

## Introduction

One of the interesting things about growing up is experiencing historical moments. I remember the Berlin Wall being torn down. Some of you might remember it going up. A whole lot of you are like, “What’s the Berlin Wall?”. I remember where I was when the space shuttle blew up—the first one. I was in eighth grade science class. Our teacher walked into the class and was visibly shaken. He had just left the teachers’ lounge where he witnessed the explosion. It’s one of those moments you never forget.

One of the most iconic moments in television history took place on September 20, 1977. I don’t remember where I was. *I was only 5*. You may not remember it, either, but you know about it. You’ve heard of it, even if you don’t know the full context. On that date Fonzie *jumped the shark*. That expression, “jumping the shark”, refers to a show has lost any real creative integrity. It resorts to gimmicks in order to try to revive itself.

This often results in a show going in a new direction, having exhausted all its jokes and plot lines. It’s a desperate attempt to stay relevant. Oftentimes when a show “jumps the shark” it loses its charm and character—the stuff that made the show enjoyable. The new direction is contrary to what you knew and loved about that show.

If we’re honest, sometimes we think God jumps the shark. He changes the “plot” of our lives and we don’t like it. We get settled into a comfortable life and then tragedy strikes or we encounter suffering and pain. We wonder what happened. Why can’t the “show” stay the way it was? Why change the direction our lives were headed? We liked the way things were; why does God want to mess with a good thing?

The cognitive dissonance comes from hearing that God is good and kind, that he is loving and merciful, and then seeing the hardships we all face from time to time. We wonder what happened. Why can’t—why *won’t*—God do what he did before, and end all this pain? We *like* how it was; why can’t we go back?

What we want is for God to *respond* to our plight, to finally *do something* about it. We’re failing to remember something significant: God doesn’t respond—*he initiates*. We’re in Judges 6.

Jdgs 6:1 The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD gave them into the hand of Midian seven years. <sup>2</sup> And the hand of Midian overpowered Israel, and because of Midian the people of Israel made for themselves the dens that are in the mountains and the caves and the strongholds. <sup>3</sup> For whenever the Israelites planted crops, the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the East would come up against them. <sup>4</sup> They would encamp against them and devour the produce of the land, as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel and no sheep or ox or donkey. <sup>5</sup> For they would come up with their livestock and their tents; they would come like locusts in number—both they and their camels could not be counted—so that they laid waste the land as

they came in. <sup>6</sup> And Israel was brought very low because of Midian. And the people of Israel cried out for help to the LORD.

<sup>7</sup> When the people of Israel cried out to the LORD on account of the Midianites, <sup>8</sup> the LORD sent a prophet to the people of Israel. And he said to them, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I led you up from Egypt and brought you out of the house of slavery. <sup>9</sup> And I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all who oppressed you, and drove them out before you and gave you their land. <sup>10</sup> And I said to you, ‘I am the LORD your God; you shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell.’ But you have not obeyed my voice.”

<sup>11</sup> Now the angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites. <sup>12</sup> And the angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, “The LORD is with you, O mighty man of valor.” <sup>13</sup> And Gideon said to him, “Please, my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all his wonderful deeds that our fathers recounted to us, saying, ‘Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?’ But now the LORD has forsaken us and given us into the hand of Midian.” <sup>14</sup> And the LORD turned to him and said, “Go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian; do not I send you?” <sup>15</sup> And he said to him, “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.” <sup>16</sup> And the LORD said to him, “But I will be with you, and you shall strike the Midianites as one man.” <sup>17</sup> And he said to him, “If now I have found favor in your eyes, then show me a sign that it is you who speak with me. <sup>18</sup> Please do not depart from here until I come to you and bring out my present and set it before you.” And he said, “I will stay till you return.”

<sup>19</sup> So Gideon went into his house and prepared a young goat and unleavened cakes from an ephah of flour. The meat he put in a basket, and the broth he put in a pot, and brought them to him under the terebinth and presented them. <sup>20</sup> And the angel of God said to him, “Take the meat and the unleavened cakes, and put them on this rock, and pour the broth over them.” And he did so. <sup>21</sup> Then the angel of the LORD reached out the tip of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened cakes. And fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened cakes. And the angel of the LORD vanished from his sight. <sup>22</sup> Then Gideon perceived that he was the angel of the LORD. And Gideon said, “Alas, O LORD God! For now I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face.” <sup>23</sup> But the LORD said to him, “Peace be to you. Do not fear; you shall not die.” <sup>24</sup> Then Gideon built an altar there to the LORD and called it, The LORD Is Peace. To this day it still stands at Ophrah, which belongs to the Abiezrites.

