how to hunt giants. You're a work in progress. And here's what I mean. You believe in God, but sometimes you're afraid. You trust, but I have a little bit of fear and trepidation here in this area. Right? Is that true about you? Yeah, it's true for most of us.

It's like the guy in the New Testament who brought his son to Jesus who was demon possessed. He said, please heal my son. Jesus said, all things are possible to him who believes. And the man said back to Jesus, Lord, I believe, but help my unbelief. I trust you, but I'm scared. That's Gideon. That's the journey of faith. We're all on it. You are in process.

Long before I ever stood before heads of state and rulers with the gospel, I stood in my classroom. I stood with my family. I had to make a stand with my friends and at work. And God knows that you are in this process, and He cuts you a lot of slack. He doesn't condemn you. He understands.

I love the Bible verse that says, God knows our frame and remembers that we are dust. God knows what you're made out of. He doesn't have high expectations for dust, right? It's like, OK-- not to put you down, not to put me down-- I don't expect a lot out of dirt. I know what you're made out of. You're human, and it's only natural for humans to trust but have a little bit of fear mixed in with it.

So, I love also Hebrews 4. Jesus is called our great high priest who sympathizes with our weaknesses. So, here is the gradual growing of Gideon's faith. By the way, why does God test our faith? And He does. He's

testing Gideon's faith, every little increment here. He's testing his faith. Testing, testing, testing. Why does God test our faith? Any takers on that? That's good. I'm hearing some good answers. Let me give you two of them.

Number one, God tests your faith not so He can find out what kind of faith you have. It's not like God's saying, gosh, I got to find this out. He knows already going into it how much faith you have or don't have. But, you don't. So the test is to reveal to you the level of your faith.

Number two, God tests your faith, and I heard it shouted out, so it will grow. So, I go into the gym. The only way for those muscles to grow is for you to put some resistance on them, and when that resistance, those weights, are added, and the muscle breaks down, it's going to build back up. And so, the trials, the hardship, the testing of your faith is what builds you up. God tests your faith. A faith that can't be tested is a faith that can't be trusted. So, your faith is gradual.

Second key. God's math is unusual. And we would even say, God does weird math. He does it way differently than we do. So, there's Midianites and there's Israelites. How many people are in the Israelite army? 32,000. How many in the enemy's army? 135,000. You got the number down now. 32,000 to 135,000. Four to one odds.

By the way, Midianites were like a Bedouin tribal peoples in ancient times. I don't know if you know this or not, but Midian was one of Abraham's sons. You're going, I don't remember that. There was Isaac and there was Ishmael, but that was with his first wife, Sarah. After she died, he got married again to Keturah, and had a whole bunch of kids. One of them was named Midian. He goes down into the Sinai desert in northern Saudi Arabia, and that's his area. By the way, Jethro, the Father-in-law of Moses, was a Midianite priest. So they have ties way back. At this time, they have invaded the land and they've encamped around. They're stealing their crops. They're terrorizing them. And there are way more of them than there are of God's people. So, it already seems impossible, 32,000 to 135,000.

Now, look at verse 2. "The Lord said to Gideon, 'The people who are with you are too many.'" Uh, hello? Because that's not what I was thinking. Yeah, God, I wanted to talk to you about the size of my army because I'm outnumbered four to one. And I was just about to say, I have too few, and what did you just say? "The people who are with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.'" How many of you think Gideon was shocked when God said that? Yeah, I do. I think he was pretty shocked.

Did you know that we rarely think that size-- bigness of size-- is a hindrance to the work of God. Most Christian organizations, most churches don't see size as a hindrance. They see that as a good thing. They see the hindrances as things being small, not big. But when things are large, and resources are abundant, and there's lots of people, it's often harder to trust God. What we trust in is our resources. Those resources may be from God, but it doesn't take much faith when the cupboards are full, and the money's in, and the crowds are there.

Sometimes, churches are wowed by size and statistics, and they think they're strong because they're big. That's a misconception. I want to throw up on the screen what Gary Inrig wrote, just a little portion. He says, "You cannot be too small for God to use, but you can be too big. That is why, as you look around, you will see God working in a powerful way in the lives of some very weak people." Well, I hope that encourages you. Because if you're thinking, man, I just feel so weak. Perfect. You are a great candidate for God to use. Do you know that? God has chosen the foolish things of this world, the weak things of this world, to confound the mighty and the wise. Size can hinder the work of God.

