

GREAT LESSONS FROM THE LESSER KNOWN

Week 1: Living a Significant Life: Gideon
Judges 6 & 7

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Heroes often emerge from **unexpected places**, teaching us **important lessons** about what to do, and sometimes, what not to do. Many of these characters seem larger than life — overcoming unbelievable odds on their path to victory. However, some of the best lessons come from less prominent stories — people that appear, at first glance, easy to discount. **Great Lessons from the Lesser Known** looks more closely at these obscure characters. Learn how **God can use anyone** to accomplish great things. You don't need to be a powerful and wealthy leader **to have influence**. **Obeying God**, even in the small things, can impact history.

A significant life is not always the most noticed life or the biggest life but it is a significant life. It is a meaningful life. With this series, we'll look at some of the lesser known people in the Old Testament and what we can learn from them. In the Old Testament there's the Big Three. There's Abraham, there's Moses, there's David. We talk about these guys. **But there are many other men and women mentioned in the Bible who can help teach us some very significant lessons.**

This Week's Memory Verse:

***"My grace is sufficient for you,
for My power is made perfect in weakness."
2 Corinthians 12:9 (NIV)***

GREAT LESSONS – Day 43

“But God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.” Romans 5:8

COME AS YOU ARE

EVERYTHING Jesus did for you, He did out of love. The Bible says that God made you to love you. The only reason you’re alive is because you were made to be loved by God. God didn’t just say He loved you; He showed it, and today’s verse says God showed His love for us while *we were still sinners*. Before you even knew God, before you even knew you needed God in your life, Jesus died for *you*.

There’s a myth that says you’ve got to clean up your act before you can come to God. That myth says, “I’ve got to get it all together. There are a few things that I have to make right in my life first, and then I’ll go to God.” This is like brushing your teeth before you go to the dentist to have your teeth cleaned or washing the dishes before you put them in the dishwasher or picking up the house before the maid gets there!

God says, “No, no! You don’t have to clean up your act first! Just bring it all to Me. Bring Me all of your problems; I have all the answers. Come as you are.”

The Bible says, “You will be saved, if you honestly say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and if you believe with all your heart that God raised Him from the dead. God will accept you and save you if you truly believe this and tell others” (Romans 10:9-10 CEV). God is not asking you to make a promise you cannot keep. God is asking you to believe a promise that only He can keep.

TODAY’S PRAYER

Father, I thank You that You made me and saved me. I know you sent Jesus to give His life so I could enjoy this life to the fullest, but for me to fully live my life, I must believe with all my heart that You love me above all else. As I go through this day I pray that You will help me to remember that You saved me because You love me! Thank you for loving me just as I am! In Jesus name, Amen!

Love the way Jesus loves!

GREAT LESSONS – Day 44

“. . . so it is with Christ’s body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.” Romans 12:5

WHY BELIEVING INCLUDES BELONGING

YOU are called to belong, not just believe. We are created for community, fashioned for fellowship, and formed for a family. None of us can fulfill God’s purposes by ourselves. In fact, if you look hard in the Bible, you will find it tells nothing of solitary saints or spiritual hermits isolated from other believers and deprived of fellowship. Why? Because you are not on your own anymore!

While your relationship to Christ is personal, God never intended for it to be private. In God’s family you are connected to every other believer, and we will belong to each other for eternity. C.S. Lewis noted that the word “membership” is of Christian origin, but the world has emptied it of its original meaning. Stores offer discounts to members, and advertisers use member’s names to create mailing lists. In churches, membership is often reduced to simply adding your name to a roll, with no requirements or expectations. To Paul being a “member” or “belonging” to the church meant being a vital organ of a living body, an indispensable, interconnected part of the Body of Christ. We need to recover and practice the biblical meaning of membership. The church is a body, not a building; an organism, not an organization.

God’s purposes for His church are identical to His five purposes for you. *Worship* helps you focus on God; *fellowship* helps you face life’s problems; *discipleship* helps fortify your faith; *ministry* helps you find your talents; *power* helps fulfill your mission. There is nothing else on earth like the Church!

