



Near and Now

When I Don't Think I Have What It Takes To Live Into My Calling? – Gideon
By Rev. Evan McVann

Warm-up Question

*Have you felt called to an action you did not feel prepared for?
Describe how you approached it.*



Photo by Austrian National Library on [Unsplash](#)

Discussion Questions

1. What do you see in this image?
2. What do you feel looking at this image?
3. What stories from your own life does this image bring to mind?
4. What stories of the world does this image bring to mind?

I am the Least in My Family

Read [Judges 6:11-25](#)

Bible Story Reflection

We are first introduced to Gideon doing a rather odd task. He was hiding his food, afraid of what could happen if he did not. We are immediately confronted with the reality that Gideon lived under the constant threat of military occupation and raids. His hard-earned food could easily fall into the hand of the hungry Midianite army. In fact, all Israel, God's own chosen people, was suffering under Midianite oppression. To Gideon, it appeared if God was real, God must have been absent. It is in this moment Gideon has a divine encounter without even knowing, talks with an angel while unaware of his divine status. On the other hand, the angel knows exactly who Gideon is. The angel compliments him, "The Lord is with you!" But in the midst of oppression, Gideon could not receive the compliment, especially if it included "God" talk. Instead, Gideon's reply expressed only his doubt: "If the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us?"

Amid spiritual depression, it can be very difficult to hear any language that beckons to religion. These are times when we can still believe in God, but every sermon and quoted Bible verse feels like a meaningless platitude. Unfortunately, there are many, well-meaning Christians who default to platitudes. Gideon, too, was having none of it. Pejoratively, he concluded, "The Lord has cast us off, and given us into the hand of the Midian." But he received a surprise response from God through the angel. God says to Gideon (my own words), "OK, you might think God has turned a blind eye to oppression and suffering, but what are you going to do about the suffering of your people?"

In the face of suffering and overwhelming oppression, it is easy to adopt a defeatist attitude. We need to be reminded of what we *can* do about the issues surround our families, our communities, and our world. No matter how insignificant we may feel next to the gravity of suffering, God is not, and God never acts alone. God gave Gideon a new calling from the depths of his doubt. God may be waiting on us to start the action of change. When we start with action, God can surely work with that.

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways do you identify with Gideon?
2. How do you think Gideon looked back on this encounter with God after responding to God's call?
3. Think of a time when you or someone else quoted a religious platitude in response to suffering. What do you think could have been said instead?
4. Gandhi once said, "Be the change you want to see in the world." How do you think this relates to your faith?
5. Can you believe in God and still doubt God's presence at the same time? If so, have you experienced that yourself?
6. Have you ever experienced a time when you discovered God's presence when you did not expect to? Describe what that was like.
7. How are people suffering in your community? What is an action you can take to help?
8. How can faith empower others to join you in action for your community?

Activity Suggestions

Think about your own vocation or purpose. What are some of the greatest doubts you have? Try to identify them in words. If applicable, share them with a partner and pray with one another asking for God to give assurance and strength.

Either individually or in a group, write a list of the greatest needs in your community. Next to the "Needs" list, write down any local non-profits or organization that has responded to these specific needs. What needs, to your knowledge, are not being met? Discuss together.

As a group, attend or volunteer at one of the local non-profits or service organizations. Afterwards, debrief with each other about the experience. Challenge one another with this question: "Where did you see God at work in others?"

Prayer Concerns

Those living under military occupation, those who are struggling to see God's presence, and for strength to respond in action to community needs.

Closing Prayer

Sometimes I feel like an imposter, O God, and doubt that I can be who you have called me to be. Calm my fears and give me confidence in your call for me. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.