Judges 6:1–24

## Midian

Israel once again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. Let's remember what God considers to be true evil. Rather than worship him, the Lord, the Creator of heaven and earth, their Rescuer from slavery and the one who remains in their midst offering blessings untold, they worshiped false gods. They bowed down to idols. This is their single greatest evil. All the other evil Israel commits flows out of this particular evil. In fact, Martin Luther once said that in order to break commandments 2–10, one must also break the first commandment: “You shall have no other gods before me”. To sin against God in any way is to *also* have an idol you bow down to, therefore, to properly confess and repent of sin one must seek to understand what idol is also being served.

In our culture idols don't tend to be physical objects we literally bow before. Instead, they are more conceptual idols like image or popularity or pleasure or security. If our fear is financial ruin, we may pursue the idols of financial security while “bending some rules” along the way, whether cheating on our taxes or lying to a potential client. Some idols we bow before are idols that promise a sense of relief, causing us to temporarily forget our troubles. Rather than turn to the only God who can truly help us, we turn to idols that soothe us and distract us, whether a chemical or food or binge watching a show on Netflix.

In Israel's case they bowed before literal idols because they pursued specific things. The various gods of the Canaanites offered various things. The primary god worshiped was Baal, the storm god. Being the storm god he controlled the weather, which includes rain. Rain is necessary for crops to grow. Rain is necessary for grass to grow. Grass feeds sheep and goats and cows, which produce meat and *milk*. Rain is necessary for flowers to bloom. Flowers feed bees, which produce *honey*.

YHWH God of Israel promised to cause the land to flow with milk and honey yet Israel pursued Baal for these things, even though YHWH demonstrated he and he alone controls the weather. He proved this by causing it to rain during the dry season and render Sisera's 900 iron chariots pointless on the battlefield.

Israel rejected him and did evil in his sight by worshiping false gods. God remained true to his word, even when Israel would not, and God gave them over to the hand of Midian. God is doing this so as to *initiate a response from Israel*. God wants them to remember who he is and what he has done, so he allows trouble to come their way.

God raised up the Midianites. These Midianites attacked through the Jezreel Valley, which is just south of the Sea of Galilee in the tribal territories of Issachar and West Manasseh. They would go all through the land, all the way to Gaza in the southwest of Israel.

They were so powerful the people feared them and hid themselves in caves and dens in the mountains. Here again we see Israel's failure to trust the Lord. They were to be on offense. God promised to drive out the people from before them but instead of engaging in the battle, Israel resorts to defense. Rather than stand up in faith, they seek to minimize their losses by hiding from their enemies.

The problem is the attacks would come at harvest. Whenever a crop was ready to be harvested the Midianites would swoop in, along with the Amalekites and “the people of the East”—some group that is unknown to us. They knew the harvest times for the various crops so they would come after Israel had done all the work and they would steal their harvest. Verse 4 says they took everything—crops, sheep, cattle, and even donkeys.

This wasn't a temporary economic setback. This was taking away the people's livelihood. It's one thing to steal their gold and silver. By stealing their crops they were taking away their food for today—and they were limiting the available seed for the following year. By stealing their flocks and herds they were taking away their food for today—and they were taking the offspring those animals would produce. This was theft that continued for as long as those animals continued to reproduce.

This went on for seven years. Remember, the Lord promised his people prosperity and security. The people forgot him and pursued prosperity and security by worshiping the Baals. Baal never gave them prosperity nor security. After seven years they finally realize they need to call out to the Lord, the God of Israel. This is the response God initiated in raising up Midian in the first place.

## A Prophet

When the people finally cried out to the Lord, the Lord responded by sending them a person. As with Deborah, the first person the Lord sends them is not a deliverer. He does not send them a rescuer who immediately raises an army and engages in battle. As with Deborah, the Lord sends them a prophet. This time we're told what the prophet's message was, and it's one of rebuke.

