

Main Idea: In Judges 6:25-40 we learn about the God who gives sufficient grace for the ordinary man. In Gideon’s life, we see two evidences of grace.

- I. By grace, we can exhibit repentance (25-32).
 - A. Here’s what God said to Gideon (25-26).
 1. We need to remove what displeases God (25).
 2. We need to replace it with what pleases God (26).
 - B. Here’s what Gideon did (27).
 1. He struggled with fear.
 2. He obeyed.
 - C. Here’s what happened as a result (28-32).
 1. Gideon was attacked (28-30).
 2. Gideon was defended (31).
 3. Gideon was delivered (32).
- II. By grace, we can exhibit faith (33-40).
 - A. God allowed an enemy to come (33).
 1. Sometimes when we obey, things get better.
 2. At other times, they get worse.
 - B. God recruited Gideon for service (34-35).
 - C. God reassured Gideon of His promise (36-40).
 1. God may use a fleece.
 2. God wants us to live by faith, not by a fleece.

Make It Personal: Because we have God’s sufficient grace...

1. We can get rid of rivals to God today.
2. We can trust God with our challenges.
3. We can serve God meaningfully, for His glory.

Today is Father’s Day. In the last verse of the Old Testament in our English Bibles we read this announcement in Malachi 4:6, “And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers...”

-Fathers Day quiz (special gifts to those with most points).

I’ve entitled today’s message, “*Good News for Dads: Sufficient Grace for the Ordinary Man.*” Let’s read together from a passage in Hebrews 11 which mentions the main character in the Old Testament passage which will be home base for us again this morning.

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 11:32-40

I’m about two-thirds through David McCullough’s audio biography of Harry Truman, the thirty-third president of the United States. Truman led our country from 1945 to 1952, through such momentous events as the atomic bombing of Japan, and the outbreak of the Cold War and the Korean War.

Yet one of the things that stood out most to me was not his extraordinary accomplishments, but how *ordinary* he was. He didn’t have the connections of his predecessor, FDR, but was a Midwesterner from Missouri. He wanted to go to West Point, but his poor eyesight kept him out. His family’s financial problems prevented him from going to a four year college. He worked on the family farm until he was thirty. He

^{**}Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ For a previous look at this passage, see the Gideon series at WBC in 2000.

proposed to Bess Wallace when he about 27, but she refused, then continued to pursue her until they were married eight years later in 1919, which he was 35.

He tried to earn a living as the owner and operator of a small mining and oil business, but couldn't make it go. He later opened a men's furnishings store, but the shop failed after only a few years. During World War I he shipped out to France as an officer with the National Guard, and became an excellent officer, bringing all his men safely home from the war.

Eventually, at the age of 38, he turned to politics and becomes a judge in a county court, where he served one term and then was defeated. He then regained a court position where he served eight years, until he was 46.

At the age of 50, he became a U.S. Senator, supporting FDR's new deal. In 1944 Roosevelt chose Truman to be his vice president, "largely because the Missourian passed muster with Southern Democrats and party officials."²

He was vice president for only 82 days, when his boss, 63 year old President Franklin Roosevelt, died of a cerebral hemorrhage. During his few weeks as VP, he was allowed to meet with President Roosevelt only a handful of times, and received no briefing on the development of the atomic bomb or the unfolding difficulties with Soviet Russia.³

But on April 12, 1945, Harry S. Truman became the thirty-third President of the United States. He was sixty years old, and immediately assigned the tasks of closing out the second world war, deciding whether to drop the atomic bomb on Japan, and determining a course of action to keep Stalin and the Soviets from taking over Europe.

According to the publisher's promotional, "McCullough tells the deeply moving story of the seemingly ordinary 'man from Missouri' who was perhaps the most courageous president in our history."⁴

I love reading stories about the ordinary man who does extraordinary things. I can relate to the ordinary man. Men, most of us are pretty *ordinary*, frankly. Is there a place for the ordinary man in the kingdom of God? Indeed there is.

