"A Kingless Kingdom" Series **WEEK 7 – EMBRACING WEAKNESS**

--We are studying the entire book of JUDGES!

TODAY: WEEK 7 – EMBRACING WEAKNESS

We have seen God call out Gideon as a judge to redeem the KINGLESS KINGDOM of the people of God, the Israelites, and Gideon has just completed his first task of destroying the altars of Baal…

And now we see Gideon following God to defeat the HORRIBLE oppressors – the Midianites – ***remember*** – after 7 years of oppression – the Israelites have had enough and are crying out to God – couldn't even live in their own homes or work their own land because of the oppression

Gideon is filled with peace in walking forward, has asked God MULTIPLE times ro confirm that it WAS in fact the Lord talking…

GIDEON said – *God if you're truly going to use me – confirm it through impossible signs – let me wake up in the morning and the fleece be wet and the ground dry, and then the next day let the fleece be dry and the ground be wet…***GOD DID both**

AND IN THAT chapter – we saw GIDEON blew the ram's horn (SOUND OF VICTORY) and after messengers were sent an army of 32,000 showed up…so let's see what God does with an army of 32,000…

Judges 7:1-2 (NLT)
1 So Jerub-baal (that is, Gideon) and his army got up early and went as far as the spring of Harod. The armies of Midian were camped north of them in the valley near the hill of Moreh. **2** The Lord said to Gideon, "You have too many warriors with you. If I let all of you fight the Midianites, the Israelites will boast to me that they saved themselves by their own strength.

TALK ABOUT A TEST OF FAITH – Gideon, you've got too many…

What is funny is that even with 32,000 men, they were OUTMATCHED by the enemy army – there were 135,000 Midianites – over 4X as many

BUT GOD said – GIDEON – yall have too many

WHY – God said "I don't want yall to get the credit for the victory"

GOD wanted the odds SO BAD that the ONLY glory could be given to GOD – not a strategic army

AND it raises a question – DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE in HIS POWER?

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IF God says to you, like He told Zerubbabel in the book of Zechariah
'not by might, not by power, but by the Spirit? – WOULD you go in that

IF God says to you "I will strengthen you , help you , and hold you with my hand"
Like HE did in Isaiah – WOULD that be enough for you?

DO YOU BELIEVE "I can do all things through HIM who gives me strength"

DO YOU BELIEVE "God will supply my every need"

IF WE REALLY believe all these things
THEN OUR size DOES NOT MATTER
THEN OUR CURRENT INFLUENCE DOES NOT MATTER
when it comes to GOD having victory in our LAND and CULTURE

THERE ARE MANY prophetic words given right now about a REMNANT of people – a small group of believers who are actually walking differently than the world and are actually IN it but no OF it
And God says – THEY MAY BE SMALL – but trust in me and I can do great things through you FOR MY glory

And part of that REMNANT – is a people who are not governed by fear…

Judges 7:3 (NLT)
3 Therefore, tell the people, 'Whoever is timid or afraid may leave this mountain and go home.'" So 22,000 of them went home, leaving only 10,000 who were willing to fight.

22,000 of these men went home – because they were governed BY SIGHT, not by FAITH – they saw the large army and they were AFRAID

PAUL writing to TIMOTHY sais this…

2 Timothy 1:7-8 (NLT)
7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline. **8** So never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord. And don't be ashamed of me, either, even though I'm in prison for him. With the strength God gives you, be ready to suffer with me for the sake of the Good News.

AND A LOT OF fear is tied up in NOT BEING willing to suffer….

22,000 left because they didn't want to die – THEY DIDN'T WANT TO SUFFER

BUT if God called you to a task, BEING willing to suffer is what will give you the ability to TRUST in GOD to a degree of walking forward NO MATTER WHAT

- A posture of "I don't care what the consequences may be, I'm gong where God has instructed me to go"

1 John 4:18 (TPT)
18 Love never brings fear, for fear is always related to punishment. But love's perfection drives the fear of punishment far from our hearts. Whoever walks constantly afraid of punishment has not reached love's perfection.

Are you SO wrapped up in the truth of the LOVE of the FATHER – that FEAR does NOT stand a chance of getting a foothold in the temple of God that is you..

God says "I NEED THE REMNANT of people who are CONSUMED in me"

SO 22,000 men left, and and now Gideon has an army of 10,000

Judges 7:4 (NLT)
4 But the Lord told Gideon, "There are still too many! Bring them down to the spring, and I will test them to determine who will go with you and who will not."

