

## God Chose the Wrong Person

### Introduction:

Good Morning!

### ME:

- Have you ever been handed a responsibility and immediately thought, "I am not the right person for this"?
- To the point where it's not just a difficult task but it's literally impossible.
- I was nineteen years old when I got put in charge of my very first youth conference
- The senior pastor tasked me with being the point person
- I had no experience at all
- whenever I went to him for help, he just said, "Just make it happen."
- And there are moments in your life when you realize that I don't have what this situation requires

*(And maybe that's exactly where God likes to begin with us)*

### WE:

- I think we've all had these moments where something lands in our lap and our first reaction immediately is, "I'm not the right person for this."
- We feel deep down a gap between what's required and what we're able to bring to the table

And I think there's lots of normal situations in life where you feel that way:

- Starting a new job
- Becoming a parent
- Being a ministry leader

- Going through health challenges
  - Sharing your faith with a friend
  - Forgiving somebody who's hurt you
  - Trying to stay faithful and life feels spiritually dry
- And if we're honest most of us have learned how to live in that space: we compensate, push through and fake it until we make it or we learn as we go.
  - And a lot of the time it works. We figure things out, we adapt, we grow, and we're actually more capable than we give ourselves credit for
  - But there are still those moments that expose something deeper: there are moments when we can't just figure it out, make it work. They require more of us than we have capacity for or it's beyond our wisdom that we have.
  - And sometimes we're able to say it out loud and sometimes we struggle with saying it out loud. We don't have what this requires.
  - One person is called to forgive but they don't have strength for it
  - Another person is called the lead but they're not equipped at all.
  - Another person wants to follow Jesus but like a dog returning to its vomit, they keep going back to their sin
  - And it's not a personality issue. It's not just insecurity. It's a spiritual reality
  - What do you do when God calls you to something that requires more than you can produce?
  - Most of us want to say, "God, you've got the wrong person."
  - But the answer is not that God finds stronger people.
  - The answer is that God supplies what his purposes require,
  - which is why we need the Holy Spirit

- We need the Holy Spirit because He supplies what God's purposes require, making ordinary people capable of what they could never accomplish apart from His power.

*(that's exactly where Israel is in the book of Judges)*

**GOD:**

**Turn to Judges Chapter 6**

**We're going to look at a couple of very familiar Bible characters if you've grown up in the church. If you haven't grown up in the church and you haven't heard about these guys, you're in for a treat.**

**Today we are looking at Gideon and Samson and how the Holy Spirit shows up for them. Because they are long narratives we can't read the whole story so we'll look at snippets.**

**Here's what's happening in the book of Judges:**

before the book of Judges we have the book of Joshua, where Moses has passed the torch on to Joshua. God has done some incredible things through them: crossing the Jordan River, the fall of Jericho, all these amazing things, but they failed in one key area: **They didn't do a good job of passing on the faith to the next generation. (youth/children's min)**

Israel stopped living faithfully and idolatry crept in.

The consequence for not passing on the faith is that Israel becomes unfaithful to the Lord.

God has to raise up individuals that are called judges.

These are temporary God-appointed deliverers raised up by God in times of crisis in order to rescue Israel from their sin.

They enter a cycle: Israel abandons God/God allows oppression/Israel cries out/God raises up a judge

to deliver/There's a little bit of peace/The cycle repeats

By the time Chapter Six comes around, we're almost 200 years into this repeating cycle, and God is about to raise up the fourth judge, Gideon.

- Israel is trapped in a cycle they cannot break out of on their own.
- When God responds He doesn't just give advice. He raises up deliverers and we're meant to see something deeper about these deliverers:
- There are not people who are able to do it on their own. They are Holy Spirit-empowered instruments.
- And it's been so interesting to look at how the Holy Spirit is described in these specific instances
- He's never introduced as a feeling or an ability. Rather the Holy Spirit is always the subject of the action
- He comes, he moves, he acts and the deliverer that God raises up is being used by the Spirit to accomplish what the Spirit wants to accomplish.

**So Gideon** is living in a time where Israel is under the oppression of the Midianites

- And they are really oppressive, to the point where they won't let the Israelites even grow their own crops to survive without coming in and taking the crops that are being grown
- Gideon is standing in a wine press trying to beat out the grain because he has to hide it.
- An angel of the Lord comes to him and tells him that God is with him
- Gideon's response is, "If God is with us then why hasn't he rescued us from the Midianites control?"
- Valid question
- The angel said I'm here to send you to do that very thing.

