

Remembering What God Has Done

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Full Text (for reading on your own)

Is the Christian Life Boring?

Every guy in America wants to be Ned Flanders from the *Simpsons*. Every woman wants to be with Ned Flanders. Not really!

Think of the Christian characters you can remember from TV shows or movies. Are they super cool? Does everyone want to be around that Christian character? Does this person attract people around them or are they the “Debbie-downer” character?

Why is there a perspective in the media that Christians are boring? Why would culture think that Christians do not really know how to have a lot of fun?

If you take a minute to think about the idea of Christianity being boring, you realize that those who think that must not have read the Bible! The testimonies of what God has done in and through the lives of His people are amazing! Additionally, unlike a typical book, the Bible actually invites you to personally engage in and experience what God is doing. Not only is the Bible wildly interesting, but we ourselves are invited to experience it as our own reality! How can that be boring?!?

Gideon

Let’s look at the story of Gideon in Judges 6. Imagine you were watching this scene unfold as in a movie. As the story turns to Gideon, you are flying in on a helicopter that is zooming in on Gideon who is hiding in a winepress. He is using a winepress to work wheat - not because it is the right tool for the job but because he is afraid. Is the picture of an exciting believer?!?

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. And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him, and said to him, “The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor!” 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.” (Judges 6:11-13)

Did you take note of Gideon's response? "If the Lord is with us ..." We can see that Gideon is not unschooled in the history of his people with God. He knows about God bringing the Israelites out of Egypt. Gideon knows those facts for sure. Despite knowing this testimony, Gideon questions "if the Lord is with us." Gideon's statement / question was a loaded one. He wasn't asking if God was with them, but instead offering an indictment against God "*but now the Lord has forsaken us.*"

It is clear that Gideon has not remembered; he has forgotten the testimony of his people. Gideon remembered (recalled the facts) about what God had done, but did not remember in a way that affected him (by actually feeling a connection with the facts of the past). True remembrance actually transcends time and space - bringing the past to today. It is not vague recollection, but instead a hauling forward of history to today.

I can remember when my daughter was 3 in a much more visceral way than simply remembering the facts about her age at the time. I don't just recollect the fact that she used to make jokes, I can actually re-experience the feeling of those moments when she made the jokes. That's remembering.

Can you remember what you were like before you were saved? Can you project forward that person you were pre-salvation to today? Where would that person be today apart from the intervention of Christ in your life? Are they in jail? At a church? In a ditch? In a healthy marriage? With blessed children?

How well do you remember all the ways God has blessed you? Can we still taste and see and feel and smell the experiences we've had with God? How well do you remember the growth that you've had in the Lord? Do you remember when it seemed impossible for you to get over that stumbling block but then were free by God's grace?

Facts vs. Experience

Psalms 78:12-16 recounts what Gideon probably "recollected" about God: "*Marvelous things He did in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan. He divided the sea and caused them to pass through; and He made the waters stand up like a heap. In the daytime also He led them with the cloud, and all the night with a light of fire. He split the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink in abundance like the depths. He also brought streams out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers.*" Despite hearing of the salvation of God for the Israelites, Gideon did not have a personal, visceral remembrance of God's goodness.

You can read God's word to hear facts. This is likely what Gideon had done. You can, however, read the Word of God and actually extract power by putting yourself in the story. First, you can imagine yourself in the story you are reading in the Word of God. You can imagine Gideon's fear. We can experience with our imagination what it would be like to be so afraid that you were hiding in

a winepress who is then visited by someone (who you think may or may not be an angel). The second way you can make the Word come alive in your life, is to imagine with God what it would be like to be in “Gideon’s story” in your own life - in modern times. What would it look like, how would you act? What would you do in this set of circumstances? How would you think? What would your emotions be? What would you be asking of God?

When you read the Word experientially like this, it allows you to take ownership of another’s testimony. It allows what Gideon went through and how he grew through it all to become part of your story and part of your walk with God.

Generational Testimony

Testimonies are meant to be handed down generationally. Psalms 71:15-18 says *“My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness and Your salvation all the day, for I do not know their limits. I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD; I will make mention of Your righteousness, of Yours only. O God, You have taught me from my youth; and to this day I declare Your wondrous works. Now also when I am old and gray-headed, O God, do not forsake me, until I declare Your strength to this generation, your power to everyone who is to come.”*

Likewise, Psalms 78:4-7 says *“We will not hide them from their children, telling to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done. For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know them, the children who would be born, that they may arise and declare them to their children, that they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments;”*

When the angel of the Lord visited Gideon it seemed he had forgotten the works of God. He may have known the works of God in fact, but didn’t remember His power. So, why did that generational hand off of the testimony of the Lord not happen? Who was at fault? The answer is both Gideon and the previous generation were at fault as both the younger generation and the older generation have a responsibility in the hand-off of generational testimony.