Remember what a prophet is. A prophet is a person who hears from the Lord and communicates to people on God's behalf. The apostle Peter said of the prophets, "[M]en spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21). Here this unnamed prophet is speaking from God as he is carried along by the Holy Spirit.

It is clear the people of Israel have forgotten. Oh, they know the stories! They've heard the stories of how God had rescued them and how God had provided for them. They knew of the plagues, the miracles, the crossing of the Red Sea. They knew of the walls of Jericho falling down and the river Jordan drying up so they could cross. They had forgotten these stories. By this I mean their knowledge of these stories was mere head knowledge. They did not trust in the Lord to do it again.

God reminds them. The prophet speaks for the Lord and tells them he had delivered them from the hand of the Egyptians. He had delivered them from the hand of all the others who oppressed them. He had driven out many peoples from the land and gave their land to Israel, with all its abundance. In verse 10 we read a strong declaration: "And I said to you, 'I am the LORD your God; you shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell'".

Think of what God is saying. He introduces himself as if to ask, "Have we met? Do you know who I AM?" Because of who he is, they were not to fear the gods of the Amorites. The term Amorites is a stand-in for the Canaanites as a whole. He doesn't tell them here to not fear the Canaanites—the actual people with actual swords and actual spears—and actual iron chariots. He tells Israel to not fear their *gods*.

In the ancient world gods determined the outcome of battles. If Egypt defeated Cush, it was because the gods of Egypt were more powerful. If Ammon defeated Moab, it was because the gods of Ammon were more powerful. Here we see why God wants Israel to trust him. If they would trust him they would win every single battle, and the fame of YHWH God of Israel would grow and more people would worship him and receive *life*.

Remember the context. Israel is suffering greatly under the oppression of the Midianites. God reminds them how many times he had delivered them from their oppressors. He reminds them of his instruction to not fear the gods of their oppressors, for they are nothing before YHWH God of Israel. Then the prophet declares on behalf of God, “But you have not obeyed my voice.” That it, it is because they feared the gods of the Amorites. It is because of this refusal to obey—this refusal to *trust* the Lord—that they find themselves suffering as they do.

God does not give any weight to the military might of the Midianites. He does not give any weight to their superiority on the battle field. The author does. They come “like locusts in number”. Israel is overwhelmed by their sheer numbers alone: how could they stand up to such a vast number? What does God say? “I delivered you from the oppression of Egypt. I delivered you from the oppression of many other peoples. The problem is you actually fear their gods.”

Hear what the prophet is saying. The problem is not the thing that presents the difficulty. Yes, the presenting problem is the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the East stealing their crops. That’s a *symptom* of the problem, not the actual problem. The occasion of the difficulty is the Midianites. The real problem, however, is far deeper than this. Crops can be replaced. We know God can send manna from heaven to feed these people. The problem is they fear their gods and so Israel does not act in faith.

## Mighty Man of Valor

After the prophet spoke to Israel, the angel of the Lord appears one day. He’s sitting under a terebinth tree that belonged to a man named Joash, who was an Abiezrite. The Abiezrites were a clan that was part of the tribe of Manasseh. An Abiezrite named Joash has a son named Gideon.

The text says Gideon was beating out the wheat in the winepress. That’s a jumble of words for us. When wheat is harvested, the entire stalk is cut and piled up. The kernels have to be separated from the stalks. In many parts of the world today there are those who still use grain flails to pound the wheat to separate these kernels.

After the wheat has been threshed—this is what the pounding is called—the wheat is tossed into the air so wind can blow away the chaff. Threshing requires a flat, hard surface so the wheat stalks are caught between a rock and, well, a hard place. This was usually done on a hill top where wind would be the strongest. The grains are heavier so they fall back to the ground quickly while the wind blows the chaff away.

Gideon is threshing wheat in a winepress. Winepresses were cut into the rock on the side of a hill. Wind wasn’t necessary. Grapes would be crushed so as to release the juice. This juice would flow downhill through a tiny channel cut into a rock below which a container would be placed to capture the juice. The thing about a winepress is it would be much smaller than a threshing floor. Why would Gideon be threshing wheat in such a small place, particularly where the wind would be less than ideal? If he were on a hilltop he would be easily seen! He’s *hiding*!

