THE STORY CHAPTER 8  
A Few Good Men…and Women

October 29-30, 2016

**Appearing on the Big Screen…**

After that whole generation had been gathered to their ancestors, another generation grew up, who knew neither the Lord nor what He had done for Israel.

*The Story, Pg. 103, Judges 2:10*

**Disobedience LEADS TO punishment, FOLLOWED BY repentance,**

**which LEADS TO Deliverance!**

**Deborah was a woman of influence.**

Now Deborah, a prophet, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time. She held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites went up to her to have their disputes decided.

*Page 105, Judges 4:1-5 NIV*

**Deborah had a close walk with the Lord.**

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*2 Chronicles 16:9*

**Gideon was a man of courage.**

The angel of the LORD came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites.

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**In the midst of The Story, God is going to move Gideon from fear to trust.**

**Where do you need God to move you from fear to trust?**

When the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon, he said, ‘The LORD is with you, mighty warrior.”

*The Story, Pg. 108, Judges 6:12*

But sir,’ Gideon replied, ‘If the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all His wonders that our fathers told us about when they said, “Did not the LORD bring us up out of Egypt?” But now the LORD has abandoned us and put us into the hand of Midian.”

*The Story, Pg. 108, Judges 6:13*

**Gideon was faithful to God over FEARS and FAMILY.**

The LORD answered, “I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites.”

*Judges 6:16*

The LORD answered, “I will be with you…

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What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

*Romans 8:31*

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**To view The Story Chapter 8 sermon video,** [**CLICK HERE**](http://media.oakhillschurch.com/default.aspx?page=3679&item=548)**.**

**Opener**

Hey Oak Hills Church! I have admired you from afar. I might be a Carolina boy, at heart, but I have always admired the great state of Texas.

I have also admired your pastors, Randy Frazee and Max Lucado! I’m sure you know this, or should I say I hope you know this, but you have to be one of the most blessed churches on the planet to have not just one amazing, humble, faithful, intellectual pastor, but two of the very best! Praise God for blessing you so abundantly!

And am just grateful to be able to stand on this stage and teach God’s word, in God’s house, to God’s people! May we pray together?!

*PRAY*

Well, as you know, you folks are making your way through *The Story.* We are doing the same thing on the East Coast. It is just so powerful to chronologically walk through the Bible. Think about where you folks have already been:

* **Creation**
* **God building a nation**
* **Joseph**
* **Deliverance**
* **Than you studied the Commandments!**

**ILLUSTRATION/Humor: Ten Commandments!** A little while back I came across a list kept by a teacher at a ***Christian School*** of answers given by children in tests covering Bible curriculum. I got a kick out of some of the samples – I hope you do, as well.

***~ Moses died before he ever reached Canada. Then Joshua led the Hebrews in the battle of Geritol.***

***~ The seventh commandment is thou shalt not admit adultery.* {God help us!}**

***~ The Egyptians were all drowned in the desert. Afterwards, Moses went upon Mount Cyanide to get the Ten Amendments.***

***~ Jesus was born because Mary had an immaculate contraption.***

***~ Christians have only one spouse. This is called monotony.***

Now it just goes to remind us that it takes a while to learn and truly understand the stories of Scripture. But the first step to doing this is reading it for yourself. Way to go for engaging this series.

**A Few Good Men…and Women**

**The Bible says that the nation of Israel followed God faithfully throughout the life of Joshua and the elders who succeeded him.** We have seen this cyclical pattern developing, much like what we do, where we can sometimes follow God faithfully and passionately and then we can walk in darkness and disobedience.

In Judges 2:10, *The Story, on Pg.* 103, we read these words:

After that whole generation had been gathered to their ancestors, another generation grew up, who knew neither the Lord nor what He had done for Israel.

*The Story, Pg. 103, Judges 2:10*

This verse is a frightening one. It shows how important it is for us to pass our spiritual faith onto the next generation, and that did not take place with them.

*Acknowledge the ministry of the youth and children’s workers, and thank them for how they are partnering with parents to instill a love and devotion to God in our children.*

So Judges Chapter 2 begins this cyclical pattern of behavior by the Israelites where:

Disobedience LEADS TO punishment, FOLLOWED BY repentance,   
which LEADS TO deliverance!

But when they disobeyed they began to walk in darkness. They stopped worshipping the Lord and they began idol worship and Baal worship.