The Responsibility for Testimony: Younger Generation

Gideon surely had a responsibility to connect with what God had already done. Gideon could have connected with the story of God. When you read what God has done in His Word, that is an encouragement to you! When you hear what God has done in someone else’s life that should be an encouragement to you! God is God. He is no respecter of persons. If God did it for them, He wants to bless you too! We too can read the Word experientially. We can listen to testimony experientially. We can say “what you have, I want” when we see someone walking in the presence and power of

God. And that is up to us to individually go after. “I am going to experience THAT!” *“Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!”* (Ps. 34:8)

The Process of Establishing your Own Testimony

Gideon went through a process in Judges 6 and 7 in which he learned to taste and see that the Lord is good! Let’s look at that progression:

“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.” 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?” 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.” And the Lord said to him, “Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man.” (Judges 6:13-16) God reaffirmed Gideon concerning the exact question he had of God. God said “Surely I will be with you!”

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. 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.” So Gideon went in and prepared a young goat, and unleavened bread from an ephab 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. 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. 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. 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.” (vv. 17-22) Now Gideon finally realizes that the Angel of the Lord is talking with him!

Subsequently, the Lord tells Gideon to go and tear down an altar of Baal. Gideon is pretty nervous so he takes some servants with him. Gideon is now trusting God more and he is stepping further into the “taste and see” process. Gideon steps out and he does as God has directed him. Under the cloak of night Gideon tears down the altar of Baal. Come morning, there is shock in the city “who did this!?!?” Someone yells “Gideon did it!” Gideon may have thought that was the end of his road, but his father spoke up and said “if Baal is so strong, why doesn’t he come and make himself seen?”

After this experience, Gideon is starting to really get it. He is starting to really see that the Lord is moving. Gideon is becoming more and more willing to move on in the actions the Lord is laying before him. So Gideon said to God *“If You will save Israel by my hand as You have said look, I shall put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know*

that You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said.” Notice, Gideon still has the “if” as He asks God. God is not put off.

Gideon follows up with God once more: *“Do not be angry with me, but let me speak just once more: Let me test, I pray, just once more with the fleece; let it now be dry only on the fleece, but on all the ground let there be dew.’ And God did so that night. It was dry on the fleece only, but there was dew on all the ground.”* As Gideon is walking this process out, he keeps checking in with God as if to say “is that still you?” He is tasting and seeing; he is checking with the Lord. He is doing. He is moving forward. It was still God working with Him and just as promised!

Now Gideon was ready to roll! He had torn down the altar of Baal and not died. He had done the fleece test with God - twice. He is pretty sure that he has God on his side now and he has a pretty good size army. He is ready to roll! And then Judges 7:2-3 happens! *“And the Lord said to Gideon, ‘The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me.’ Now therefore, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, ‘Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead.’” And twenty-two thousand of the people returned, and ten thousand remained.*” Gideon had 32,000 soldiers before and now he only has 10,000! Nevertheless, ten thousand is still a huge number so “let’s go!”

“But the Lord said to Gideon, ‘The people are still too many; bring them down to the water, and I will test them for you there. Then it will be, that of whom I say to you, ‘This one shall go with you,’ the same shall go with you; and of whomever I say to you, ‘This one shall not go with you,’ the same shall not go.” So he brought the people down to the water. *And the Lord said to Gideon, ‘Everyone who laps from the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set apart by himself; likewise everyone who gets down on his knees to drink.’”* And the number of those who lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men; but all the rest of the people got down on their knees to drink water. *Then the Lord said to Gideon, ‘By the three hundred men who lapped I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into your hand. Let all the other people go, every man to his place.’”* So the people took provisions and their trumpets in their hands. *And he sent away all the rest of Israel, every man to his tent, and retained those three hundred men.”* (Judges 7:4-7) Surely Gideon knows that God is with him, but he sure had to be getting nervous!