Last week we began a new series on the life of Gideon, entitled "*Ordinary Man, Extraordinary God.*" The story of Gideon is not so much a story about Gideon as it is a story about *God*, and shows us what God can do to accomplish His purposes using ordinary people.

In Judges 6 God chose Gideon to rescue His people from the oppression of the Midianites. Why Gideon? That's what Gideon wanted to know when the angel of the Lord approached him, his first words being, "But sir (13)."

It wasn't because of Gideon's courage that God chose Him. Nor his convictions or connections. Gideon, indeed, was a very ordinary person. Yet he had one thing in his favor that qualified him for the task.

God. What qualified Gideon for the assignment he faced is the same thing that qualifies unlikely servants like us. It's *God*.

Last time we looked at Gideon's call to the ministry in the first half of Judges 6. Though Gideon's initial reaction was one of doubt, the Lord began to dispell Gideon's

² <https://millercenter.org/president/truman/life-in-brief>

³ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/presidents/harry-s-truman/>

⁴ <https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/Truman/David-McCullough/9780671456542>

fears by giving him a demonstration of his presence (16-19), power (20-22), and peace (23-24).

“I will be with you,” the Lord told Gideon in verse 16, “and you will strike down all the Midianites together.” If you have God, you have all it takes to do the will of God.

You say, “I’d love to be used of God. I want my life to count for Him. What does it take?” As we look at what God did next with Gideon, and we’ll see. The second half of Judges 6 is all about what God did to prepare Gideon for His service. In the first half of Judges 6 we see Gideon’s call. In chapter 7 we’ll see Gideon in the battle. In the connecting section, which is today’s text, we’ll see what God did to get His man ready for his mission, namely, He gave him two fresh experiences of sovereign, sufficient grace.

Men, this isn’t merely a history lesson. On this Father’s Day, this is for us. We’re going to learn about the God who gives sufficient grace for the ordinary man. We’re going to see two evidences of grace in this passage, and they can be ours.

I. By grace, we can exhibit repentance (25-32).

God is not interested in taking second place to anything in His universe. As our Creator, and even more so as our Redeemer, He desires and deserves our highest affection. All rivals must go, which is why repentance is essential.

“Repentance,” says the Puritan Thomas Watson, “is a grace of God’s Spirit whereby a sinner is inwardly humbled and visibly reformed.”⁵ In Gideon’s case, here’s how God’s grace-gift of repentance took place. Three things happened.

A. Here’s what God said to Gideon (25-26). “That same night the LORD said to him, “Take the second bull from your father’s herd, the one seven years old. Tear down your father’s altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole beside it. Then build a proper kind of altar to the LORD your God on the top of this height. Using the wood of the Asherah pole that you cut down, offer the second bull as a burnt offering.””

The text states that this happened, “That same night.” Which night? The night after the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon and called Gideon into service. The night after Gideon built an altar to the Lord as an expression of his surrender to the Lord (24). *That* night the Lord spoke to Gideon.

There’s no time like the present to get serious about God. And what God asked Gideon to do that night was a real test of just how serious he was.

What did the Lord tell Gideon to do? In essence, the same thing we must do if we want to be used of God.

1. We need to remove what displeases God (25). In Gideon’s case what needed to go? God’s commands were very specific.

One, take the second bull from your father’s herd. Whose bull was it? It was Gideon’s father’s bull. It was also a seven year old bull. What’s significant about the age of the animal? According to verse 1, it was seven years earlier—the year this bull was born—that God gave the Israelites into the hands of the Midianites.

This bull, then, would symbolize a *rededication*. In offering this bull, Gideon would be making a statement, “It’s time to go back to where we got off track. It’s time to renew ourselves to the One we forsook seven years ago.”

⁵ Thomas Watson, *The Doctrine of Repentance*, p. 18.

God's second command was very pointed and personal. "Gideon, tear down the altar to Baal, *your father's* altar. Tear it down along with the Asherah pole [KJV "grove"]. Those abominations must go."