TODAY’S PRAYER

Father, I thank You that You have called me to something greater than myself. You have called me to belong to a body, in which I am a key part of its working, and the work of this body is to tell the world about Jesus. Use me today, Lord, to do what you designed me to do to bring the truth of Jesus to the world around me. Thank you for making me a valuable part of Your 'Community of Faith' called the Church! In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Love the way Jesus loves!

GREAT LESSONS – Day 45

“So if the Son sets you free, you are truly free.” John 8:36

TRULY FREE

Do Your Fears Keep You From Being Free?

THE world defines freedom as a life without any restraint – “I can say and do anything I want to say and do without anybody telling me what to say or do.” In other words, when it comes to how you treat others, you may treat others how you want to treat them and you get to do it your own way. This suggests you can have your freedom, but in the end, that freedom is gained only by being totally selfish.

When we consider what the Bible says has to say about freedom, it points to a very different definition. It says the only way to true freedom is through Jesus: “If the Son sets you free, then you will be really free” (John 8:36). Real freedom is freedom from fear, it's being truly free from guilt, from worry, from bitterness, and from death. You are free to quit pretending because you are free to be yourself.

How do you trade in your fear for true freedom? True freedom is found when you let God love you! The Apostle John teaches that “there is no fear in love; perfect love drives out all fear.” (1 John 4:18) When you realize how much God loves you, you'll begin to live in true freedom. In fact, more than just experiencing freedom, you begin to truly worship God when you recognize that “God is love.” It's an act of worship to agree He is a loving, caring, generous God. His love is a love we can rely on to set us free! (1 John 4:16a)

TODAY'S PRAYER

Father, Thank You so much for Your great love toward me! I know I don't deserve that love, but I thank You that, because of Your Son, Jesus, I receive it. Help me to remember and meditate on that amazing love throughout this day, and help me to freely give that love to others who need to know You. Thank you for setting me truly free! In Jesus' name, Amen.

Love the way Jesus loves!

GREAT LESSONS – Day 46

“Then Jesus shouted, “Lazarus, come out!” John 11:43

GLORIOUS DAY!

YOU called my name, and I ran out of that grave! We, as followers of Jesus, can proclaim this because of who He is and what He has done. Sin doesn't just make us bad; it makes us dead. We were all in desperate need of a Savior, so not only did Jesus die for our sin, but He was raised to everlasting life! He was the first to run out of that grave, and when we trust Him with our lives, we are right there with Him in glory – eternal life both now and forever.

In John 11, Jesus raised a dead man to life, crying out at his tomb: “Lazarus, come out!” He says the same to you and me: “_____, come out!” He knows your name, and calls you out of your grave. Get up! Unwind the grave cloths of sin and shame, for you have been set free, raised to glorious life because of Jesus' resurrection. All the chains of your past and the worries for your future have been swallowed up forever in victory.

The scripture says that the very same Spirit who raised Christ from the dead is living in each of us who follow Jesus. This is a reality for you today. You can, therefore, declare confidently that God has called your name, and Jesus has defeated whatever threatens to entangle, discourage, or thwart you from His promise today.

TODAY'S PRAYER

Father, Thank You that because of Jesus, I have a future and my eyes are open. Thank You for calling my name! I worship You and give You glory. Let me not be taken down by apathy, entangled by old sins, or paralyzed by fear and discouragement. I believe that chains break at the weight of Your glory. Help me to remember who You are, whose I am, and live a life that brings You glory. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Love the way Jesus loves!

GREAT LESSONS – Day 47

"And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death -- even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Philip. 2:8-11

ONLY ONE NAME

IT really is unfathomable, if it weren't so true, that the same One who "stood in our place" also "stands by our side," even today, even now, wherever we find ourselves today, in the best of times, in tough circumstances, and in every moment in between. Scripture says in Hebrews 1 that Jesus "is the image of the invisible God and the exact representation of His being." Colossians 2 says He is the fullness of the Deity in bodily form, and He holds all things together by the power of His word.

And yet, with all the power of God at His disposal as He walked on earth, fully God, yet fully man, He instead emptied Himself. He chose to make Himself nothing, chose to consider His equality with God not something to be grasped. He was scorned, condemned, scourged, and killed. He was sinless yet became sin for us, paying the ultimate penalty for all mankind. He gave His perfect, holy life for us, a ransom payment to rescue us from the sin which held us captive and would surely kill us unless the price was paid in full.