God is so gracious though! He tells Gideon to go down into the enemy’s camp. Gideon takes a servant with him and hears someone in the enemy recounting a dream he had: *And when Gideon had come, there was a man telling a dream to his companion. He said, ‘I have had a dream: To my surprise, a loaf of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian; it came to a tent and struck it so that it fell and overturned, and the tent collapsed.’”* And then listen to this interpretation! *“Then his companion answered and said, ‘This is nothing else but the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel! Into his hand God has delivered Midian and the whole camp.’”* Gideon returned to the camp and said *“Arise, for the Lord has delivered the camp of Midian into your hand.”*

Consider this story and every layer of trust that Gideon processes through. He starts with making an offering to test the validity of the angel of the Lord. Then he destroys the altar of Baal. Then he laid a fleece before the Lord - twice. Now, emboldened, Gideon was ready to take the Middianies according to the Word of the Lord and the size of his army! God had different plans and distilled Gideon's army from 32,000 to 10,000 to 300 men!

Gideon's story is our story too. The testimony of the previous generation had made it through to Gideon in fact, but he needed to make it his own in order to trust God deeply. He started small, believed that the Lord was speaking, and partnered with God to the result of an incredible victory! Gideon had learned some great facts about the Lord, but he did not connect to them. This failure to connect to them was ultimately remedied by establishing his own testimony.

The Responsibility for Testimony: Older Generation

As much as it is the responsibility of the younger generation to establish their own testimonies, as we saw in Psalms 71, it is our responsibility as the older generation to declare God's strength! Psalm 78 tells us not to hide our testimony but to tell the generation to come the praises of the Lord - to tell of God's strength and wonderful works. Not just in facts, but to actually pass along the power of the testimonies.

In any area of our Christian walk we can be either the new generation or the old. For instance, if we have really good history in healing, we can be the older generation in that aspect of our walk with God while being the "younger generation" in prophecy. There are lots of areas where we can be the "Gideon" that needs to look up, find, seek, and experience through others' experience in the Word. Concurrently, we can also be those who are sharing our testimonies with other people.

Consider areas of your life where you have experienced fantastic testimony! Connect with that testimony. Remember it in a way that is beyond facts. Remember the passion that you have for that topic because you have experienced such good things there. Consider that there are "Gideons" out there that want to experience what you have experienced! You have the opportunity to share out of the passion of your heart for that topic!

We are all the "older generation" with regards to salvation. There are a lot of pre-believers out there that, as was true of you, do not know what they are missing! God is so good! When we talk about leading others to Christ, it is not recruiting more Ned Flanders! God is good! Following Him is exciting!

"But rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy." (2 Pe. 4:13) What makes you glad with exceeding joy? When God's glory is revealed! God's presence is joy! The life of the Christian is not boring at all! God is 100% good!

When you see a good movie, you tell your friends about it! “Hey, you’ve got to check out this movie; it’s really good!” When you listen to a great band, hear a great song, or eat at a phenomenal restaurant, you tell others about it. Here we are experiencing the goodness of God and there are people out there that literally don’t know! We have the opportunity to share our testimonies of His goodness! “This is what God has done in my life! You’ve got to see this because you can have it too!”

Remember your testimony. Consider areas where you need to develop a testimony. Consider areas where you can share a testimony. Read the Word experientially. As others give testimonies, listen experientially. Establish your own testimonies with God - and help others establish theirs! Taste and see that the Lord is good! Be activated today in the power of the Lord.

Text Summary (for reading as a group)

Think of the Christian characters you can remember from TV shows or movies. Are they super cool? Why is there a perspective in the media that Christians are boring? If you take a minute to think about the idea of Christianity being boring, you realize that those who think that must not have read the Bible! The testimonies of what God has done in and through the lives of His people are amazing! Not only is the Bible wildly interesting, but we ourselves are invited to experience it as our own reality! How can that be boring?!?

Let’s look at the story of Gideon in Judges 6. As the story turns to Gideon, we see he is hiding in a winepress. He is using a winepress to work wheat - not because it is the right tool for the job but because he is afraid. Is this a picture of an exciting believer?!?

And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him, and said to him, “The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor!” 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.” (Judges 6:11-13)

Did you take note of Gideon’s response? “If the Lord is with us ...” We can see that Gideon is not unschooled in the history of his people with God. Gideon knows those facts for sure. Despite knowing this testimony, he believes, “*but now the Lord has forsaken us.*” Gideon remembered (recalled the facts) about what God had done, but did not remember in a way that affected him. True remembrance actually transcends time and space - bringing the past to today. It is not vague recollection, but instead a bringing forward of history to present day. For example, I (Joe) can

remember when my daughter was three years old in a much more visceral way than simply remembering the facts about her age at the time.