Now, wait a minute. I have 32,000. They have 135,000. You're telling me I have too many? Did you notice how God wrote that, or put that, how He spoke it? "The people who are with you are too many." What's the next two words? "For Me." "Too many for Me." I know they're not too many for you, Gideon. You think you need 10 times more. Too many for Me. Who's doing the work here? Who's doing the fighting here? God's

doing the fighting. Too many for Me to deliver them into your hands.

Listen to this principle, never forget this. Difficulty must always be measured by the capacity of the agent doing the work. Difficulty must always be measured by the capacity of the agent doing the work. Gideon, you're not doing the work. You're going to blow off some trumpets and hit some jars. That's basically what you're going to do. I'm doing the work. I'm doing the deliverance. And difficulty must always be measured by the capacity of the agent doing the work.

So, God's math is pretty simple. It's pretty straightforward. Here it is, here's God's math. I'm here, and it doesn't matter how many are out there. They're outnumbered because I'm here. That's what Martin Luther said. He said, "With God, one is a majority." So, here's God's math. I'm here. No matter who's out there, they're outnumbered.

Here's another story in the Old Testament. Elijah the prophet, 2 Kings 6. He goes to a town called Dothan. He's there with his buddy, his assistant. And his assistant looks around one morning, and he sees that he is surrounded by Syrian soldiers, the army of Syria camped around them. And they're ready to pounce on Dothan to kill Elijah and his buddy. So, he looks around, the servant, and says, alas, my master. That's Bible talk for, oh no, we're toast. Alas, my master, what shall we do?

And Elijah, he's just so cool. He goes, chill out, dude. Now, that is a paraphrase. He actually didn't say that in the Bible. Maybe in the NSV, the New Skip Version. But, it's like, relax. Literally, it says, "Do not fear. Those who are with us"-- listen to this-- "are more than those who are with them." That's God's math. Those that are with us are more than those who are with them. That's God's math.

Now, let me throw something fun at you. In Deuteronomy 32, before this was written in the law, God promised his people, hey listen, if you obey Me, if you do what I say, if you keep my commandments, listen to these words, one man shall chase 1,000, and two will put 10,000 to flight. How's that for math? According to God's math, all Gideon needed, then, was 27 men to fight 135,000 Midianites.

All of that to say this, don't be surprised if God starts trimming your resources. If He starts tearing down your strength. And you say, man, I'm not as strong as I used to be. I'm feeling weaker and weaker and weaker. Paul the Apostle thought that. He had a thorn in the flesh. 2 Corinthians 12, he prayed to God about it, and God came to him and said, "My strength is made perfect in your weakness." "My strength is made perfect in your weakness."

Listen, man's extremity is God's opportunity. That was a good place for an amen, right there. All right, that's good. Man's extremity is God's opportunity. God likes when you're weak because you lean into Him. You lean in Him. You trust Him. When you got the resources, the strength, the bigness, you don't do that. When you have none of that, you lean into Him. So God's math is unusual.

Here's the third. People's fear is transmissible. People's fear gets passed on. It's like coronavirus. Others get it. People's fear is transmissible. I'm going to add to that, people's fear, or faith, is transmissible.

Look at verse 3. "Now therefore"-- this is God talking to Gideon. You got too many, Gideon. "Now therefore, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, 'Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead.'" OK, stop. He's already outnumbered. How many are in his army? 32,000. You thought this number keeps changing. 32,000. How many are in the enemy's army? OK. 32,000 to 135,000.

So, he's already outnumbered, and then God says, whoever's scared-- here, I'll make the announcement-- any of you in my army afraid to go to war? Go home. And Gideon's expecting that nobody's leaving. They know what they signed up for. They're in this army to fight. Nobody's scared here. Well, let's finish verse 3. "And 22,000 of the people returned, and 10,000 remained." Wow, 2/3 just walked out on Gideon. They just bailed. They dropped their weapons. See ya, I'm going home. Bye. I'm scared. See ya. Just like that.

So, he was already outnumbered four to one. Now, there are only 10,000 people left. Here's what you may not know. What God called Gideon to do with this was standard operating military procedure in the Old Testament. That was. When God gave the law to Moses, He said, when the people go to war, there are four exemptions I'm going to list. Four reasons why they don't have to go to war and fight.