Baal, of course, was the god of the Canaanites. He was believed to give fertility to the womb, and all sorts of immoral practices accompanied his worship—including prostitution and child sacrifice. God had specifically told His people to get rid of Baal worship when they entered the Promised Land.

But they didn't listen. In fact, the attraction of Baal plagued God's people for centuries (see 2:13). Apparently, even Gideon's own father had succumbed. God told Gideon, "Tear down *your father's* altar to Baal."

Ponder the implication of those words. If we're going to be used of God, then we must eliminate all rivals to God, even if those rivals are promoted by our family. Please realize that family loyalty is *not* to be our highest loyalty. Loyalty to *God* is.

For some people—including Christians—family becomes god. What family says, what family wants, in practical terms, is more important than what God says and wants.

Yes, God is pro-family. He designed the family. He wants us to make our families priority over work and recreation. But know this. Though God is pro-family, first and foremost He is *pro-God*. That is, He is passionate about His glory. He created us to live for His glory, honor and pleasure.

Men, should family be a priority to us? Yes, but not our highest priority. "Seek first the kingdom of God (Matt 6:33)." Listen to Jesus' words in Luke 14:26, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple."

Is Jesus saying we should actually *hate* our families? Obviously not. His point is that if we're going to be His disciple, He must be number one. He must have our undivided allegiance. We must get rid of all rivals—including family.

To be straightforward, sometimes our allegiance to God will put a strain on family relationships. If we take God's Word seriously, it may offend those who don't. So what should we do, *not* obey God so we can maintain peace in the family?

Should we just go ahead and miss church when our family schedules a reunion on a Sunday? Or should we say...? "You know how much I love you and appreciate our family, but Jesus Christ is my Lord, and Sunday is the Lord's Day, and worshipping Him is my greatest priority in life. I hope you'll understand, but I'll be a little late getting to the reunion."

It's easy to put the Lord into the back burner position in our lives. "Oh, He'll understand," we convince ourselves. This is why repentance is vital as an ongoing practice in our lives.

For Gideon, getting serious about God involved tearing down his father's altar. It was a matter of pleasing God or pleasing family. He was either going to deal with a sin issue in his family, or overlook it for the sake of peace.

God gave Gideon quite a test, didn't He? Yet it's no different for us if we really want to be used of God. First, we need to remove what displeases Him.

2. *We need to replace it with what pleases God (26)*. In Ephesians 4 terminology, we must "put off" and then "put on." Remove, then replace.

God told Gideon to tear down the Baal altar, but he wasn't to stop there. He told him to build a "proper kind of altar," an altar *to the Lord your God*. And then he was to offer the bull as a burnt offering, using the Asherah poll for firewood.

In so doing, Gideon would make a statement, to his family and his countrymen. It's time to change. No more business as usual. We need to take steps to honor and obey God, and I'm leading the way.

The fact that God told Gideon to offer this sacrifice, though Gideon didn't even belong to the tribe of Levi, shows how abnormal and out of whack things were in Gideon's day. But desperate times call for desperate measures.

Notice that God told Gideon to bring a specific kind of offering, a *burnt offering*. That's significant. The Mosaic Law prescribed several types of offerings. Why does God authorize a *burnt offering* here?

Answer this. What had Gideon's people done? According to verse 1, they'd *sinned*. And what do sinners need? They need God's forgiveness, don't they? And what is the basis of God's forgiveness?

Don't miss this. God says the basis of His forgiveness is *atonement*. One who is blameless must die so that one who is guilty may live. It's called substitutionary atonement.

Do you remember what did Noah did immediately after he got off the ark? He built an altar to the Lord and sacrificed *burnt offerings* on it.

God gave these instructions in Leviticus 1:3-4, "If the offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he is to offer a male without defect. He must present it at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting so that it will be acceptable to the LORD. He is to lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him."

What did Gideon's people need? They needed *atonement* so they could be forgiven, and God raised up a judge, a deliverer named Gideon to provide it for them.