Despite hearing of the salvation of God for the Israelites, Gideon did not have a personal, visceral remembrance of God's goodness. You can read God's word to hear facts. This is likely what Gideon had done. You can also, however, read the Word of God and actually extract power by putting yourself in the story. You can experience with your imagination what it would be like to be so afraid that you were hiding in a winepress and then visited by someone (who you think may or may not be an angel). The second way you can make the Word come alive in your life, is to imagine with God what it would be like to be in "Gideon's story" in your own life - in modern times. What would it look like, how would you act? What would you do in this set of circumstances? How would you think? What would your emotions be? What would you be asking of God? When you read the Word experientially like this, it allows you to take ownership of another's testimony. Testimonies are in fact meant to be handed down generationally. Psalms 71:15-18 says *"My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness and Your salvation ... until I declare Your strength to this generation, your power to everyone who is to come."*

Likewise, Psalms 78:4-7 says, *"We will not hide them from their children, telling to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done."* When the angel of the Lord visited Gideon it seemed like he had forgotten the works of God. Why did that generational hand off of the testimony of the Lord not happen? Who was at fault? The answer is both Gideon and the previous generation were at fault as both the younger generation and the older generation have a responsibility in the hand-off of generational testimony.

Gideon surely had a responsibility to connect with what God had already done. When you read what God has done in His Word, that is an encouragement to you! When you hear what God has done in someone else's life that should be an encouragement to you! God is God. He is no respecter of persons. If God did it for them, He wants to bless you too! We can read the Word experientially. We can listen to testimony experientially. We can say "what you have, I want" when we see someone walking in the presence and power of God. And that is up to us to individually go after. "I am going to experience THAT!" *"Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!"* (Ps. 34:8) The younger generation must work to establish their own testimony!

After originally doubting God, Gideon went through a process in Judges 6 and 7 in which he learned to taste and see that the Lord is good! God reaffirmed Gideon concerning the exact question he had of God. God said, "Surely I will be with you" and Gideon finally realized that the Angel of the Lord was talking with him. Subsequently, the Lord tells Gideon to go and tear down an altar of Baal. Gideon was pretty nervous, but he stepped out and he did as God has directed him - tearing down the altar of Baal under the cloak of night. As Gideon walks this process out, he keeps

checking in with God as if to say “is that still you?” He puts out a fleece before the Lord - twice. He is tasting and seeing; he is checking with the Lord. He is doing. He is moving forward.

At this point, Gideon was ready to roll! And then Judges 7:2-3 happened: *“And the Lord said to Gideon, ‘The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me.’ Now therefore, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, ‘Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead.’”* Gideon originally had 32,000 soldiers and now he only has 10,000! Nevertheless, 10,000 is still a huge number so he kept moving forward with the plan.

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God is so gracious though: He tells Gideon to go down into the enemy’s camp and Gideon takes a servant with him. He overhears someone in the enemy recounting a dream — listen to this interpretation: *“Then his companion answered and said, “This is nothing else but the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel! Into his hand God has delivered Midian and the whole camp.”* Gideon returned to the camp and said “Arise, for the Lord has delivered the camp of Midian into your hand.”

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In any area of our Christian walk we can be either the new generation or the old. For instance, if we have really good history in healing, we can be the older generation in that aspect of our walk with God while being the “younger generation” in prophecy. There are a lot of areas where we can be the “Gideon” that needs to look up, find, seek, and experience through others’ experience in the Word. Concurrently, we can also be those who are sharing our testimonies with other people.

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there that want to experience what you have experienced. You have the opportunity to share out of the passion of your heart for that topic!

For instance, we are all the “older generation” with regards to salvation. There are a lot of pre-believers out there that, as was true of you, do not know what they are missing! God is so good! *“But rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.”* (2 Pe. 4:13) What makes you glad with exceeding joy? When God’s glory is revealed! God’s presence is joy. The life of the Christian is not boring at all. God is 100% good!

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Points to Ponder . . .

- What is the difference between recollecting facts and remembering a testimony?
- How can you experientially engage with the testimonies in the Word of God?
- What role does the “younger generation” play in establishing their own testimonies?
- What role does the “older generation” play in imparting / sharing their testimonies?
- What are some keys we learn from Gideon’s life about establishing your own testimonies w/ God?