



Judges 6

If there was a chapter that lacks faith it's this one. There is a group of business leaders in North America called the Gideons. For decades they have devoted themselves to putting Bibles in the hands of children. They are the ones who put Bibles in motels and hotels. They do this on faith that the Bible will do its work. I find it strange that they call themselves the Gideons. This chapter 6 of Judges has little to no faith.

I had forgotten just how much fun this chapter is. Usually we read a chapter and are reminded of the highlights. Is there more to John 3 than just 3:16? Is there more to Acts 2 than Pentecost? We tend to remember the highlights and skip the rest. This chapter is asking God for help. Gideon and the Israelites are under oppression from the Midianites. Will God say yes? Will he help these people?

Everyone talks about answered prayer. I have heard stories of answered miracles. The flip side is silence from God. Sometimes it seems God is not there. He is not saying yes. The question is: does God have an obligation to say yes? I am calling this chapter the faith chapter. Why? It's because most people do as they please. Yet, we have set up churches as places of faith. There are special people like Santa to give us presents. Christians have instituted prayer and laying of hands to bolster faith (like Santa) in the miraculous. Yet, we are people. As people, we

expect God to jump at our very command just as they did in this chapter. Is God obligated to answer prayer like Santa gave gifts?

Judges 6 opens with a curious line. The people were doing evil in the sight of the Lord. They had even set up alters to the God Baal. I would bet that little time was spent talking to the true God of Israel. If it appeared the Baal was giving them what they desired and that was good enough. Possibly God was silent and not producing in their eyes. People are like that. If a penny in a well worked would you toss another? What if your prayer met silence from God?

What happens when you don't care about God? When other Gods like a Baal become your God? What then happens if God feels nobody cares anymore? Is he obligated to protect us? This story is a warning and a hard truth. This world is in trouble these days. There are threats of wars. We have some sort of climate change. Things are not as they should be. Is it our fault? Is it Gods? Does this world worship other Gods? Do the people of this planet care about God anymore?

Gideon and the Israelites had dishd God. They did not need him. It is said that God holds back calamity. It's possible he also puts a reign on evil. In this story, God let evil loose to get the attention of his people. So, we have a cry for help. Basically, the people decided to go back to God because Baal appeared not to work anymore. The funny part is that they cry out to God but leave the places of Baal still standing (just in case).

Pastors tend to pull out the fact that Gideon had faith. That he defeated the Midianites with just 300 men. It did not begin that way. After the Israelites cried out to God for help, help came in the form of a man named Gideon. He is described as small and weak just as the boy

David must have appeared to Goliath. Yet, David had faith. This little Gideon had very little of that.

If an Angel of the Lord approached you, what would you do? Would you ask this angel to prove himself? To top it off, Gideon complained that God had abandoned them. Did Gideon care that the people had abandoned God? So, we have Gideon challenging this Angel to perform miracles to prove his worth. Through a series of offerings, the Angel does a few miracles. Then Gideon graciously agrees that it's from the Lord.

After this, God asks Gideon to take down the Baal shrines first. That gets him in a ton of trouble. Then back goes Gideon to not believing again. You see, this people (including Gideon) only love a God that does good things for them. They want a servant (Santa) God. Gideon then has the nerve to challenge God, yet again, to make him believe. There is the famous story of Gideon asking that a fleece become wet or dry to prove it's God.

I am stunned by the lack of faith in the man and his people. They only love God if he provides. Later in this story, Gideon argues with God over how many men are needed to defeat the Midianites. This whole story is about trust, faith, and loyalty. Over and over the people are not loyal to God. Yet, behind the scenes, God is loyal to them.

If God does not provide, does that mean God is being disloyal? If God is silent does that mean he does not hear? Must he act on your behalf? I am amazed that God chose them. That he used Gideon. This group of people did not care about God. They did; however, care about their needs. Yet, God waited for them to cry out. He waited for a man who would test him. God then uses their lack of faith to grow their faith. That is why I call this the faith chapter. When there appears to be no faith, God says "yes" to grow what they really didn't have: faith.