- And Gideon's response is like what we just talked about. In chapter 6, verse 15. He says, "Please Lord, how can I save Israel? Behold my clan is the weakest in Manasseh and I am the least in my father's house. The Lord said to him, "But I will be with you and you shall strike the Midianites as one man."
- And you have to spend some time reading this whole chapter. It's so interesting!
- But then from there Gideon isn't sure if he can trust God so he tests him.
- **You see in this story Gideon is bitter and uncertain. He is constantly testing God**
- **He is not an image of a faithful bold follower of the Lord.**
- **He's not somebody we look at and go, "Oh yeah, that guy's got it all together."**
- But then after the testing goes well, Gideon goes and ruins some pagan altars that his father had actually put up.
- Everybody in town is mad and they demand that Gideon pay for his crimes and be put to death
- But then Gideon's dad actually stands up for him and says, "If Baal was truly a god that he should be able to defend his own altar."
- Quite a lot of family drama
- But then Gideon has to do more. He wants to gather over 30,000 men to be able to fight back against the Midianites
- The Midianites had a strategic massive raiding encampment. Most of the Midian army was there and from there they would sweep the area to consume everything in sight. About 135,000 soldiers and leaders.
- This was the target location
- And then in Judges chapter six, verse 34, it says, "But the Spirit of the Lord clothed Gideon and he sounded the trumpet and the Abiezrites were called out to follow him."
- From there with the Spirit's empowerment, Gideon is able to call together over thirty thousand men to fight back against the Midianites

- I learned that when it says “the Spirit of the Lord clothed Gideon”, what it actually means is the **Holy Spirit put on Gideon like a cloak.**
- Imagine Gideon is like a glove and the Holy Spirit is like a hand that puts it on and then takes action
- Gideon lacked confidence, courage, authority, and charisma to be able to pull all these people together.
- **And we see the Holy Spirit supply to Gideon what is needed to be capable of accomplishing the deliverance that God wanted.**
- And the Holy Spirit uses that to set up this wonderful scenario of where God will actually whittle down those 30,000 soldiers to a much smaller number of 300 people, to clearly demonstrate who the main character of this story is- Yahweh.
- Very cool. God gets all the glory
- Now let's jump to the end of Judges, in chapters 13 to 16
- Here we see Samson was the really strong guy with the long hair.
- Samson ends up being like the worst of the judges but there's a prophecy about him that he would begin the Deliverance of Israel from the Hands of the Philistines. Which would not fully be dealt with until King David, generations later.
- Overall Samson never really did what he was called to do and just did his own thing. The only reason he had any success was because of the work of the Holy Spirit through him.
- There are four times we see the Holy Spirit explicitly mentioned coming to Samson:
  - In chapter 13 verse 25 it says: "[And the Spirit of the Lord began to stir him while he was in Mahaneh Dan.](#)"
    - he becomes restless and he goes to the Philistines territory
    - He finds a Philistine woman he wants to take as his wife.

- **His parents object** because the **law of Moses** says Israelites should avoid marriages that would lead Israel into idolatry.
- Then we get a remarkable insight to what God was doing through this. In chapter 14, verse 4, it says that “his father and mother didn't realize the Lord was at work in this, creating an opportunity to work against the Philistines who ruled over Israel at that time.”
- At first glance it looks like the Holy Spirit stirred him to do something against God's law, but that's not what's happening
- This is just the first horrible decision that Samson makes and God then uses it for his purposes.
- This is not unlike other situations, like when Joseph's brothers threw him into a hole. They intended it for evil but God meant it for good.
- The second time is in Judges 14:6.
  - Samson and his parents are on their way to find this woman.
  - A lion jumps out to attack them. Verse 6 says, "Then the spirit of the Lord rushed upon him and although he had nothing in his hand, he tore the lion in pieces as one tears a young goat."
  - I'm sorry, what?
  - First of all tearing apart a lion into pieces is a bit grotesque unless you're a junior high guy and then you think it's pretty cool.
  - But then see what it says after: He tore the lion in pieces as one tears a young goat. Who's tearing apart young goats??? They had tools to butcher animals.
  - Honestly this left me with more than one question. Haha
  - But we get the idea – it was easy for him to do that because of the power of the Spirit.