**ILLUSTRATION: Baal Worship!** For Israel, quite possibly like us in the Western world today, there are plenty of false gods out there! They had the Canaanite Baals, those jolly nature gods whose worship was a rampage of gluttony, drunkenness, and ritual prostitution. For us there are still the great gods of *Sex, Shekels, and Stomach* (you might call it the *Unholy Trinity.*)There are other enslaving trios, I think of *Pleasure, Possessions, and Position,* or how about *Football, the Firm, and Family*. I know, I probably just went too far when I listed football.

**Deborah**

There are two people that I would like to draw our attention to today. In fact, as we read that person Joshua 24:15, these two biblical leaders come to mind: The first is Deborah.

You see, people began to blend in and compromise in terms of their love and loyalty for God, the one true God, they began to just blend in and compromise, and soon they became just like their pagan neighbors. But each time God is going to use a judge to lead them back into the light of the Lord. And so for four hundred years, one by one, a dozen people… **Eleven of them were men; one of them was a woman.** And one by one they led the nation of Israel.

**ILLUSTRATION: Judges -** Now when you think of the term *judge*, you probably think of a person who presides over a trial and sits back in a chair behind a dais. But I don’t want you to think that, because back in this time—**a little over a thousand years before Christ’s birth—a judge was even more than that. The Old Testament…these judges…they were the political, they were the spiritual, and they were the military leaders, and they were all rolled into one.**

One of the earlier judges was a woman by the name of Deborah. **Deborah was a woman of influence.**

Now Deborah, a prophet, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time. She held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites went up to her to have their disputes decided.

*Page 105, Judges 4:1-5 NIV*

She was the most unlikely judge because she was, well, a she, and she was living in a man’s world. Women at any campuses or online this should be so encouraging to you. It was not common for a woman to hold such a powerful political office. They didn’t lead nations. They usually were seen and not heard. However, Deborah was raised up by God to be a judge among His people. God used this woman in a powerful way. Never under estimate the leadership and influence of a woman!

Can I get an amen from the women in the house!?

**ILLUSTRATION/humor: CEO and Gas Station Attendant -** Several years ago the wealthy CEO of a company was on vacation in New England with his wife. One time they stopped for gas, and he went inside to get a candy bar. When he came out he saw his wife having an animated conversation with the gas station attendant. They were both laughing, and he felt a little awkward as he walked by; but he didn’t say anything. He just got in the car. She continued talking to the man for another few minutes.

Finally, she called him by name and got in the car, and he pulled out. And he was a little awkward and uncomfortable and he said, “Hey, who…who was that guy?” She said, “It’s the strangest thing.” She said, “That’s the guy that I was engaged to years ago before you, and we haven’t seen each other since all of that took place.” Well, the guy didn’t know what to think, but he drove on a little bit further.

Finally, he broke the silence and with a smug arrogance he looked over at his wife and said, “*Oh…” He said, “Do you ever think about it? If you would’ve married him, you’d be married to a gas station attendant*.”

And she said, *“No honey, you don’t understand. Had he married me, he would’ve become the CEO and your butt would have been pumping gas at a gas station!”* *Never underestimate the power of a woman!*

Write this down in your teaching notes, please: **Deborah had a close walk with the Lord.** That is why God gave her such influence. Ladies, if you want influence, and you want leadership, and you sense God is calling you to do great and mighty things with your one and only life, you must walk close with the Lord!

**ILLUSTRATION: Upper Story/Lower Story** - God’s meta-narrative continues to unfold on planet earth, it remains clear that he uses man and women in the lower story to stay closely connected in a devoted relationship with Him! I’m reminded of that great first and II Chronicles 16:9:

For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of *those* whose heart *is* loyal to Him.

*2 Chronicles 16:9*

Love that verse! God is still looking to and fro! He’s looking for a few good men and women! Will he find you faithful, loyal, and useable for His purposes in the world!

**Gideon**

Well, this trend of the unlikely being used by God is going to continue with another judge decades later. His name is Gideon. **Gideon was a man of courage.**

For seven years Israel had been struggling through a period of oppression. The Midianites and the Amalekites were ruthless barbarians who intimidated the Hebrews by destroying their crops and stealing their cattle.

Look at page 108 in *The Story*, and in Judges 6:11 we’ll pick it up. It says,

The angel of the LORD came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites.

