

# What to do when the Lord has abandoned you?

**Judges 6:11-24** <sup>11</sup> Now the Angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth tree which *was* in Ophrah, which *belonged* to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress, in order 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, you mighty man of valor!" <sup>13</sup> Gideon said to Him, "O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where *are* all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?' But now the LORD has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites." <sup>14</sup> Then the LORD turned to him and said, "Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?" <sup>15</sup> So he said to Him, "O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed 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, "Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man." <sup>17</sup> Then he said to Him, "If now I have found favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You who talk with me." <sup>18</sup> "Do not depart from here, I pray, until I come to You and bring out my offering and set *it* before You." And He said, "I will wait until you come back." <sup>19</sup> So Gideon went in and prepared a young goat, and unleavened bread from an ephah of flour. The meat he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot; and he brought *them* out to Him under the terebinth tree and presented *them*. <sup>20</sup> The Angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened bread and lay *them* on this rock, and pour out the broth." And he did so. <sup>21</sup> Then the Angel of the LORD put out the end of the staff that *was* in His hand, and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire rose out of the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. And the Angel of the LORD departed out of his sight. <sup>22</sup> Now Gideon perceived that He *was* the Angel of the LORD. So Gideon said, "Alas, O Lord GOD! For I have seen the Angel of the LORD face to face." <sup>23</sup> Then the LORD said to him, "Peace *be* with you; do not fear, you shall not die." <sup>24</sup> So Gideon built an altar there to the LORD, and called it The-LORD-*Is*-Peace. To this day it *is* still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

I've had some mice in our house, and last year we found a dead snake inside our dryer vent. But I've never had any problem with Midianite invaders. Nevertheless, if our circumstances aren't exactly the same I think we can all still appreciate Gideon's sentiments in our text.

Why have you abandoned us Lord? Where are all those miracles that we hear about but have never seen? Where are the great men of faith? It sure seems like God was "with" the men of the past in a much more powerful and visible way than he is "with" us.

**Judges 6:13** where *are* all His miracles which our fathers told us about

Many of us feel that question in our hearts. It is a question which God answered in our text from last week, "I Am who I Am." He answers it again here in our text today, "The Lord is with you." And He answers it most emphatically of all on Christmas morning.

**Matthew 1:23**<sup>23</sup> "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."

He is the God who is with us even as he was with our fathers. Nevertheless it does often seem as though he has abandoned us. So we ask the question with Gideon today:

**What to do when God abandons you?**

**1. Turn around – because I guarantee you God is standing right behind you**

It was the Israelites complacency and sin that caused this problem. Gideon makes it sound like the Lord's fault. He accuses the Lord of abandoning His people. But Judges 6:1 makes it clear that it was not the Lord who had abandoned His people but the people that had abandoned the Lord.

**Judges 6:1** Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD. So the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian

The Lord does not abandon His people or forget his promises. The first thing that God said to Gideon was "the LORD is with you." He repeats it again later, "The Lord will be with you." Our text says the Lord heard the cry of His people.

Even when they forsook God and tore down his altars and worshipped Baal, God had not forsaken them.

**Isaiah 41:10** Fear not, for I *am* with you; Be not dismayed, for I *am* your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'

Gideon thought that God had abandoned his people, yet even in their sin God was right behind them, all Gideon needed to do was turn around.

When we feel abandoned. When we think that God is gone. When we feel lonely and hopeless and lost. When we wonder where is the grace God showed to our Fathers and the mighty deeds we heard about, turn around. It is not God who has abandoned us and it is not as if we are so far gone from his presence that He is no longer there. All we have to do is turn around.

Such a turning is an act of repentance, in fact that is what the word repent means, to turn around. An acknowledgement that I had the wrong attitude, that I was headed the wrong way. To turn around is to confess that I would like the Lord to lead me rather than insisting I am going to go my own way. Turn around and you will find the Lord standing there.

Jesus is the God who is with us. He is the good shepherd who searches out the lost sheep. Even in our sin He is right behind us.

## 2. Go ahead and cry to the Lord

There was one particular trip to Nepal where I jokingly mentioned to Raju and Rajan, “A real man would walk.” They thought that was hilarious and the rest of that trip kept making remarks, “A real man would . . . “

We like to think that the ultimate manly man, is the strong and silent cowboy type. But many of the greatest men of faith had this in common. They were prolific complainers, at least to the Lord they were. They didn't hold back their crying to God. Paul begged the Lord to remove the thorn in his flesh. David wrote 73 psalms many of which are filled with complaints. Moses more than once complained to the Lord. Gideon does not hold back in his complaints against God either. It is true that it would have been wise for him to take a moment and consider how much of that was his own fault before blaming God, nevertheless God is willing to take it.

He understands our suffering and does not complain when we complain to him.

Complaining to one another is not always the most productive thing to do. In our talks with one another we ought to think first of them. But before God we can complain and complain and complain.

Jesus is Immanuel God with us. He “bore our sorrows and carries our grief,” and still does. He knows our suffering and is more than willing to bear our pain.

There was once a man who complained always about being alone, yet would not answer his phone, scowled at people who visited him, and refused every invitation.

The line to God is open, the invitation to “come to him” is in your box, Jesus stands and the door and knocks. If you think God has abandoned, you feel free to cry to him all you want.

**Psalm 86:7 NKJ In the day of my trouble I will call upon You, For You will answer me.**

Jesus is the God who bore our pain, who is with us to hear all our complaints.

### **3. Stand back and twiddle your thumbs –**

I ought to add a lesson on thumb twiddling to our adult instruction classes. Twiddling your thumbs is prerequisite to being a Christian, if you don't know how we'll cover that in bible class today. That may sound like a joke but we often do have a problem "waiting on the Lord."

Gideon kept trying to do more, God kept telling him to do less. Gideon suggested that God should choose someone from a stronger clan. Gideon wanted more men. God told Gideon to send home most of those who had come. Gideon wanted to attack but God told him no just smash your pots and shout loudly. Over and over again, Gideon tried to do more, God's constant reply was, "I've got this covered. You don't need to do anything." Once we have "cried" to the Lord, there really isn't anything for us to do except wait and see the Lord's salvation and twiddle our thumbs.

Moses told the people:

**Exodus 14:13 Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today.**

**Psalm 37:7 Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him;**

Remember the disciples in the storm? Here they were working so hard to get to the other side, and Jesus was sleeping in the bottom of the boat. And when He woke up He rebuked them. "What are you worried about."

There is nothing that our God needs our help with. There is nothing that He asks of us. He sent his Son, who became man for you at the time He chose. He suffered. He died. He rose again. He gives this grace away freely, even to us who do not deserve. By himself He accomplished our salvation, by himself He will deliver us from death and the devil and even our own sin.

He is Immanuel, the God who became man and did all things that needed doing. Come and learn how to twiddle your thumbs God will take care of the rest.

What to do when God abandons you? Turn around. He never left you. Go ahead and cry all you want. He knows how to comfort all things. Wait to see what wonderful thing He is going to do for you.

Amen