- And here it says a different language for the Spirit coming on him. It says the Spirit rushed on him.
- The Spirit empowers him for this one moment. This is not the Spirit staying with him and changing him to be better
- And there's a reason this happens: Samson will make a riddle out of this situation later on when he comes across the carcass and bees have made honey inside the carcass... he eats it
- He doesn't tell anyone where it comes from because he's a Nazirite and he's not allowed to touch dead bodies.
- Later he makes a bet with 30 men selected by the bride's parents to be his companions during the wedding celebration
- He bets them thirty sets of fine clothing if they can solve the riddle and then he tells them this obscure riddle there's no way they would ever be able to solve.
- They end up coercing Samson's bride to tell them the answer. Samson is mad because he lost the bet.
- So now Samson needs 30 pieces of fine clothing to give to these men.
- So he travels in the nearest big city, Ashkelon, and finds 30 people that are dressed really nice, kills them and steals their clothes.
- But here's the kicker. We see the third time the Holy Spirit is mentioned.
- The third time is in Judges 14:19.
  - It says, "[And the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon him and he went down to Ashkelon and struck down thirty men of the town and took their spoil and gave the garments to those who had told the riddle.](#)"
  - Again the language is the same as the Spirit rushed upon him. The Spirit empowered him to be able to do this feat but it's not for the reasons that it seems.

- At first glance it looks like the Spirit was empowering Samson to do an evil thing.
  - But contextually we know that God is working against the Philistines, trying to destroy them because of their wickedness.
  - This event is an instigating event to stir the Philistines.
  - So once again we see God using Samson's sinful bad decisions and working good out of them.
- Then the fourth time the text mentions the Holy Spirit is when he finds himself tied up in Judges 15:14.
- And you really got to read this for yourself because it's even crazier and the drama is so intense.
  - But to summarize: while Gideon was off getting those fine clothes, his bride's father ends up assuming the wedding was off and gave her in marriage to the best man.
  - Samson is ticked. He just goes for vengeance and ends up tying torches to fox tails and setting philistine grain fields on fire.
  - This makes the Philistines mad. They're like, "Who did this?" They find out it was Samson because of this situation with the father-in-law giving the bride away.
  - The Philistines actually come up and kill the father-in-law and his daughter.
  - Samson again is mad in chapter 15, verse 8. It says, "He struck them hip and thigh with a great blow." Which basically means he just attacked the Philistines with ruthless ferocity and dealt a massive devastating blow.
  - The Philistines then bring an army and encamp to try to raid the city. And they say they'll go away if they can get Samson as a prisoner to deliver to the Philistines.
  - Samson agrees. He gets all tied up.

- And then we see the Spirit comes upon him again. It says in chapter 15, verse 14, "When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting to meet him. Then the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon him and the ropes that were on his arms became as flax that has caught fire and his bonds melted off his hands."
    - Same language of the Spirit rushing upon him. He easily breaks the bonds that hold him.
    - Samson then grabs the jawbone of a donkey and with it takes down a thousand men. Insanity.
    - After this event it seems like there's some calmness for about 20 years.
    - Then eventually he meets another Philistine woman named Delilah and it goes downhill from there for him.
  - And there is one last moment where Samson, at the end of his life, cries out to the Lord for some help. It seems the Spirit answered but it doesn't say specifically.
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- The story's crazy and you have to read it for yourself.
  - But Samson was an absolute unfaithful train wreck of bad decisions.
  - In our eyes this is the wrong person for the job of being a deliverer to Israel.
  - God chose the wrong person for this role in our eyes, but He chose him on purpose.
  - The emphasis in this story is not actually on Samson's ability and strength and potential as a leader but rather it's on the Holy Spirit's decisive action in the moment of need for Israel
  - So in one instance with Gideon the spirit puts him on clothes and in the Samson situation it says the spirit rushes in.
  - In both the Holy Spirit is the one acting and the judges are the ones being carried along.

- In both the emphasis is on God supplying power for a moment that just can't be handled by human ability.
- He makes completely ordinary people capable of what they could never accomplish apart from his power.

*But there's a reality that how the Holy Spirit operated in the book of Judges is not the same way the Holy Spirit operates today.*

## **YOU:**

- You live after Pentecost, which means you're not waiting for the Spirit to show up like Gideon and Samson.
- If you belong to Christ, He's already with you
- It's the exact same Holy Spirit who clothed Gideon and who rushed upon Samson.
- Now I don't expect you're going to go around tearing apart young goats, so you don't need the Spirit to empower you in the same way.
- The question is less about: How do I get more of the Holy Spirit? The question is: How do you learn to depend on the Spirit who is already present with you?
- There are so many areas of life where the Holy Spirit is at work within you, equipping you and strengthening you and growing you into a deeper likeness of Jesus Christ.
- And that's really the most important impossible task: becoming more and more like Jesus.
- None of us are perfect and the call to the standard of love that we are called to as Christians feels like an impossible task for all of us.
- Not to mention the different situations God puts us in life where we feel those moments of "I don't have what this requires and I can't do this and this is too much for me."