In other words "THERE ARE STILL TOO MANY for my purpose of absolute glory

IS IT POSSIBLE that BIGNESS can actually be a hindrance to the work of God?
IT is easy to take credit when you have ALL the resources…

That is not to say that we CANT get to a place where we give God all credit no matter the size or amount of what we have – THAT CAN certainly be done
But sometimes you got to take an inventory of what you got and maek sure that ALL you have is giving glory to God, not just some of you

AND WE love to complain about our weak places, and our "NOT ENOUGH" places because we say 'I want to get rid of all the weak and puny places so I can walk in what God has for me"….

BUT PAUL writes about this in 2 Cor…

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (NLT)

7 even though I have received such wonderful revelations from God. So to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud. **8** Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. **9** Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. **10** That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

I BOAST IN MY WEAKNESS so that I HAVE to depend on HIS power and strength working through me

I TAKE PLEASURE in my weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, troubles
BECAUSE I am so WRAPPED up in PERFECT love that I take PLEASURE in SUFFERING rather than letting the possibily of SUFFERING cause a FEAR to hold me back

AND SOME of us are too PROUD to let guards down to look vulnerable and weak
WHEN GOD SAYS "I can use that IF you'll let it be exposed"

SO GOD says – GIDEON, take the soldiers down to the water and I WILL test them so to decide who will go with you to FIGHT an army of 135,000 MIDIANITE OPPRESSORS…..

Judges 7:5-8 (NLT)

5 When Gideon took his warriors down to the water, the Lord told him, "Divide the men into two groups. In one group put all those who cup water in their hands and lap it up with their tongues like dogs. In the other group put all those who kneel down and drink with their mouths in the stream." **6** Only 300 of the men drank from their hands. All the others got down on their knees and drank with their mouths in the stream. **7** The Lord told Gideon, "With these 300 men I will rescue you and give you victory over the Midianites. Send all the others home." **8** So Gideon collected the provisions and rams' horns of the other warriors and sent them home. But he kept the 300 men with him. The Midianite camp was in the valley just below Gideon.

WHAT A STRANGE TEST…
but think about what is going on…

Those who cupped with hands , were able to keep their eyes on all around them

Those who knelt down and drank with their mouths in the stream were not able to focus on anything except their own needs…

GOD SAID – I need the SOLDIERS who are willing to look silly so that they can KEEP THEIR FOCUS on the task at hand rather than the ones who are SO consumed with their thirst, that they focus on their need for a drink..

AND I believe in the CHURCH – we have 2 groups of people
THOSE LOOKING at their need and focusing on it alone….
& THOSE who are getting their need while keeping their eyes on the assignment

Colossians 3:2 (TPT)
2 Yes, feast on all the treasures of the heavenly realm and fill your thoughts with heavenly realities, and not with the distractions of the natural realm.

WHERE is your focus? Are you distracted with the need in your natural realm, or are you so focused on "WHAT DOES GOD WANT ME TO DO" that the natural things are secondary to your focus

IT may be harder and IT may be foolish, and IT MAY not be the most productive way to LAP UP water from my hands, BUT IF IT MEANS I can focus on the task, ILL take LONGER to get satisfied naturally

AND we make SO MANY compromised to get satisfied by needs of our flesh

YOU know, when GOD said "I'LL SUPPLY EVERY NEED" – HE wasn't just referencing spiritual and emotional – he knows what the flesh needs

BUT ARE YOU WILLING to go through a longer process for satisfaction

- WAIT til marriage
- GET HIGH off of relationship with GOD
- BE fulfilled by taking deight in HIS pleasures rather than gluttony
- IT IS BETTER TO GIVE than keep it all to yourself…

AND JUST TO THROW THIS OUT THERE – even though it was a good teaching point – MAYBE this wasn't as much about HOW the men did it…as it was for GOD to find the SMALL number within the 10,000 men….

SO THAT HIS GLORY could be displayed in the LESSER portion

ALL That was left was GIDEON leading 300 men looking down in to a valley of 135,000 soldiers – that's like 450 to 1!!!!

AT THAT POINT - that HAD to trust ONLY in God

Judges 7:9-11 (NLT)
9 That night the Lord said, "Get up! Go down into the Midianite camp, for I have given you victory over them! **10** But if you are afraid to attack, go down to the camp with your servant Purah. **11** Listen to what the Midianites are saying, and you will be greatly encouraged. Then you will be eager to attack." So Gideon took Purah and went down to the edge of the enemy camp.

God gives the command – TAKE YOUR WEAKNESS in to the enemy's camp – I HAVE GIVEN YOU VICTORY…

BUT JUST in case you are afraid – go down there and LISTEN to the conversations

GOD KNEW Gideon SO SO WELL – after he had an experience of Gideon needing confirmations – God doesn't wait for Gideon to ask about it; He says 'I KNOW you'll need something to confirm, so go listen and you'll get it"

Psalm 139:1-6 (NLT)
1 O Lord, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. **2** You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I'm far away. **3** You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do. **4** You know what I am going to say even before I say it, Lord. **5** You go before me and follow me. You place your hand of blessing on my head. **6** Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too great for me to understand!