*The Story, Pg. 108, Judges 6:11*

Now you don’t typically thresh wheat in a winepress. You do it where the wind can blow away the chaff. But Gideon didn’t want to be seen by the Midianites, they were ruthless and barbaric.

Sometimes preachers paint a picture of Gideon as being a very cowardly man—and that may have been the case—but in his defense he was also a very practical man. He was a realist. He knew that he himself was no match for the vigilante tactics of the Midianites. But, **In the midst of The Story, God is going to move Gideon from fear to trust.**

This causes me to ask this one question to you, Where do you need God to move you from fear to trust? Think about that for a moment! Where is that area?

* Marriage, frightened at the status of your marriage
* Single, wonder about your future and whether you’ll ever marry
* Vocation, where are you headed
* School, whether you should go back

Gideon was not from some special tribe. He was the least likely candidate, but God moves him from fear to trust. Look at verse 12 of Judges 6:

When the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon, he said, ‘The LORD is with you, mighty warrior.”

*The Story, Pg. 108, Judges 6:12*

Now that’s a stretch. Gideon was a farmer who appears to be attempting to save his crop before the Midianites could steal it.

Please don’t miss this. The angel of God is **inspiring him to become a mighty warrior**. He is not a mighty warrior yet, in reality. But in the eyes of God, who always sees in us the best version of ourselves in the future, God speaks profound and inspiring words of hope and courage! No doubt, Gideon was a diligent man, but God was about to stretch him out of his comfort zone because God always sees inside us all our greatest potential, and he was about to move Gideon from fear to trust.

**ILLUSTRATION: Divine Sculpting -** After marveling at Michelangelo’s statue of Goliath-vanquishing [David,](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_%28Michelangelo%29) the Pope asked the sculptor, “How do you know what to cut away?” Michelangelo’s reply? **“It’s simple. I just look inside and remove everything that doesn’t look like David.”**



Did you know God wants to do some divine sculpting on you as a result of this journey through The Story? He knows you. He created you. And he desires to look inside you and remove everything that doesn’t look like the true you. He wants to call out the best version of you that you can’t even begin to imagine.

Gideon is up against this big battle. The odds are against him. God keeps dwindling the number down, until he gets to only 300 men. At this point, God speaks a word to Gideon:

The LORD answered, “I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites.”

*Judges 6:16*

Can I end our time today talking to you about 5 simple words— I WILL BE WITH YOU! Whenever we share communion, we are remembering Jesus’ words, “I will be with you.” Jesus’ last words to the disciples in Matthew 28 were to go and make disciples, and “I will be with you always.”

**ILLUSTRATION: 5 Words – I WILL BE WITH YOU!** Lately, as a result of my journey through The Story, I have been thinking about these five words often. When I get in certain situations, and I sense someone is believing the lies instead of the truth about themselves, I will ask them, *“Could you just give me a five-word sentence…just five words that represent a lie that you’ve believed that has robbed your story of strength and courage?”* I have been writing some of the responses down – can I share some with you?

• “It’s too late for you.”

• “You messed up too much.”

• “No one will want you.”

• “It’s never going to happen.”

• “You will just fail again.”

• “You’re never going to change.”

• “You will always be alone.”

• “You’ve failed as a mom.”

• “You’re just like your dad.”

• “God doesn’t love you anymore.”

• “It’ll be like this forever.”

• “You’ve wasted too much time.”

• “You are on your own.”

• “You don’t need any help.”

• “God’s done giving you chances.”

Just five words come so quickly to the people I asked…words that have been lies and robbed strength and courage from their lives.

I flew out to Texas to give you five new words—five new words to replace all the other five-word lies you have ever believed about yourself! Let’s throw it back up there:

The LORD answered, “I will be with you…

*Judges 6:16*

Therefore, square your shoulders. Look full into the wonder of God, lean into His word, God declares, as I was with Moses, Joshua Deborah and Gideon, **I WILL BE WITH YOU!**

You see, those 5 words will trump all those other 5-word lies you have ever been told.

* You have some fears? So did Gideon. So do I.
* Ever wonder about your resources? So did Gideon. So do I.
* Ever wonder if you got what it takes? So did Gideon. So do I.

I WILL BE WITH YOU.

What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

*Romans 8:31*

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

*PRAY*