But that isn't why Jesus is worthy. He is worthy because death could not hold Him, and three days later He was raised to life, by the power of the Holy Spirit, bringing with Him any and all who would put their faith in Him, so that all who call on His name will be saved.

There are so many "names" vying for our attention: the name of our boss, spouse, or child. The names on our clothing, our degree, or the car we drive. But only One name is worthy of our time, our energy, our affection, our entire lives: Jesus. Scripture says God has exalted Him to the highest place, giving Him the name that is above all names.

TODAY'S PRAYER

Father, Thank You for Jesus, who is the Author and Perfecter of my faith, Maker, Ransom, and Savior. Let this truth sink into my mind and heart and reflect in the way I live today. I want to live a life of worship that brings You glory. Please help me do that today. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Love the way Jesus loves!

GREAT LESSONS – Day 48

"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. 1 John 3:1 (NIV)

HOW GREAT IS YOUR LOVE

IT'S easy to look around and see that the world is looking for love. We all deeply connect with the idea of feeling known, accepted and, ultimately, loved, and are searching for it . . . maybe 'in all the wrong places' as the old adage goes. But more often than not, we look for it in good things: a relationship, our career, a success or a goal met, our family, the next adventure or "big" thing on the horizon. We may readily run to these things to fill us with a sense of love and acceptance. However, when earthly love takes up residence within us in place of divine love, it will leave a void of dissatisfaction. In other words, there are many "good" loves, but only one Heavenly Great Love. Only the love of God in Christ Jesus will continually satisfy the innermost depths of our hearts, minds, and souls, filling us to overflowing both now and forever.

Today's scripture tells us our Father has lavished so great a love upon us and because of it, we are called God's children and we are God's children! Romans 8 tells us that nothing, not death, life, nor even circumstances can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Through Jesus, the Innocent Perfection, who gave His life for us, we have been forever changed by the power of the cross and brought into this great love of God. This kind of love calls us by name and lifts us up. It gives us a mercy which is new every day. It allows us to live from a place of love and acceptance, not a place of striving or earning. We are simply free to respond to the love of God that He has placed within our lives. Oh Lord, let us live in response to Your love for us today!

TODAY'S PRAYER

Father, Thank You that I can call You 'Father'! You, my Father, have continually, even now, poured out in great measure Your love on me, that I would be called Your child. Thank You that through Jesus, I have access to Your love and power through the Holy Spirit. Help me to lift my eyes to You today, and let Your love transform me as I cease striving and live *in* Your acceptance not *for* Your acceptance. Thank You for Your love that cannot be measured poured out on me! In Jesus' name, Amen.

Great LESSONS – Day 49

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? . . . No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." Romans 8:35 & 37 (NIV)

THE LOVE OF CHRIST

BEFORE following Jesus, we were building our lives on something. Whether it was a relationship, an achievement, a dream, a failure, or our own plan, our foundation was our own making. We can only build our lives with our own hands for so long before we realize that our foundation isn't strong enough. It is cracked. Or completely shattered. What God wants to build in each of our lives is an eternal, purpose-filled life, a life that we cannot muster or earn or build on our own strength. This type of life takes a strong and sure foundation. Here's the good news! When we put our faith in Jesus, we exchanged our faulty, self-made, crumbling foundation, broken by the weight of sin and darkness, for a sure footing on the brand new foundation of God, with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone.

As we surrender daily to Jesus, we begin to see Him building in us what only He can build: eyes that see Him, hearts filled with the things He loves, and lives which seek to serve those around us in His name. His is love which cannot be moved, and in Jesus, we are given a kingdom that cannot be shaken. Jesus holds it all together and the Holy Spirit fills us with wisdom and revelation, revealing who God is to us. Revelation always moves us to act. If we have truly seen God for who He is, our desires will shift and eventually become His desires. As He changes our lives, we will long for others to "know and rely on the love God has" for both us and those around us.

TODAY'S PRAYER

Father, Show me who You are today. Fill me with Your heart – all the things You love and want me to love – and empty me of the things which do not build up Your kingdom. Then, in turn, lead me in Your love to love those around me with the love of Christ. In Jesus name, Amen.