Dear friends, this is what He has done for us, too, isn't it? In the book of Judges, God provided "deliverers" who foreshadowed the coming of The Deliverer. Do we need to kill bulls and offer burnt offerings today? No. Why not? Because the Final Deliverer has come, and the final sacrifice made. Jesus, the Lamb of God, was slain on a cruel Romans cross, thereby providing atonement for all who will place their faith in Him.

Men, repentance isn't optional. Listen again to Thomas Watson. "Repentance is a grace of God's Spirit whereby a sinner is inwardly humbled and visibly reformed." So if we have the Holy Spirit, there will be repentance. It is His gracious work, and it shows up with inward humility and a visibly transformed life.

There's no such thing as "easy believism" in the Bible. If we want to be used of God, we must, by His gracious help, take steps to get rid of sin, of *all rivals* to God. This includes false gods. This includes functional gods in our lives, like our jobs and hobbies and perhaps our families, that take the place of God in our lives.

That's what God asked of Gideon. How did he respond?

B. Here's what Gideon did (27). "So Gideon took ten of his servants and did as the LORD told him. But because he was afraid of his family and the men of the town, he did it at night rather than in the daytime."

Here's one of the things I love about the story of Gideon. God used Gideon, but not because he was a super-saint. He was just like us in so many ways, and the Bible doesn't hide his weaknesses. How did Gideon respond to God's command?

1. *He struggled with fear.* Fear of whom? The text says he was afraid of his family and of the men of the town. Right here is perhaps the #1 factor that keeps people from obeying God often. The fear of man. For Gideon, it was the fear of family and the fear of community. That's another way of saying Gideon struggled with peer pressure.

Dear friend, it's okay to struggle. Gideon struggled. But he didn't let his fear control him. By the grace of the One who told him back in verse 16, "I will be with you"...

2. *He obeyed.* He recruited ten men and did exactly what the Lord asked him to do. Granted he struggled with fear, and granted he did it at night, *but he did it!* He obeyed. And why did he obey? Because he wanted to please God more than man.

Do I have to be a super-saint to be used of God? No. I just have to be *obedient*.

Perhaps you're thinking, "Okay, good job Gideon. You obeyed God rather than yielding to your fears. But the reality is, most of our fears don't materialize anyway."

Really? That may be true, but they certainly did for Gideon.

C. Here's what happened as a result (28-32). What he feared actually happened to him, three outcomes.

1. *Gideon was attacked (28-30).* "In the morning when the men of the town got up, there was Baal's altar, demolished, with the Asherah pole beside it cut down and the second bull sacrificed on the newly built altar! They asked each other, "Who did this?" When they carefully investigated, they were told, "Gideon son of Joash did it." The men of the town demanded of Joash, "Bring out your son. He must die, because he has broken down Baal's altar and cut down the Asherah pole beside it."

So the next morning came, and Gideon's nighttime deed was discovered. The townspeople saw the destroyed altar of Baal and the newly built altar, and they were hot!

"Who did this?" they wanted to know. They conducted an investigation and soon found the answer. As commentator Arthur Cundall observes, "A secret known to ten men is no secret."⁶

It's interesting that though Gideon committed the deed, the men of the town demanded an accounting from Joash, Gideon's father (30). Why? Because for starters, the "crime" involved Joash's bull and Joash's altar. And furthermore, in the Bible a man is responsible for what happens in his home.

So this is the first outcome for Gideon. He was attacked—by the way, just like we may be if we get serious about obeying God. The crowd demanded Joash bring out his son for execution. Don't expect the world to applaud godliness.

2. *Gideon was defended (31).* "But Joash replied to the hostile crowd around him, "Are you going to plead Baal's cause? Are you trying to save him? Whoever fights for him shall be put to death by morning! If Baal really is a god, he can defend himself when someone breaks down his altar."

Joash had a mob on his hands. The NIV says a "hostile crowd" was "around him." The ESV and KJV says he spoke to the people that "stood against him."