This is Deuteronomy 20. "What man is there who has built a new house and has not dedicated it? Let him go home." It'd be frustrating to plan and build and save and have a house, and then you get drafted to go to war and you can't enjoy it. So, God says, go home, enjoy your house. That's number one.

Number two. "What man is there who has planted a vineyard and not eaten of it?" Again, very frustrating. You plant, you fertilize, you water, it grows up. You got the grapes, but you can't enjoy it because there's a war. God says, no, you stay home and enjoy the vineyard.

Third exemption. "What man is there who is betrothed to a woman and has not married her?" You got the wedding announcements, everybody's coming, you're all happy, and then you have to go fight? God says, no, let him stay and get married and enjoy.

Here's the fourth exemption, listen to this one. "What man is there who is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return to his house, lest the heart of his brethren faint like his heart." You know why God said that? Because fear is contagious. Fear is contagious. One timid soldier can do more damage than a whole bunch of enemies. I mean, imagine if the battle begins, and in the middle of the battle, 22,000 people leave. If 22,000 people leave, everybody is gone. It would be mass panic. It would be crowd panic. We see this in stadiums when there's some threat that happens and people try to rush out and they trample others because of it.

John Wesley wrote, "Give me 100 men who fear nothing but sin and love nothing but God, and I will shake the gates of hell." I don't need a lot. I can shake the gates of hell with just 100 faithful people. It's all I need. You see, a few people with faith is better than a lot of people without faith. You want a lean, mean, fighting machine.

G. Campbell Morgan, I'm going to throw this up, said, "The trouble today is that the fearful and trembling man insists on remaining in the army. A decrease that sifts the ranks of the Church of men who fear and tremble is a great, a gracious, and a glorious gain."

You see, and here's why. When you feel overwhelmed, it's different than feeling stressful. We all get stressed. There's a number of things that cause stress in our lives. It could be our job. It could be our family, relationship with a friend, or health. We're stressed. But, when you have one, two, three, four, five, several things piling up, and you start feeling overwhelmed, that's like stress on steroids. And when you're feeling overwhelmed, you don't need people around you filled with fear. You need people around you filled with faith. They're the ones that are going to carry you through. And you need not only fearless people, you need people who are alert. They're watching. They got your back. They're ready for action.

And I want you to see that in verse 4. "The Lord said to Gideon"-- OK, you've got 10,000. So how many were in the army? 32,000. How many were in the enemy's army? Yeah, come on, group participation. 135,000. Now, how many are in the army? 10,000. 135,000. Their odds haven't changed, but the odds toward Gideon's defeat go way up. OK.

I lost my place. Verse 8. "The Lord said to Gideon, 'The people who are still too many, bring them down to the water, and I will test them for you there. Then it will be, that of whom I say to you, "This one shall go with you," the same shall go with you, and whomever I say to you, "This one shall not go," the same shall not go.' So he brought the people down to the water. And the Lord said to Gideon, 'Everyone who laps from the water with his tongue, like a dog laps, you shall set apart by himself. Likewise everyone who gets down on his knees to drink.' And the number of those who lapped, putting their hands to their mouth, was 300 men. But all the rest of the people got down on their knees to drink water.

Then the Lord said to Gideon, 'By the 300 men who lapped I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into your hand. Let all the other people go, every man to his place.' So the people took provisions and their trumpets in their hands. And he sent away all the rest of Israel, every man to his tent, and retained those 300 men. Now the camp of Midian was below him in the valley."

We read this, and I go, this is weird. What does drinking water have to do with fighting a battle? Well, the way a man would drink water in those days would tell an awful lot about the man. If on one hand, he bows all the way down, gets on all fours. And here's the stream of water, and he just bows down like this, drinks water, what's he looking at? Just the water, right? He is predisposed. He is vulnerable. He is not able to act quickly, right? Because he is just into drinking the water. Self-gratification.

But, if somebody bows down slightly, and takes water in his hands, and brings it up to his mouth, and laps it, he still has eyes out. He's less vulnerable. He's on the alert. He has his priorities right. There's a sense of urgency about him. I think that's behind this little test.

Listen, some people take unnecessary time with necessary things. You got to do it, you got to drink. Everybody has to do it. But some people take unnecessary time with necessary things. There's no sense of urgency about their lives. There's no sense of priority. And you need people around you in a battle that have a sense of vigilance, right? Peter said, be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, walks around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Get friends on your side like that. Fearless people, watchful people. Fear is transmissible.

