

Life-Sharing Lesson 1—Overcoming Our Fear Judges 6:1-40

1. When was a time in your life when you were very afraid of making a change, but the change actually worked out in your favor?

Judges 6:1-40 New International Version (NIV)**Gideon**

6 The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD, and for seven years he gave them into the hands of the Midianites. ² Because the power of Midian was so oppressive, the Israelites prepared shelters for themselves in mountain clefts, caves and strongholds. ³ Whenever the Israelites planted their crops, the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples invaded the country. ⁴ They camped on the land and ruined the crops all the way to Gaza and did not spare a living thing for Israel, neither sheep nor cattle nor donkeys. ⁵ They came up with their livestock and their tents like swarms of locusts. It was impossible to count them or their camels; they invaded the land to ravage it. ⁶ Midian so impoverished the Israelites that they cried out to the LORD for help.

⁷ When the Israelites cried out to the LORD because of Midian, ⁸ he sent them a prophet, who said, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I brought you up out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ⁹ I rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians. And I delivered you from the hand of all [your](#) oppressors; I drove them out before you and gave you their land. ¹⁰ I said to you, ‘I am the LORD your God; do not worship the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you live.’ But you have not listened to me.”

¹¹ The angel of the LORD came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. ¹² When the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon, he said, “The LORD is with you, mighty warrior.”

¹³ “Pardon me, my lord,” Gideon replied, “but if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our ancestors told us about when they said, ‘Did not the LORD bring us up out of Egypt?’ But now the LORD has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian.”

¹⁴ The LORD turned to him and said, “Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian’s hand. Am I not sending you?” ¹⁵ “Pardon me, my lord,” Gideon replied, “but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.”

¹⁶ The LORD answered, “I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive.” ¹⁷ Gideon replied, “If now I have found favor in your eyes, give me a sign that it is really you talking to me. ¹⁸ Please do not go away until I come back and bring my offering and set it before you.” And the LORD said, “I will wait until you return.”

¹⁹ Gideon went inside, prepared a young goat, and from an ephah^[a] of flour he made bread without yeast. Putting the meat in a basket and its broth in a pot, he brought them out and offered them to him under the oak. ²⁰ The angel of God said to him, “Take the meat and the unleavened bread, place them on this rock, and pour out the broth.” And Gideon did so. ²¹ Then the angel of the LORD touched the meat and the unleavened bread with the tip of the staff that was in his hand. Fire flared from the rock, consuming the meat and the bread. And the angel of the LORD disappeared. ²² When Gideon realized that it was the angel of the LORD, he exclaimed, “Alas, Sovereign LORD! I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face!”

²³ But the LORD said to him, “Peace! Do not be afraid. You are not going to die.”

²⁴ So Gideon built an altar to the LORD there and called it The LORD Is Peace. To this day it stands in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. ²⁵ That same night the LORD said to him, “Take the second bull from your father’s herd, the one seven years old.^[b] Tear down your father’s altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole^[c] beside it. ²⁶ Then build a proper kind of^[d] altar to the LORD your God on the top of this height. Using the wood of the Asherah pole that you cut down, offer the second^[e] bull as a burnt offering.”

²⁷ So Gideon took ten of his servants and did as the LORD told him. But because he was afraid of his family and the townspeople, he did it at night rather than in the daytime.

²⁸ In the morning when the people of the town got up, there was Baal’s altar, demolished, with the Asherah pole beside it cut down and the second bull sacrificed on the newly built altar!

²⁹ They asked each other, “Who did this?” When they carefully investigated, they were told, “Gideon son of Joash did it.”³⁰ The people of the town demanded of Joash, “Bring out your son. He must die, because he has broken down Baal’s altar and cut down the Asherah pole beside it.”

³¹ But Joash replied to the hostile crowd around him, “Are you going to plead Baal’s cause? Are you trying to save him? Whoever fights for him shall be put to death by morning! If Baal really is a god, he can defend himself when someone breaks down his altar.” ³² So because Gideon broke down Baal’s altar, they gave him the name Jerub-Baal^[f] that day, saying, “Let Baal contend with him.”