⁶ Arthur Cundall, *Judges and Ruth*, p. 107.

I'm impressed by Joash's response. Apparently, the Lord used Gideon's obedience to jolt his father out of spiritual lethargy. In fact, Gideon's actions had the opposite effect on his dad than what he had feared.

Joash responded to the crowd with two questions and two statements. The questions: one, are you going to stand up for Baal? And two, are you going to try and save Baal? And the statements: one, whoever fights for Baal is the one that's going to die, not my son! And two, if Baal really is a god, let him defend himself.

Joash has a point, doesn't he? Why be loyal to a dead god? It's not a crime to eliminate vain religion. The person who's committing the crime is the person who wants to defend a dead, empty piece of wood called a "god."

In essence, Joash is saying to his people, "Look at the facts! We're in trouble. We've been living in caves and cowering in fear for seven years. Yet here you are wanting to maintain business as usual. No! It's time to change! Baal hasn't been helping us, and indeed, he can't even help himself!

Cundall's insight is worth pondering, "If this advice had been followed by the devotees of the world's religions, not excepting many who claimed to be Christians, the world would have been spared a great deal of torture, bloodshed, and untold misery."⁷

It's sad, isn't it? People are loyal to their religion even if it's vain and empty.

3. *Gideon was delivered* (32). "So that day they called Gideon "Jerub-Baal," saying, "Let Baal contend with him," because he broke down Baal's altar."

The people call Gideon, "Jerub-Baal," which means, "Let Baal contend." And so the life of Gideon became a living challenge to Baal.

That's quite a change, isn't it? One minute the people are calling for Gideon's execution. The next they're giving him a new name, in essence, treating him like a hero of sorts. "Yea, Joash is right. Way to go Gideon!" Crowds are fickle.

I'm intrigued by Gideon's silence here. Again, I don't think that the book of Judges presents him as a courageous, mighty hero. Rather, he's like most of us. *Ordinary*. But by the grace of God, he's learning to live the kind of life that pleases God, and preparing himself for the work God intends to accomplish through him.

Men, by grace, we too can exhibit repentance. It is God's gift to us. We can change. We can lead others around us to change. He provides the power, all by His grace.

II. By grace, we can exhibit faith (33-40).

It's this word, faith, that the writer of Hebrews says is the key to understanding Gideon and what he accomplished in life. Hebrews 11:32-40 "And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—³³ who through faith conquered kingdoms..."

How did Gideon do what he did? *Through faith*. Verse 39 says he was *commended through his faith*. Where did this faith come from? The answer is always the same.

"By grace are you saved through faith." The grace of God and the sinner's faith are linked. Divine grace makes human faith possible. Divine grace produces human faith.

⁷ Cundall, pp. 107-8.

Men, the Lord isn't saying to us, "Come on guys, increase your faith. Look deep within yourselves. You can do it." No we can't. It's not there. We don't have it within ourselves. It must come from Him, and it does, always by His grace and for His glory.

The Lord cultivated Gideon's faith in three ways in this scene.

A. God allowed an enemy to come (33). "Now all the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples joined forces and crossed over the Jordan and camped in the Valley of Jezreel."

The enemy has arrived just as it had for the previous seven years, to rob the Israelites of their crops. And not just the Midianites. This time the Midianites, Amalekites, and other eastern peoples have joined forces.

You say, "Things aren't looking too good for Gideon and his people." But that's a matter of perspective, isn't it? The truth is, things are happening right according to God's plan. God allowed this enemy to come.

Have you noticed this?

1. *Sometimes when we obey, things get better.* Sometimes. But...

2. *At other times, they get worse.* In fact, sometimes when we obey God He allows things to get a whole lot worse before they get better.

In Gideon's case, right after Gideon rededicates his life to the Lord, and right after he takes steps to remove Baal worship, the enemy coalition arrives. Not very good timing, is it? Actually, it's perfect timing. Why? Because this time God Himself is going to take care of the enemy.