While he is threshing in secret, the angel of the Lord appears to him and initiates his rescue of God’s people. This angel of the Lord speaks directly to him: “YHWH is with you, O mighty man of valor.” At this Gideon interjects. Had he not interrupted the angel of

the Lord the angel would have continued just as he does in verse 14. Gideon, however, is immediately skeptical at this initial greeting. “Mighty man of valor”? He probably looked around for a camera and asked, “Am I getting punked?”

In verse 13 he says, essentially, c’mon. If the Lord is truly with us, why am I threshing wheat in a *winepress*? If the Lord is truly with us, why are we all struggling as we are? He may think he’s being mocked, given his actual situation. It may be that Gideon assumes the angel of the Lord is the prophet who has been going around. I say this because he recounts the basic message the prophet had spoken.

He asks him where all these great stories are, these stories their fathers had told them about the incredible deeds of the Lord, how he rescued them from Egypt and performed miracles and such. All those stories are great, but they don’t mean much *right now*. Right now Egypt isn’t the problem. Right now Midian is the problem and the Lord doesn’t seem to be doing much about it.

I need to point out something significant here. The Lord does not rebuke Gideon. Gideon says the Lord has forsaken them. Gideon is being honest and truthful with the Lord and the Lord does not rebuke him for it. The reality is the Lord can handle our questions. Whatever you’re experiencing and whatever you do not understand, the Lord can handle your questions. Gideon doesn’t know yet this is the Lord speaking to him, but even if he did, this wouldn’t change the Lord’s response.

Rather than rebuke him the text says the Lord continues what he started to say. He turns to Gideon, after calling him a mighty man of valor and says, “Go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian; do not I send you?” This is where we see clearly the angel of the Lord is the Lord himself. *YHWH* turns to Gideon and speaks.

God calls him a mighty man of valor and tells him to go in this same might and rescue Israel. Gideon is skeptical. He asks what in the world he has to offer. He’s from a tiny clan in the tribe of Manasseh. Not only is he merely an Abiezrite, he’s the least important person in his father’s house! Think of it: he’s threshing wheat in a winepress. His older brothers aren’t threshing wheat. He’s the last person who ought to be thinking about rescuing Israel.

What Gideon doesn’t yet understand is he does not need to be great in order for the Lord to do great things. In fact, the Lord loves using weak and “unimportant” people to do great things, which means Gideon is the perfect person to rescue Israel. Gideon isn’t ready for the task, however.

## Sanctified

The Lord assures him he will be with him, and he—Gideon—will strike Midian “as one man”. That is, though the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the East are many, it will be like fighting a single dude. Just as God had rendered the 900 iron chariots stuck in the mud, so he can reduce the power of three armies to the power of a single man.

Gideon gets an idea. He tells the angel of the Lord he needs a sign, some tangible proof that what he says will happen will, in fact, happen. He doesn’t merely ask for a sign; he has determined what that sign will be so he tells the angel of the Lord to stay right there until he comes back. When we read this text we immediately go to the next couple verses but if we understand what Gideon is doing we see he’s not gone for a few minutes.

First, he “prepared a young goat”. This means he went out into the field, selected an appropriate goat, slaughtered the goat, gutted the goat, and then cut the goat up into cookable pieces. I’ve never “prepared a young goat” but I’m guessing that was more than ten minutes’ work. A young goat, by the way, can yield as many as 25 pounds of meat—which he has to cook!

That was the easy part. He also made unleavened cakes—flat bread—from an ephah of flour. You do not have a measuring cup in your cabinet that can hold an ephah of flour. You might have a bucket in your garage that comes close. An ephah is about 92 cups—that’s nearly six gallons of flour. This would make about 30–40 loaves of bread! I don’t know how hungry the angel looked, but Gideon is offering him a massive quantity of food.

He seems to be recognizing this person isn’t the prophet. He’s also not some random stranger walking by seeking to encourage him. He suspects this is someone more significant so he’s preparing twenty-plus pounds of meat and a ridiculous amount of bread, plus he brings the broth the meat was cooked in. Remember why: he’s asking for a sign. Clearly if the angel of the Lord can consume all this food, that would be a miracle!

When he presented this gift to the Lord the Lord told him to place them on the rock on which he had been sitting. Gideon places the meat and the unleavened bread on the rock and the angel told him to pour the broth over them. The angel touches the offering with his staff and fire springs up *from the rock* and consumes the meat and the cakes.