Here's the fourth. Enemy's words may be helpful. Your enemy's words may be helpful. Now, normally I wouldn't say this, and you wouldn't expect a pastor to say, go listen to your enemies. You would think the pastors would say, don't listen to your enemies. They don't trust God. Don't listen to what they have to say. You need to just listen to words of faith, et cetera. But in some cases, it's actually helpful for you to listen to your enemies because what they say, what they reveal, will be encouraging to your heart. I want you to see that.

Look at verse 9. "It happened on the same night that the Lord said to him, 'Arise, go down against the camp, for I have delivered it into your hands.'" In other words, strike by night. "But if you are afraid to go down, go down to the camp with Purah your servant." Now, the fact that he goes down to the camp with Purah his servant indicates that he was afraid. He's still fearful.

"And you shall hear what they say, and afterwards your hands shall be strengthened to go down against the camp.' Then he went down with Purah his servant to the outpost of the armed men who were in the camp." So, get the scene. He's being real sneaky here. He takes Purah, shhh, let's go. Let's go. Tiptoe. We're going to the camp of the Midianites. I don't know why, but God said if I'm scared, I should go do this, and I'm really scared, so let's just go down. Come on, come on.

So, they go down, verse 12. "The Midianites and the Amalekites, all the people of the East, were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts." I mean, there's 135,000 of them. "And their camels were without number, as the sand by the seashore in multitude. And when Gideon had come, there was a man telling a dream to his companion.

He said, 'I've had a dream. To my surprise, a loaf of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian, and it came to a tent and struck it so that it fell and overturned, and the tent collapsed.' Then his companion answered and said, 'This is nothing else but the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel! Into his hand God has delivered Midian and the whole camp.'"

Now, God just gave Gideon another sign. Another sign. He got fire out of a rock, the fleece thing, the fleece thing again. Now, he just sneaks into the camp and he happens to hear a conversation spoken out loud about a-- you know, I had this weird dream last night. Yeah, it just woke me up, just now, man. There's this

piece of bread, this loaf of bread came tumbling down, destroyed the tent. What's up with that? Well, the guy said, well, I'll tell you exactly what's up with that. That is a prophecy saying that we're about to get wiped out by this guy named Gideon. And Gideon just happens to hear that and be there at that time.

This is where I'm going with this. So often, you and I are afraid to engage with unbelievers. We're intimidated by them. Let's say they're agnostic, atheist. Maybe they're real smart, they're clever in their arguments. They're very articulate. We're afraid to engage with unbelievers because we're afraid of what they might say. We're afraid we won't be able to stand up to their arguments. We're afraid to answer the questions that they have coming. We're afraid we're not going to be able to penetrate their defenses. But listen to them. Sometimes, when you listen to them, they will betray their true feelings. They will reveal to you that God has been working on their hearts, and it will encourage you.

I can't tell you how many times this has happened to me. I'm just going to give you a couple examples. Number one. When I was in my college training-- it was a UCLA program-- I was at San Bernardino County Medical Center where there was a radiology internship. I worked there every day. So, I'm going to work. And I noticed this one guy, he was an orderly. He would pick up patients and bring them down to the wards-- from the wards, down to radiology. And I noticed him, and I'd say hi to him. I didn't know much about him, but come to find out, he claimed to be a Satan worshipper. Now, I don't know if he really was a Satan worshipper, but he claimed it. And I don't know if he just wanted to scare little kids or scare me, kind of look at me and go, augh. So, I'd wave at him, and, come to find out also, he lived right across the street from my apartment.

One day, in an afternoon, knock on my door. I opened the door. It's Satan worshiper guy. And he comes, and his eyes are shifting a little bit. He goes, this is going to sound really weird. I work with you. I notice you. I go, yeah, I've seen you at the hospital. He goes, well, I've seen you too. And I've watched you with people. And, I don't know how to put this, but it's like you glow. I said, what? Come again? I what? Well, it's like you have a glow. I'm thinking, OK, I work in radiology, maybe I should go look in the mirror, and maybe I have radioactive poisoning or something. I didn't notice any glow.

But he said, no, I noticed you have something about you. I invited him in my house because it was such a weird thing. And just as he was talking about it, and I listened to him, and listened to his arguments and his rebuttals to things, I could see God has been working on his heart. And I said, would you like to receive Jesus Christ as Savior? And he goes, I would like that. And I got to pray with him to receive Christ that afternoon. That's one.