³³ Now all the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples joined forces and crossed over the Jordan and camped in the Valley of Jezreel. ³⁴ Then the Spirit of

the LORD came on Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, summoning the Abiezrites to follow him.³⁵ He sent messengers throughout Manasseh, calling them to arms, and also into Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali, so that they too went up to meet them.

³⁶ Gideon said to God, “If you will save Israel by my hand as you have promised—³⁷ look, I will place a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said.”³⁸ And that is what happened. Gideon rose early the next day; he squeezed the fleece and wrung out the dew—a bowlful of water.

³⁹ Then Gideon said to God, “Do not be angry with me. Let me make just one more request. Allow me one more test with the fleece, but this time make the fleece dry and let the ground be covered with dew.”⁴⁰ That night God did so. Only the fleece was dry; all the ground was covered with dew.

2. Why does Gideon appear afraid to accept the title in verse 12 , “The LORD is with you, mighty warrior?”

3. What are some things you think the Lord would call you, that you are reluctant to accept?

4. Why does Gideon use his weaknesses as a reason to justify staying right where he is?

5. It is obvious in verses 20-22 that Gideon has had a supernatural event take place in his life. Why is he still afraid to carry out God’s command to go and tear down the altar of Baal and the Asherah pole?

6. Why is it with us, that God’s past deliverance does not keep us from having fear the next time around?

7. What do you think are the greatest fears in our church about possibly merging with Calvary/Glenville?

8. What do you think are the greatest fears about losing one pastor at Glenville or if you are at Calvary, what's the greatest fear at Calvary about going ahead with one pastor instead of three?

9. Why do you think God would consider having two congregations merge to become one, if God knew it would provoke fear among God's people?

10. We are at the point in which, no one can say, God said "for the churches to merge", or God said, "for the churches not to merge." Do you think, we should do what Gideon did in placing a fleece or test before God to discern God's will? Why or why not.

11. Does following God's will mean there will be more stress or less stress as a result of our obedience?

12. What pains will our church experience if we do not merge?

13. What pains will the new congregation experience if we do merge?

14. What is the proper role of fear in our decision making process?

15. What does this passage tell us about the kinds of people God uses to do God's will?

Life-Sharing Lesson 2- Reaching Out---A Different Church Growth Strategy
John 13:33-34

1. When you think of evangelism, what's the first thing that comes to your mind?
2. What kinds of things attract people to a church?

John 13:34-35 (NIV)

³⁴ "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

3. What do you think Jesus means by the word love in this passage?
4. When you come to church, how intentional are you about showing love to someone that you do not know?

The bible indicates two ways that love is revealed. One way has to do with our attitudes and the other has to do with our possessions. See the following passages.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (NIV)

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸ Love never fails.

5. Which of these qualities of love is the most difficult for you to practice?
6. Which of these qualities of love appears to be absent most often in the church?

7. In order for Calvary and Glenville to come together to form a new congregation, which aspect of love in this passage would have to be at the forefront in the beginning of a new body of believers.

8. If Calvary and Glenville do not come together, which aspect of love would need to be at the forefront of the congregation as it goes on a new journey in its history. (By new journey, I mean the end of the partnership agreement and the changing in the pastoral leadership pattern. Calvary would have one pastor and Glenville would have two.)

1 John 3:16-18 (NIV) ¹⁶ This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. ¹⁷ If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother or sister in need but has no pity on him or her, how can the love of God be in him or her? ¹⁸ Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

9. What do you think it means to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters?

10. If you found out that one of our members was living in an abandoned housing during the nights, how motivated are you to do something about it, and what would you be willing to do?

11. How can the church collectively do things to show love, that we as individuals may not be able to do?

12. How could it be possible that as a new congregation, we could more effectively carry out this command to have pity on our sisters and brothers?

13. What ministries do we need inside the church to truly love one another?

14. If both churches go on separate paths what opportunities are gained and what opportunities are lost in loving one another in the church.