The rock becomes an altar. The meat becomes a burnt offering. The bread becomes a grain offering. The broth becomes a drink offering. All of these were an important part of worshiping the God of Israel. The sign Gideon asked for is given: fire consumes his gift, which has become a sacrifice. In doing so, the Lord is commissioning Gideon—*sanctifying him*—for his role as Israel’s deliverer.

Gideon isn’t ready to lead Israel. His faith and character are not yet what they need to be for the role to which God is calling him, so God begins actively preparing him. Remember that God isn’t responding so much as he is *initiating*. He’s acting in order to prepare Gideon to be Israel’s rescuer.

Remember what the purpose of the conquest is: it is to root out idolatry from the land—not to *make Israel great again*, but to *make YHWH great again*. The land of Canaan was to be the place where YHWH God of Israel is worshiped—and only YHWH God of Israel is worshiped. As part of this God must root out idolatry from among his people and he is striking right at the heart of it by calling Gideon. He very specifically calls *Gideon*. Look at the very first thing God will instruct him to do.

Jdgs 6:25 That night the LORD said to him, “Take your father’s bull, and the second bull seven years old, and pull down the altar of Baal that your father has, and cut down the Asherah that is beside it...

Judges 6:25

Remember that Gideon has said he was the least important person in his father’s household. He’s probably the youngest, which means he has no authority. God tells him to tear down his father’s idols! His own father worships Baal and the Asherah! If God had simply appeared to him and said, “Hey, man. I’m gonna need you to destroy your father’s idolatry. *Tonight*. Oh, and this whole problem with Midian and the Amalekites and the people of the

East? Yeah, I'm gonna need you to gather an army to defeat them, but that army has to be just 300 men", it would not have gone well.

## Gideon's Well-being

If God had approached him like that, there's no way Gideon could have done it. He was too fearful! Instead, God lovingly and patiently started by building up Gideon, strengthening his faith, which includes condescending to Gideon's level by *submitting* to his demand for a sign! Without this sign Gideon could not have done what God tells him to do. As we will see, without further signs Gideon's faith will be too weak to do what God calls him to do.

When Gideon sees his offering turned into a sacrifice and sees the sign and the angel vanishes from his sight, he recognizes this person is YHWH God of Israel. He immediately recognizes the full extent of the danger he was in for the Lord is holy and Gideon is not. In kindness, as an act of love and care and compassion for Gideon, God continues to build him up so that he may become the man he needs to be in order for God to use him to do great things. Gideon doesn't need to be great; Gideon just needs to trust the Lord can do great things through him.

In verse 23 the Lord assures him of his calling, and assures him the sanctifying sacrifice he just offered the Lord will do its work. He says, "Peace be to you. Do not fear; you shall not die." Here we see the fullness of the Lord's care for Gideon. Peace is a spiritual matter. God is saying to him that Gideon is right with the Lord. He is in a state of spiritual well-being. Further, he must not fear. Gideon's emotional well-being is important to the Lord so he calls him to not fear but to continue trusting. Finally, he assures him of his physical well-being. Despite the difficult tasks God is going to lay before him, God will be with him and God will protect him—mind, body, and spirit.

Being assured of his safety—his *salvation*—Gideon responds appropriately. Verse 24 says he built an altar to the Lord and called it "the LORD is Peace"—YHWH Shalom. Thus Gideon indicates a shift in his understanding of the world. When the Lord first appeared to him he assumed the Lord had forsaken his people. The evidence was everywhere. The fact that he was threshing wheat in a *winepress* was all the evidence one needed!

Now he sees the world through a very different lens. Now he sees the world through the Lord's eyes. It won't be perfect. Gideon is far from a perfect man. He hasn't suddenly "arrived" at spiritual maturity. There is a shift, however. He's starting to think like God. He's starting to process the world from God's perspective. Gideon's *soul* is beginning to heal.

God must build him up before he is able to deliver Israel. God knows his plan for this rescue and he knows how any human would react upon being told to stand up to the Midianites with an army of just 300 men. The truth is if God told us all at once what he was going to take us through in the future, I think we'd all die from a heart attack. We couldn't handle it! In his kindness God reveals a few details at a time. If God revealed the 10,000 things he is doing in our lives all at once, it would overwhelm us! It is a great mercy that we know perhaps three of them.

