



SEPTEMBER 17/18, 2022  
ALFRED STREET BAPTIST CHURCH

A FEW GOOD PEOPLE:

**THE** BATTLE  
IS NOT  
YOURS

**PART 2**  
JUDGES 7:1-7

A SERMON BY  
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**Date:** September 17/18, 2022

**Preacher:** Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley

**Sermon Title:** “A Few Good People” - *The Battle Is Not Yours, Part 2*

**Scripture:** Judges 7:1-7

*Early in the morning, Jerub-Baal (that is, Gideon) and all his men camped at the spring of Harod. The camp of Midian was north of them in the valley near the hill of Moreh. The Lord said to Gideon, “You have too many men. I cannot deliver Midian into their hands, or Israel would boast against me, ‘My own strength has saved me.’ Now announce to the army, ‘Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.’” So twenty-two thousand men left, while ten thousand remained.*

*But the Lord said to Gideon, “There are still too many men. Take them down to the water, and I will thin them out for you there. If I say, ‘This one shall go with you,’ he shall go; but if I say, ‘This one shall not go with you,’ he shall not go.”*

*So Gideon took the men down to the water. There the Lord told him, “Separate those who lap the water with their tongues as a dog laps from those who kneel down to drink.” Three hundred of them drank from cupped hands, lapping like dogs. All the rest got down on their knees to drink. The 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.”*

**SERMON SUMMARY:**

The Book of Judges occurs as the people of God move into the promised land. Joshua has died, and now a succession of twelve leaders, known as “Judges”, govern the people of God. This book tells the story of God’s children living through recurring cycles of peace, falling prey to sinful behavior, crying out for a deliverer, and salvation that comes through the judges sent by God.

In Judges 7 we meet the fifth Judge, Gideon. Gideon is a reluctant leader, responding to God's call to fight the Midianite army by suggesting he is not the one. Despite Gideon's protestations, God calls him a 'mighty man of valor'.

In this sermon, we learn God's future view of us is not limited by our current circumstances. God sees where we are, **but** God knows that the calling on our lives is greater than any place we have been. The same is true for Gideon. Though we meet him hiding in a wine press, his current predicament does not preclude God's future plan for him.

In his quest to defeat the Midianites, Gideon recruits 32,000 men to fight alongside him. But God declares these 32,000 are not the ones to take into battle. God strategically thins the ranks of Gideon's army to provide him with examples of the people Gideon should draw around him.

- Some people's presence in your life can be counterproductive to God's plan for your life. In fact, other people's fear can be contagious and a detriment to your faith. *Draw around you those who are not afraid.*
- Some people have no ability to look beyond today or toward the needs of others. *Draw around you those who care for others, those who serve others, and those who have vision that exceeds the experience of today.*
- Some people are unable to give God the honor and praise for the work God does in their lives. They believe they are self-made people and rob God of the glory due. God gives victory to people who give God praise. *Draw around you those people who know the power of thanking and praising God.*

As he draws to the close of this sermon, Pastor Wesley suggests the thinning of Gideon's army by 99% might appear to set up dire and dark circumstances. But, when darkness comes, when difficulty seems to have taken the high ground, it is a set up for God to step in and show God's self strong. God will equip us with a few good people to help us, and God will fight our battles.

#### **KEY POINTS:**

1. In this world we will have tribulations (John 16:33). God is willing to fight our battles, if and when we obey the strategies and tactics laid out before us.
2. As we encounter seasons of difficulty and challenge, the story of Gideon reminds us with God on our side, all we need is a few good people.
3. The people we bring into our lives play a role in whether God fights our battles or not. When we maintain relationships with others who cause us to fear, lack vision, care nothing for others, and/or withhold our praise, God may allow us to handle our challenges on our own.
4. It is a good thing when people show you who they really are. Like Beyonce, we may find it wise to say to some relationships in our lives, "You are the best thing I **never** had."
5. The size of our battles is not as important as the size of our faith. We must have faith in God as we seek to follow God's lead in all of our battles.
6. When God thins our crowd, we must believe that God is drawing around us the few good people necessary for our assignment.

## GETTING TO KNOW YOU QUESTIONS:

1. Pastor Wesley mentioned that his father, the Rev. Dr. Alvin Wesley, preached a sermon using the old adage, "If it's not one thing, it's another." What maxims or sayings were used in your childhood home? Which ones do you speak in your home?
2. Pastor Wesley suggests that becoming a follower of Jesus does not inoculate/protect/excuse you from challenges and troubles in the world. However, some who come to Christ believe that it will. Were there beliefs you held about being a follower of Christ that, as you have matured in Jesus, you have found to be untrue? If there are, please share with your Village.

## INTO THE BIBLE QUESTIONS:

1. Pastor Wesley quotes Psalm 124 when he says, "If it had not been for the Lord on our side." Using the experiences of your own life, please finish this sentence, sharing how God has blessed you. "If it had not been for the Lord on *my* side . . ."
2. John 16:33 is embedded in a conversation Jesus has with the disciples just before he is arrested and the horrors preceding Good Friday begin. The portion of scripture beginning with John 14 and ending with John 17 is known as "The Farewell Discourse." In this section of scripture Jesus teaches his followers what to expect next. Read John 16:33 and imagine how these words might have encouraged Gideon if he had heard them. How do the words of John 16:33 encourage you?

***Village Members and Facilitators,  
The Curriculum Team does not expect you to cover all the questions. We ask the  
facilitators to choose the best questions, in each section, for your Village.***

## LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. In the sermon, Pastor Wesley says, "We serve a God who loves it when we allow him to fight our battles." How do you "allow" God to fight your battles? How do you hinder God from fighting your battles?