15. If Jesus calls individuals to lay down their lives, for another, do you think Jesus would ask a local church to lay down it's life for the good of another? Why or why not.

Life-Sharing Lesson 3 Reaching Further I Samuel 18:1-10 20:1-34

1. Has there ever been a time in your life, when you were willing to give up something you wanted in order to look at the “big picture.”

One person who was willing to accept being number 2 was Jonathan, the rightful heir to the throne of his father King Saul. Jonathan was a big picture person, but in order to do so, it required great humility on his part. When we talk about a merger, the question will come up, “what’s in it for me?” The question is, is that the right question to be asking.

1 Samuel 18:1-11 (NIV) (This story immediately follows David’s victory over Goliath and the huge victory over the Philistine army by King Saul’s army. Jonathan is the king’s son. Up until this day, David was just a lowly shepherd out in the field.)

¹ After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself. ² From that day Saul kept David with him and did not let him return to his father's house. ³ And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself.

⁴ Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt.

⁵ Whatever Saul sent him to do, David did it so successfully that Saul gave him a high rank in the army. This pleased all the people, and Saul's officers as well. ⁶ When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with tambourines and lutes.

⁷ As they danced, they sang: "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands."

⁸ Saul was very angry; this refrain galled him. "They have credited David with tens of thousands," he thought, "but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?"

⁹ And from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David. ¹⁰ The next day an evil spirit from God came forcefully upon Saul. He was prophesying in his house, while David was playing the harp, as he usually did. Saul had a spear in his hand ¹¹ and he hurled it, saying to himself, "I'll pin David to the wall." But David eluded him twice.

2. Why do you think Jonathan makes a covenant with David and is so generous with him?

3. What is the big picture that Saul seems to be missing?

4. How would Saul lose, if he got what he wanted in killing David?

1 Samuel 20:1-34 (NIV)

¹ Then David fled from Naioth at Ramah and went to Jonathan and asked, "What have I done? What is my crime? How have I wronged your father, that he is trying to take my life?"

² "Never!" Jonathan replied. "You are not going to die! Look, my father doesn't do anything, great or small, without confiding in me. Why would he hide this from me? It's not so!"

³ But David took an oath and said, "Your father knows very well that I have found favor in your eyes, and he has said to himself, 'Jonathan must not know this or he will be grieved.' Yet as surely as the LORD lives and as you live, there is only a step between me and death."

⁴ Jonathan said to David, "Whatever you want me to do, I'll do for you."

⁵ So David said, "Look, tomorrow is the New Moon festival, and I am supposed to dine with the king; but let me go and hide in the field until the evening of the day after tomorrow. ⁶ If your father misses me at all, tell him, 'David earnestly asked my permission to hurry to Bethlehem, his hometown, because an annual sacrifice is being made there for his whole clan.' ⁷ If he says, 'Very well,' then your servant is safe. But if he loses his temper, you can be sure that he is determined to harm me.

⁸ As for you, show kindness to your servant, for you have brought him into a covenant with you before the LORD. If I am guilty, then kill me yourself! Why hand me over to your father?"

⁹ "Never!" Jonathan said. "If I had the least inkling that my father was determined to harm you, wouldn't I tell you?" ¹⁰ David asked, "Who will tell me if your father answers you harshly?"

¹¹ "Come," Jonathan said, "let's go out into the field." So they went there together.

¹² Then Jonathan said to David: "By the LORD, the God of Israel, I will surely

sound out my father by this time the day after tomorrow! If he is favorably disposed toward you, will I not send you word and let you know?

¹³ But if my father is inclined to harm you, may the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if I do not let you know and send you away safely. May the LORD be with you as he has been with my father. ¹⁴ But show me unfailing kindness like that of the LORD as long as I live, so that I may not be killed, ¹⁵ and do not ever cut off your kindness from my family--not even when the LORD has cut off every one of David's enemies from the face of the earth."