Are you facing any enemies in your life? Know this. They're not there by accident. In order to cultivate Gideon's faith, God allowed an enemy to come. For us, it might be a challenge at work, or a financial crunch, or a bad report from a doctor. May the Lord give us eyes to see that the Lord is at work for our good (Romans 8:28).

His cultivation of faith occurs in a second way in the next two verses.

B. God recruited Gideon for service (34-35). "Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, summoning the Abiezrites to follow him. He sent messengers throughout Manasseh, calling them to arms, and also into Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali, so that they too went up to meet them."

Now that Gideon has removed the rival gods, he and his people are ready to experience the real thing, God Himself. *The Spirit of the Lord* came upon Gideon.

In Old Testament times, when the Spirit of God came upon people, it was usually in preparation for a special act of service. So here.

Don't miss that God took the initiative. He allowed the enemy to come, and then He sent His Spirit to "come upon" Gideon. The Hebrew literally means that the Spirit of the Lord "put Gideon on" like a garment. C. J. Goslinga explains, "In the Hebrew phrase...the man is conceived as the garment in which the Spirit envelops Himself, the instrument that He makes use of."⁸ In other words, the Spirit entered Gideon, filled him, and prepared him for action.

Fellow soldiers of Christ, know this. God does not send His people into battle alone, but accompanies and enables them. Aren't you glad?

⁸ C. J. Goslinga, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth*, p. 331.

After the Spirit came upon Gideon, what did Gideon do? First, he blew a trumpet to summon the Abiezrites. Who were they? Gideon's own clan—he was an Abiezrite (11).

Then he broadened his invitation, sending messengers to these four tribes: Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali. Why these tribes? Because these four northern tribes were the ones affected by the Midianite invasion.

And according to Judges 7:3, 32,000 men responded to the call.

C. God reassured Gideon of His promise (36-40). Do you ever need reassurance? Gideon did. He saw the enemy, and he saw his troops, and then he began to have second thoughts. That's how faith works. It's not static, but grows, and sometimes shrinks.

So he prayed and asked God for reassurance. Notice verse 36, "Gideon said to God, "If you will save Israel by my hand as you have promised." Stop there. Please notice that Gideon knew what God promised. He says so. "If you will save Israel by my hand *as you have promised.*" Gideon didn't lack information, for he knew what God said. But he lacked assurance, so he devised a test for God.

Verse 37, "Look, I will place a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said."

And God said, "No way, Gideon! No sign. Just trust me." Actually, that's not God's response. God is so patient and gracious, isn't he? He knows exactly what it takes to take our little faith and grow it up in greater faith.

And so it happened. Verse 38, "Gideon rose early the next day; he squeezed the fleece and wrung out the dew -- a bowlful of water."

And Gideon was convinced, right? He's now ready for the battle, isn't he? Not yet. He says he needs more assurance so he requests a second sign.

Verses 39-40, "Then Gideon said to God, "Do not be angry with me. Let me make just one more request. Allow me one more test with the fleece. This time make the fleece dry and the ground covered with dew." That night God did so. Only the fleece was dry; all the ground was covered with dew."

I'm amazed at God's patience, and so thankful for it. What's happening here? God is preparing Gideon for battle for giving Gideon what he needs most. Not a bigger sword, not a bigger army, but a bigger faith. God is cultivating Gideon's faith.

You say, "Should we do what Gideon did? Should we 'throw out the fleece' when we're unsure of God's will?" Some say we should.

I once heard a missionary candidate talk about how he determined his field of service. The person shared, "I said to God, 'If you want me to go to such-and-such a country, then send me an email from that country today.' And lo and behold, that very day I got an email from that country! I knew it was God's will for me to be a missionary there!"

Shortly after that testimony I heard another missionary candidate share about his search for God's will. He said, "I was driving along in my car and asked God, 'Do you want me to go to France to serve You? If so, would You give me a sign?' And almost instantly God brought to mind the words of Jesus, 'This is an evil generation. They seek a sign, and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonah the prophet (Luke 11:29).' And I knew I didn't need a sign. I just needed to obey God and go!"

