

Explore the Bible: Timid Warrior

January 18, 2017

- *The Explore the Bible lesson for Feb. 5 focuses on Judges 6:11-16, 25-32.*

One of my most poignant and painful memories involves my son, now 31, who was about 4 or 5 at the time. We were visiting friends out of town and getting ready to leave for home. The friend's garage door was open a few inches at the bottom and, as we were standing in the driveway, my son let a toy roll under it into what, to him, was a dark and foreboding place.

I was upset because we were getting ready to leave and in a hurry, but my son wouldn't leave without the toy. It would have been so easy to ask my friend to open the door just enough to let in the light. I wanted my son to learn responsibility, though.

I instructed my son to climb under the door and retrieve the toy. He said he was afraid to and wouldn't go. Only by threatening him with punishment did I finally get him to go under the door into that dark place alone. Finally, he gave in and did what I commanded.

After it was over, I promised myself I never, ever would do that again. I never would ask my son to go into a place alone that frightened him unless I was willing to at least go with him.

No, never alone

It seems silly now. Yet I've never forgotten that moment. I've never forgotten how important a father's presence can be, especially when we are facing dark and foreboding places. Our heavenly Father has sent us into the world to do his bidding in sometimes dark and foreboding places. Yet

he has promised that we'd never go there alone.

The last words of Jesus as recorded in Matthew's gospel are these: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations ... And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age"(Matthew 28:19-20).

We do ourselves a great disservice when we fail to read the stories of the great heroes of faith as recorded in the Old Testament. Although our Christian faith doesn't come to maturity until the New Testament, the Old Testament, as seen in the text for today, is chock full of stories of common people of faith who did uncommon things simply because they believed the promise of God never to abandon them.

Believing in God's presence when we don't see the evidence

Gideon, at first, questioned God's presence because there was no evidence of God's presence. Everything, it appeared, had to turned to dust in the people's hands, even though they believed they had been faithful to the call of God (Judges 6:12-13).

None among us can deny we've all felt that way at one time or another. It's so easy to measure the presence of God by the level of prosperity and success we are experiencing. We mistakenly associate material success with God's blessing.

Yet in that very time, God—through an angel—appeared to Gideon and commanded obedience to do the next thing, even though there was no evidence Gideon saw of God's presence. In moments like those, our faith is tested more than ever. Are we willing to continue to obediently follow God's call even when there is no evidence God is with us?

All Gideon had was the promise of God to go with him wherever he was sent. When it's all said and done, if we have the presence of God with us, is there anything else we need more?

C.S. Lewis lived and wrote much of his work even as London was being bombed during WWII. He saw the dark, foreboding earthly hell that was war first hand. Lewis also once wrote these words: “(Satan) wants (the believer) to be in the maximum uncertainty, so that his mind will be filled with contradictory pictures of the future, every one of which arouses hope or fear. There is nothing like suspense or anxiety for barricading a man’s mind against (God). (God) wants men to be concerned with what they are do; (Satan’s) business is to keep them thinking about what will happen to them.”

The Christian walk is one that never ends. It is also one in which we are constantly called to take steps that frighten us and remind us of our impotence for the task at hand. Yet, looking back, we often find that it was when we felt weakest that we also experienced the presence of God as never before.

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