Even in this chapter God will tell Gideon to tear down his father's altar and his Asherah pole. This won't be easy but God waits to tell him until that night. Gideon needs that time to process what has happened. Again, had God dumped it all on Gideon all at once,



he would have been overwhelmed. As he processed it he would have realized he had seen YHWH God of Israel face-to-face—and *lived*. God received a sacrifice from his own hand—he, from the tribe of Manasseh, not the tribe of Levi! God commissioned him and sanctified him, thus preparing him for service.

Further, God made declarations about Gideon that Gideon could not believe were true. He called him a “mighty man of valor”. He’s a man of strength and of power, but Gideon knows he’s the least in his father’s household. Surely if he were a great man his own family would know, right? But he’s not merely a man of valor: he’s a *mighty* man of valor!

It is so very difficult to believe about ourselves what God declares to be true of us. That day as Gideon contemplated and reflected on the words of the Lord and his actions with regard to the meal-turned-sacrifice, his mind began to comprehend that God was, in fact, calling him to do something great. Again, *Gideon* doesn’t need to be great in order for *God* to do great things. God gives him time to process this before calling him to action. The Lord prioritizes Gideon’s well-being—his complete and total well-being—mind, body, and soul.

## Application

Church, this is how God deals with *us*. He knows our limitations, our struggles. He knows we are “the least” in this world. He knows what he has to work with. He also knows his own power, and he delights in using unimportant and insignificant people.

The truth is God is content to work over time. God can speak and light throughout the universe can suddenly pop into existence. He can also set in motion the processes that will take time—years, decades, *centuries*. He’s working on a completely different timescale than we are.

God knows he must initiate his work in our lives, both individually and *corporately*. As the apostle said, the one who began the good work in us is the one who will be faithful to complete that work. In this we see there is a process. God could snap his fingers and do it all at once, but rarely does he work this way. He chooses to initiate a journey for us, a journey that if we knew every bend in the road would destroy us. Instead of showing us every turn he walks with us, for if he is with us we can take every step in faith.

We need to remember, for even though we may know the facts, we are prone to forget what they mean. I love how Daniel Stulac summarizes this text.

At the opening of the Gideon story, God sends an unnamed prophet to remind the people that they did not walk out of Egypt by their own free will (Judg 6:8), and neither did they defeat their enemies in Canaan through any self-possessed strength (Judg 6:9).

Daniel J. D. Stulac, “Gift of the Grotesque”

Whatever it is you are facing, whatever it is we will face together as a church, it *is* too big for us. It is too dangerous, too difficult, too expensive, too costly. *For us*. God does not need us to be great in order for him to do great things.

Whatever it is we face, whatever difficulty comes our way, the result of being reminded of God’s faithfulness to his promises ought to be worship. As we look forward to the Thanksgiving holiday this week, we remember the good and the bad. Some have gone through

incredible hardship this past year. Others have seen new life and new jobs and promotions and such. Your individual bend in the road may be wonderful or it may be painful. The right response to God's sanctifying work in our life is the same as Gideon's response: we must build an altar and worship.

Rom 12:1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Romans 12:1

The right response to God is worship. Worship is how we overcome sin. Worship is how we root out idolatry. Worship is how we serve the Lord. Worship is how we honor the Lord. Worship is how we overcome adversity.

When faced with the challenges of life, choosing to respond in worship is far more difficult than being brave or being courageous. The problem with worship is it doesn't feel like we're doing something. We ascribe to God the glory and honor that is his by right. We recognize his beauty in all things. That doesn't feel like a solution to our struggles, yet when we worship God in faith we are actively engaged in the battle, for the battle is not against the Midianites or the Amalekites or the people of the East. The battle is not against bad health or temptation or financial difficulty. The battle is against unbelief.

Worship is turning to the Lord and remembering who he is, remembering what he has done. God doesn't jump the shark. He doesn't change course. He's not trying to figure out a way. He is working out his plan; we just don't know it in its fullness. Worship is recognizing that he is good, come what may, and praising him in the midst of the storm, in the midst of the pain, in the midst of the suffering. The same God who allows joy and delight in our lives allows pain and sorrow. He remains worthy of worship.