So what about the "fleece" approach to God's will? Two considerations.

1. *God may use a fleece.* In His patience He did with Gideon. He used Gideon's request for a fleece to bolster his faith.

But this doesn't mean He endorses such a practice for us. In fact, by Gideon's own admission the fleece was his acknowledgment that the promise of God was not enough for him. "I know what You promised me, God, but I need reassurance."

Friends, because God is longsuffering, He can use a fleece. Indeed, He can do whatever He wants to do. But... He has a higher goal for His people.

2. *God wants us to live by faith, not by a fleece.* God has given us promises. Indeed, He's recorded these promises in this Book, which is His sufficient Word for our lives. The spiritually mature are those who have learned to take God at His Word. They live by faith, not by a fleece.

The point of the story is not, "Go and do what Gideon did. Bargain with God. Ask God for signs." No, this is the point. God is a great God! He's so great He can use unlikely candidates, like Gideon, like us, to accomplish His purposes. And He's so gracious that He patiently brings us along, enabling us to trust Him more and more.

Perhaps you're struggling with an important decision right now. The Lord has opened up an opportunity for you to serve Him, but you're wavering. "I want a sign, Lord. Just send me a sign, and then I'll know what You want me to do."

My friend, I'm not going to tell you that God can't give you special affirmation. I will tell you that you can waste a lot of time in life just waiting for something you really don't need. God has already given you His Word. Are you prayerfully searching this Book, in the context of relationships with others who are speaking truth from this Book into your heart and life, to determine what He wants you to do?

My encouragement is this. Take God at His Word. Live by faith, not by a fleece.

I began by telling you the story of how Harry Truman became president. Here's how he finished the job seven years later, in his own words. He was speaking from the Oval Office in his farewell address to the nation, and said this, "When Franklin Roosevelt died, I felt there must be a million men better qualified than I, to take up the Presidential task. But the work was mine to do, and I had to do it. And I have tried to give it everything that was in me."⁹

Men, by the design of our Sovereign Lord, I have a job to do, and so do you. To lead my family, to care for my wife and children and grandchildren, to point them to Christ so they'll cherish and make much of Him. At times I may feel that there must be a million men more qualified than I to do this task. But the work is mine to do, and your work is yours to do, given to us by our Lord. So let's do the work given to us by the grace of God and for His glory.

Make It Personal: Because we have God's sufficient grace...

1. *We can get rid of rivals to God today.* What are the rivals to God, the idols, in your life? It may be a good thing—a person, or a job, or a hobby. But that good thing has been taking the wrong place in your life, *God's* place.

⁹ <https://www.trumanlibraryinstitute.org/farewell-address/>

Your rival may be a sinful thing—an ungodly habit, or attitude, or aspiration. Will you repent and forsake it today? You can, my friend. By grace, we can exhibit repentance.

2. *We can trust God with our challenges.* What does it mean to trust God? It means to believe Him, to put our faith in Him and in what He has said He will do. And again, this trust, this faith, is something He gives us, by His grace. And so we ask.

He's taken care of our biggest problem. Sin. He sent Son into the world, Jesus the Christ, who did in our place what we could never do, live a perfect life. And when He died on the cross, He paid sin's penalty. Three days later, He rose from the dead, and now He rules from heaven's throne and rescues those who put their trust in Him.

Have you repented and put your total trust in Him? If not, why not today? By the grace of God, you can exhibit repentance and faith right now. The Living God Himself will enter your life, and give you strength to face every other challenge that may come.

3. *We can serve God meaningfully, for His glory.* In our homes. At our jobs. In the church where He places us. God loves to work in the lives of people who take Him seriously. Ordinary people. We learn that from Gideon.

Closing Song: #201 "Grace Greater Than Our Sin" (verses 1, 2, 4)