- And the Spirit doesn't set us free from the struggle but the Spirit means we're not alone through the struggle. God will accomplish the things that He wants to accomplish.
  - And also think about how terrible those guys were. If God is going to use these horrible people and work through them, of course he can work in and through you.
  - And when you read through the book of Judges, you're left seeing Israel stuck in the same broken pattern.
  - There's this longing for a deliverer who will not fail, someone who can rescue not just temporarily but finally.
  - And you see where this is going. It's pointing to Jesus, where he steps in as the true and better deliverer.
  - Jesus came and lived a perfect life and then died on a cross, was buried, and rose again.
  - In doing so he defeated sin and death on the cross.
  - And then Jesus did something incredible. He sent the same Holy Spirit to his people.
  - But our responsibility with the Holy Spirit isn't to be a deliverer of Israel or God's people. Jesus is already the perfect deliverer.
  - But now our role with the Holy Spirit is to carry Jesus' work forward into the world.
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- **So when we have this feeling of "I am not enough for this," or "I don't have what this situation requires," or "I feel out of my depth"**
  - **The answer that scripture gives is not that we need to try harder or find your inner strength. It's actually something much more grounded and honestly much more freeing.**
  - **The same Holy Spirit who empowered ordinary people in the book of Judges now lives in you.**
  - And that's so huge because it's not our circumstances or skill set that changes, but rather our posture towards God.

- Instead of saying "I hope I can handle this situation," you say, "Holy Spirit, I can't do this without you. I'm depending on you right now."
- **And we don't have to limit this kind of prayer just to those crazy impossible situations that we might find ourselves in but we actually get to bring the Holy Spirit into everything we do.**
- Hard conversations, Parenting, new job, Serving in ministry, Forgiving someone
- **Because when you invite the Holy Spirit to be part of that process, he will always guide you to the way of love, loving God and loving others.**
- **And God has never once required his people to do his will without supplying what is needed to do it.**

#### **WE:**

- And you can imagine what a church family looks like when they believe this. It's not just filled with confident or capable people.
- Rather it's normal people who are learning to depend on the Spirit of God who lives within them in every aspect of their life
- It's people who feel like they are weak or unable who are then stepping into hard things. It's ordinary people being faithful to the calling of God on their life. It's people who are unsure still obeying God anyway not because they are enough but because He is present.
- And over time something beautiful happens. It's that we stop being surprised that God uses people like us.
- Because that's exactly who he's always used.
- The Holy Spirit makes ordinary people capable of what they could never accomplish apart from His power
- God didn't choose the wrong person when he called you.
- Those here today who feel like God might be calling them to trust in him more today

- He has a purpose to work in and through you.
- You are exactly where you need to be and hearing exactly what God wants you to hear.
- God is choosing to draw you to Himself and all you have to do is put your trust in Jesus as your Savior to believe the Gospel that He lived, died, rose again for the forgiveness of your sins, that you would repent of your sins and turn towards God instead of living in your own strength.
- I imagine you're tired from trying to do it all on your own.
- Make today the day where you invite Christ into your life and you surrender your life to him.
- If you want to learn more about doing that or you just want somebody to pray with you as you kind of wrestle with that decision, you can come to the front after the service and Gerald will be at the front or you can find me or somebody you came with. We'd love to pray for you and help you with this next step.

## **Let's pray.**

Father,

So often we walk into life feeling like we're not enough for what's in front of us. But thank you that you've never asked us to carry your purposes in our own strength. You've given us your Spirit. The same Spirit who clothed Gideon and rushed upon Samson now lives in us because of Jesus. So help us to stop trying to do this on our own. Where we're weak or unsure, strengthen us and lead us. Where we're tired, sustain us. Where we need courage and boldness to do the ministry that you're calling us into, empower us with that. Teach us to depend on You in the middle of real life, not just in the big moments. Thank you for sealing our faith with the Holy Spirit and reminding us that we are not alone.

Amen.

## **Benediction**

**Right before Jesus ascended into heaven, he made a promise to his disciples. That promise rings true for all of us and reminds us of our mission.**

Acts 1:8

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

Brothers and sisters, let's take that power into the world and share the love of Christ with everyone we meet.