¹⁶ So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, "May the LORD call David's enemies to account." ¹⁷ And Jonathan had David reaffirm his oath out of love for him, because he loved him as he loved himself.

¹⁸ Then Jonathan said to David: "Tomorrow is the New Moon festival. You will be missed, because your seat will be empty. ¹⁹ The day after tomorrow, toward evening, go to the place where you hid when this trouble began, and wait by the stone Ezel. ²⁰ I will shoot three arrows to the side of it, as though I were shooting at a target. ²¹ Then I will send a boy and say, 'Go, find the arrows.' If I say to him, 'Look, the arrows are on this side of you; bring them here,' then come, because, as surely as the LORD lives, you are safe; there is no danger. ²² But if I say to the boy, 'Look, the arrows are beyond you,' then you must go, because the LORD has sent you away.

²³ And about the matter you and I discussed--remember, the LORD is witness between you and me forever." ²⁴ So David hid in the field, and when the New Moon festival came, the king sat down to eat.

²⁵ He sat in his customary place by the wall, opposite Jonathan, and Abner sat next to Saul, but David's place was empty. ²⁶ Saul said nothing that day, for he thought, "Something must have happened to David to make him ceremonially unclean--surely he is unclean." ²⁷ But the next day, the second day of the month, David's place was empty again. Then Saul said to his son Jonathan, "Why hasn't the son of Jesse come to the meal, either yesterday or today?"

²⁸ Jonathan answered, "David earnestly asked me for permission to go to Bethlehem.

²⁹ He said, 'Let me go, because our family is observing a sacrifice in the town and my brother has ordered me to be there. If I have found favor in your eyes, let me get away to see my brothers.' That is why he has not come to the king's table."

³⁰ Saul's anger flared up at Jonathan and he said to him, "You son of a perverse and rebellious woman! Don't I know that you have sided with the son of Jesse to

your own shame and to the shame of the mother who bore you? ³¹ As long as the son of Jesse lives on this earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established. Now send and bring him to me, for he must die!"

³² "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?" Jonathan asked his father.

³³ But Saul hurled his spear at him to kill him. Then Jonathan knew that his father intended to kill David.

³⁴ Jonathan got up from the table in fierce anger; on that second day of the month he did not eat, because he was grieved at his father's shameful treatment of David.

5. How easy is it for you to stand in someone's shadow, when the spotlight rightfully belongs on you?

6. What do you think is Jonathan's motivation for yielding his rightful place of authority to David's future as the next leader? What's in it for Jonathan?

7. What do you think is King Saul's motivation for getting rid of David at this point? What good is King Saul possibly trying to maintain.

8. As we discuss the merger, how do you see either Calvary or Glenville being asked to take on the role of Jonathan to make a new congregation possible?

We find this passage about Jesus. **Matthew 9:35-38 (NIV)**

³⁵ Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸ Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

9. What is the big picture that Jesus sees in this passage?

10. When we go into the community, less than 10% of the congregation show up to go out knocking on doors. Only about 25% of the 11:15 service raised their hand in the affirmative when asked the Sunday before Easter, how many of you have taken cards to distribute to others. How could a new congregation be better equipped in sending more workers into the harvest field?

11. If our churches do not merge, and how much additional time are you willing to set aside to give in order to go into the harvest field to bring in new people.

12. We live in a global world today. The internet has made all kinds of things instantly available around the world. Is God calling us to win people in the Glenville community or the Fairfax community, or is God calling us to win people for Christ, wherever we find them, wherever we may be?

13. If our churches do not merge, what would you consider a vibrant healthy Calvary or a vibrant healthy Glenville to look like?

14. We recently had our first Spring Camp for kids at Calvary. We had African-Americans kids, a white kid, a Chinese kid and a Muslim kid. When we talk about the harvest for Christ, our goal should be a multi-ethnic church where all races come together. What changes are required of us, if we are to become more racially inclusive as churches or as a new church.

15. Spend some time praying for wisdom as we come together as one congregation this weekend and prepare to vote. Please commit to being at the service at 10am at Calvary.