

LifeWay Family Bible Series for March 14: Prophets don't point to answers, but to God_30804

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Prophets don't point to answers, but to God

Judges 6:1, 7-10, 12-14, 25-32

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Jesus said we are to be salt and light in the world (Matthew 5:13). This lesson is about how the people of God can be that kind of influence in a faithless world. The key verse of our text is, "But Lord," Gideon asked, "how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family" (Judges 6:15).

Avoid the danger of applying this passage to America. America is not God's recently acquired people who have taken the place of his ancient first choice.

Let's get it straight. Let's apply Gideon's question to the salt. How can we keep the salt of which Jesus spoke from losing its saltiness? How can we keep the church on the right track in a world of spiritual terrorists who

always are seeking to derail the witness of the people of God? Gideon is a good example for us.

Due to the severity of Midianite captivity, the people who had been unfaithful began to call upon the One who is always faithful and just. God answered with a person.



Words alone never seem to reveal the heart of God for his people. Someone has to walk on the stage of history in flesh and blood and show us the word of God.

God did not just give deliverance. He gave a deliverer. Gideon would put a stop to the spiritual hemorrhaging of Israel. He would expose the evil that like spiritual SIDS was sneaking into the nursery of Israel's national development and stealing away their infant faith. How did he do it? How can we?

The first description of Gideon found in the text is that he was a prophet. "When the Israelites cried to the Lord because of Midian, he sent them a prophet ..." (Judges 6:7-8). Like the many prophets of Israel who would follow him, Gideon would be a spokesman for God.

God needs people who will stand up for the truth today. Modern prophets, today's Gideons, will not be known for their fleece-making but for their truth-telling. Christians must become faithful spokespersons for God in a world that needs the truth.

Prophets are students of the past. We most often think of prophets as spiritual weathermen. They predicted things. Prophets were spiritual

historians first. They had an eye on the past before they gazed to the future. Listen to Gideon's message. "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I brought you up out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. I snatched you from the power of Egypt and from the hand of all your oppressors. I drove them from before you and gave you their land. I said to you, 'I am the Lord your God; do not worship the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you live.' But you have not listened to me" (Judges 6:8-10).

This is a recitation of Israel's history. Gideon knows the story, and he tells it to those who have forgotten it. He is a wordsmith, refusing passive verbs to describe an active God. "God brought," "God snatched," "God drove," "God gave" and "God said." "Don't forget" is the first message of a true prophet. He starts with what was before going to what will be. As a teacher, you are a weekly reminder of the story of God and how each of us fits into it. Be a prophet.

Prophets don't avoid tough questions. In fact, they ask them. He asks the angel of the Lord, "If the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us?" (Judges 6:13). Then he asks, "Lord ... how can I save Israel?" (Judges 6:15).

Is your class a place where people can voice their doubts? John once sent a messenger to Jesus and asked if he really was the Christ or if they should wait for somebody else (Matthew 11:1-11). It was on this occasion that Jesus said John was the greatest to be born of a woman. Good words from the Master on behalf of a doubter. Be a prophet!

Prophets seek a personal relationship more than an impersonal answer. Gideon did not get the kind of answer we expect. He instead was promised a presence—the presence of God (Judges 6:16).

Don't give in to the pride of being the answer man each Sunday morning. God's answers are not formulas and propositions. We get something better than that. We get God. When people are tempted by the trials of life to turn

back on faith, they do not need a new proposition. They need a new presence.

Israel had not simply left good teaching about God. They left God. But he did not leave them. He was coming after them. The Hound of Heaven was on the scent, and he was not about to give up the chase. This is the prophet's hope. He is a God who never gives up on people who quit too easily.

How do we oppose false beliefs? We bring people the presence of God. With your class, seek to be the presence of God in your community. Be a prophet! Be a Gideon. Happy studying and faithful service!

Questions for discussion

- ◆ Do you sense the people of America are really seeking a prophet?
- ◆ What would have to change in your life for you to fulfill the office of prophet?
- ◆ And yet another question that will spark great thoughts in your mind.

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