2. The book of Judges is a cyclical narrative of Israel rising and falling, and starting all over again. Why do you think Israel seemingly did not learn from their repeated struggles? Is there a situation in your life where it took you several cycles to learn a lesson God sought to teach you? If you could speak to your younger self, what would you say about the power or the detriment of learning a lesson only after repeated cycles?
  
3. Pastor Wesley tells us our friends help determine if, and how, God will fight our battles. Do you have friends you should let God thin from your life? Why do you think they are still in your life? What are the prayers you might pray and the actions you might take to make room for God to begin to thin these people from your circle?
  
4. A major teaching in this sermon is that we ought to give God praise. Why does the God of all creation demand or need our praise? What happens when we praise God and when we do not praise God? Does it really matter?
  
5. Pastor Wesley shares in the sermon "If you want God to give you victory, you have to give God glory." Gideon's victory allowed Israel to live lives of peace and joy. What is the victory you seek as you fight your battles? What would this victory mean for you, right now, today?

**"CAN I PUSH IT?" QUESTIONS:**

1. There is a steady stream of messages in our culture about being popular, possessing what the "cool kids" have, being liked, and being powerful. This constant emphasis on what we have, our position, and our status can cause people to seek surface-level relationships based on the need to prove our worth. What positive role does the church play in helping to overcome this kind of behavior? What negative role does the church play in promoting this behavior? What role should the church play?
  
2. The early church and Gideon's band of 300, were small in size but powerful agents for change. Research report, the modern US "Church" has declined in size. But God still calls the Church to be powerful. Whether large or small in size, how could the Church serve as a more effective agent of change in today's world? What role do you play in this shift toward a more powerful church?

## **ACTIVITY:**

Pastor Wesley called Beyonce's song, "The Best Thing I Never Had", a gospel song because it bears an important message. He describes coming to understand the reality of a person's true character and not their public face as good news. God speaks through many vehicles, and music is one of the most powerful. What is one of your "good news" songs—a song that speaks truth to you? Make a playlist of at least five of these songs. What are their messages? *Please note, the songs do not have to be only ones we sing in church.*

## **SPIRIT WORK:**

Make a list of friends who fit the following description:

- They have faith that inspires you and calls you to be a better person.
- They care for others and have an eye toward the future.
- They are willing to give God glory, honor and praise.

If they are alive, write them a note, send them an email, or speak to them in person or on the phone and tell them that they made your list of "a few good people".

Now, ask yourself, would you be on anyone's list if these are the criteria? Pray and ask God to help you strengthen your ability to be the kind of friend our sermon describes.

## **ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS**

*Within the structure of Village there are various affinity groups. Each week the team creates questions especially for the individual groups. However, any Village may draw from the questions listed below if the Spirit so moves.*

### **For Married Couples:**

1. Have there been occasions in your marriage where the thinning out of your circle of friends would have benefited your marriage? Were you able to allow God to thin? Why or why not? What did you learn?
2. Within marriage we are committed to one another. However, sometimes that commitment can supersede our commitment to God. Have you ever experienced wanting your spouse's approval more than God's? What did you do? What did you learn?

### **For Young Adults:**

1. How do you choose your friends? Do the characteristics listed in the sermon summary (see bullets) seem reasonable? Why or why not? What characteristics are not mentioned that are important to you in the choice of your friends?
2. In the age of social media, how can you determine which people are “water dippers” who look out for the community, versus people who are “face dunkers” who serve their own thirst at the expense of others?

### **For Parents:**

1. What are the characteristics you want in your children’s friends? How do you guide your children in making friends? How do you protect them?
2. Are there important lessons you have learned about thinning or adding to your child’s friendship group that you would be willing to share in your Village?

### **For Women:**

1. There is a phrase in the sermon that reminds us we can be addicted to having too many people in our lives. What is the cost of needing other people’s approval? How might needing other people’s favor affect our relationship with God? If you have ever been addicted to popularity, what was the cost?
2. Please create a list of three of the *best things you never had* for which you thank God. Which has been most instructional in your walk with God? Which produced the most/least growth in your faith?

### **For Men:**

1. There is a phrase in the sermon that reminds us we can be addicted to having too many people in our lives. What is the cost of needing other people's approval? How might needing other people's favor affect our relationship with God? If you have ever been addicted to popularity, what was the cost?
2. Please create a list of three of the *best things you never had* for which you thank God. Which has been most instructional in your walk with God? Which produced the most/least growth in your faith?

### **Additional Questions for Returning Citizens:**

1. Was there someone God put in your life while you were incarcerated who showed you how to be courageous, see beyond yourself, help others, or praise God? Who was that person? What impact did they have on you? What would you say to them today?
2. There is a phrase in the sermon that reminds us we can be addicted to having too many people in our lives. What is the cost of needing other people's approval? How might needing other people's favor affect our relationship with God? If you have ever been addicted to popularity, what was the cost?

### **Additional Questions for Differently-Abled Person/People:**

1. Pastor's sermon noted that some people's presence in your life can be counterproductive to God's purpose for your life. Have you encountered people whose impact on you was less than positive? How did you navigate that relationship? What did you learn?
2. Have there been circumstances in your life when you have encountered people who have helped you live into the fullness of God's plan for your life? How did they support you? What did they do differently from those who did not support you? What did you learn that you would like to pass on to others?

**REFERENCES FOR FURTHER STUDY:**

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2. Bible Project Video, The Book of Judges
  - a. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOYy8iCfIJ4>
  
3. Lyrics to Beyonce's The Best Thing I Never Had
  - a. <https://genius.com/Beyonce-best-thing-i-never-had-lyrics>