Number two. I worked in another hospital with a gal who worked at the front desk. And she knew I was a Christian, and she didn't believe what I believed. And she brought evidence and papers and articles to work, and wanted to show me that I was wrong and she was right. And this went on for days and weeks.

And one day, one evening, I walked her out in the parking lot, the St. Joseph hospital in Orange. I walk her out to the parking lot, to her car, and she still has her papers, and she's saying this and saying that. And I stopped in the parking lot, and I said, Linda, throw in the towel. She goes, what? I said, stop. You're fighting God. I have a hunch that all of this wrangling that you are doing is because you are convicted by God and you know that you need to receive Christ. Am I right, Linda?

And I did not expect what happened next. She broke down weeping. She broke down weeping. And she stood with me in the parking lot and prayed to receive Christ. To this day, she and her family are still walking with the Lord. So, when those things happen, they build up your faith. Sometimes, you need to listen to your enemies to find out what God is doing in their lives.

And then fifth, and finally. We only have a couple of minutes to finish this off. Fifth, our worship is essential. Look at verse 15, it closes out the paragraph. "And so it was, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, that he worshipped." You're going, well, yeah. He just had four signs from God. Yeah, but follow me here. "He heard the telling of the dream and it's an interpretation, he worshipped. He

returned to the camp of Israel and said, 'Arise, for the Lord has delivered the camp of Midian into your hand.'

Here's what I want you to notice. Gideon worshipped before the battle, not after the battle. Now, he may have worshipped after the battle. He probably did. Praise God, we won. But before the battle, he was a worshiper before he was a warrior. You see, worship reorients you when you're in a battle. It recalibrates your spiritual GPS, so to speak. It adjusts your compass. It reaffirms your purpose.

So, there's a great passage in Romans 8. I know you know it. Paul said, in all these things, we are more than conquerors. In all these things, we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. It's one thing to be a conqueror. What is it to be more than a conqueror? More than conquerors, those are three words in English. In Greek, it's one word, [SPEAKING GREEK] And it means, the best translation is, you'll be a hyper conqueror. In all these things, we are hyper conquerors. We are super conquerors.

Well, what's the difference between a conqueror and a hyper conqueror? Super conqueror? To be a conqueror is to rejoice when the battle is over. To be more than a conqueror is to rejoice before the battles start. And that's Gideon. He goes, boys, the Lord has given the enemy into our hands. Let's march down. That's how you stand when you face overwhelming odds. That's how you stand up to devastating news.

Abraham Lincoln, president of the United States-- I talk about overwhelming times, the Civil War. He said, "I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go." There's nowhere else to go. There's no plan B. It's plan A all the way. It's trust God, trust God, trust God.

And so, he paused and he worshipped. He'd been praying, and now he worships. All of that deep prayer life. You've heard the name John Knox, the Great Reformer of Scotland. John Knox was a pretty fiery preacher. He got in the face of Mary Queen of Scots many times. He just sort of said it like it was. You need to repent of your sins, on and on and on. So, there was a debate between them. Mary Queen of Scots said, "I fear the prayers of John Knox more than I fear all the armies of Europe." That's quite a statement, isn't it. "I fear the prayers of John Knox more than I fear all the armies of Europe." The Midianites should have been afraid of the prayers of Gideon, because he's the guy who took the battle.

So, as you map out your future, as you look ahead, and you are tempted to say, I don't know what the future holds, it's been such a bad year, couple of years, granted. It's OK, it's OK. You're fearful. You're learning. We're all getting our faith feet on. But, know this. God's got you covered. God's got you covered.

In the old times, when they made maps, cartographers-- did I tell you this already? Beyond here, there be dragons, right? So, as you look at your future and map it out, instead of saying, beyond here, there be dragons. How about, beyond here lay the everlasting arms of God, who holds you right where He wants you.

Father, thank you for this incredible story, and all of these lessons we have been learning about men and women of great faith and great courage. And I pray, Lord, that you will make us such. A people who trust you. We are weak. We are fearful on many occasions. You know what we're made of. You know our frame. You remember that we're but dust. But Lord, what you can take with dust-- what you can do with dust. We're just clay pots, but that clay pot filled with your Holy Spirit is a mighty weapon. I pray, Lord, that you will use us in this faithless generation-- Paul called it-- faithless generation. Make us faithful, men and women full of faith. In Jesus's name we pray. Amen.

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