

The Transforming Power of the Word of God

By Michael Molloy

There are many reasons why studying the word of God should be a daily exercise for all of us. Proverbs teaches us practical lessons about how to navigate this life. Ecclesiastes documents Solomon's search for happiness and contentment in this world and concludes with the knowledge that all of our lives should be focused on keeping the Lord's commandments in reverential fear. Another great reason to study the Bible is the transformative power of God's word. We come to God broken, sinful, and needing His grace and mercy; His word teaches us how to leave our previous life behind and begin the transformation into the image of Christ (Romans 8.29).

Throughout the Bible, there are many people whose interactions with God follow this pattern: God calls them, they respond to Him, and they are transformed by their interaction with Him or His word. Gideon is a great example of this. When we first meet Gideon, he is threshing wheat in a wine press so that the wheat will not be stolen: "Now the angel of the Lord came and sat under the terebinth at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites" (Judges 6.11). The Lord knew that with His help, Gideon could become Israel's next great liberator and greeted him as such when He said, "The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor" (Judges 6.12). Once Gideon understood that the Lord was calling him to become Israel's next deliverer, he expressed the same doubt that many of us feel when we consider the things that God calls us to do.

Overthrow the Midianites? "Please, Lord, how can I save Israel? Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house" (Judges 6.15). Tear down the altar of Baal? Well, okay, but only when no one is watching: "But because he was too afraid of his family and the men of the town to do it by day, he did it by night" (Judges 6.27b).

Gideon was frightened to do the things that the Lord was asking of Him, but he prayed to the Lord. He first asked for the fleece to be dry and the ground to be wet, and then for the fleece to be wet and the ground dry. The Lord answered his prayers (Judges 6.36-40), and Gideon was emboldened to do the work that the Lord had called him to do. As his story continues, we see Gideon growing in faith and confidence in the Lord until he ultimately fulfills God's plans for him.

The Lord has called us to do great things as well. He has tasked us with reflecting Him and His light in this dark world. We are to be neighbors to all of those who we find in our path. We are to show love for one another, even when it is difficult. We are to teach the lost the gospel of Jesus Christ. We may be scared to do some or all of these things at different times. But God's word has not lost its transformative power. If we follow Gideon's example, praying to the Lord and relying on His word, we will be transformed just as Gideon was, and we will accomplish the will of the Lord, just as Gideon did.