DON'T buy in to the lie that HE DOESN'T KNOW YOU – throughout the rest of this chapter in Psalm 139 it says

"I CAN NEVER ESCAPE FROM YOUR SPIRIT"
"Whether I go to Heaven or the grave, You are there"
"I could ask the darkness to hide me but even there I can't hide from you"

GOD IS WELL AWARE of every thought in your head and every action you are taking and HE LOVES us SO WELL, that HE MAKES ROOM for us and FORMS every step

And just like He said 'Gideon I know you'll need confirmation, so go ahead" – God will do the same for you – BUT are you seeking enough to RECOGNIZE His voice

Judges 7:12-15 (NLT)
12 The armies of Midian, Amalek, and the people of the east had settled in the valley like a swarm of locusts. Their camels were like grains of sand on the seashore—too many to count! **13** Gideon crept up just as a man was telling his companion about a dream. The man said, "I had this dream, and in my dream a loaf of barley bread came tumbling down into the Midianite camp. It hit a tent, turned it over, and knocked it flat!" **14** His companion answered, "Your dream can mean only one thing—God has given Gideon son of Joash, the Israelite, victory over Midian and all its allies!"

Here again, we see the DESCRIPTION of the VAST amount of the army

And a man had a dream about a LOAF OF BARLEY BREAD
In this time; only the VERY POOR would eat barley bread
It was known as food for those not worthy of the good stuff

So the INTERPRETATION of the dream – was that THE DESTRCUTION of the strongest people would be given over by an insignificant NOBODY – GIDEON

SO A FEAR was gripping the enemy

MAKE NO MISTAKE – the enemy KNOWS the seemingly insignificant people of God carry a POWER within us that is ONLY attributed to GOD ALMIGHTY and they FEAR HIM…

And if YOU are walking in the IDENTIY of JESUS – they fear you because of what you carry – so the FLEE at the sound of your voice when it comes in to agreement with IN THE NAME OF JESUS

DEMONS speaking in Mark 1

Mark 1:24 (NLT)
24 "Why are you interfering with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!"

MAYBE you are facing TREMENDOUS battles that you are scared to WALK DOWN in to and claim victory and TODAY – you need to remember and HEAR THOSE conversations JUST LIKE Gideon needed to hear those conversations
Demons saying "If they carry Jesus, that insignifncat people will destroy us"

Judges 7:15 (NLT)
15 When Gideon heard the dream and its interpretation, he bowed in worship before the Lord. Then he returned to the Israelite camp and shouted, "Get up! For the Lord has given you victory over the Midianite hordes!"

WHEN HE HEARD IT – gave praise to God and then SHOUTED
LET'S GO!! We have eon

HIS ENCOURAGEMENT WAS CONTAGIOUS because when HE SAW TRUTH, he could not help but to do one thing – SPREAD IT TO EVERYONE in his camp and build faith

HAS YOUR encouragement in HIM caused you to spread it everywhere in your camp?
Or are you still hiding on a mountain, but you have forgotten, that HE HAS GIVEN you the upperhand for the battle…

Judges 7:16-18 (NLT)
16 He divided the 300 men into three groups and gave each man a ram's horn and a clay jar with a torch in it. **17** Then he said to them, "Keep your eyes on me. When I come to the edge of the camp, do just as I do. **18** As soon as I and those with me blow the rams' horns, blow your horns, too, all around the entire camp, and shout, 'For the Lord and for Gideon!'"

GIDEON had been so consumed at this point that GOD didn't even give him this strategy in a recorded conversation –
BECAUSE NOW – He was WALKING WITH rather than God having to poke and prod, ONE MIND and ONE SPIRIT – a SPIRIT FILLED man

AND THE VERY thing used to to ASSEMBLE this army of God "A HORN OF SALVATION" – GIDEON knew it was the same thing needed to defeat the enemy
BECAUSE it is NOT by YOUR power or YOUR MIGHT – but it s by HIM

HE carries the STRENGTH and POWER and it is in HIS NAME that THE ENEMY is defeated – and THAT SOUND needs to COMPLETELY drive every part of our nature, every part of our decision making – so IN ALL we do, we blow a horn of salvation

Judges 7:19-21 (NLT)
19 It was just after midnight, after the changing of the guard, when Gideon and the 100 men with him reached the edge of the Midianite camp. Suddenly, they blew the rams' horns and broke their clay jars. **20** Then all three groups blew their horns and broke their jars. They held the blazing torches in their left hands and the horns in their right hands, and they all shouted, "A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!" **21** Each man stood at his position around the camp and watched as all the Midianites rushed around in a panic, shouting as they ran to escape.

The Midianites woke up to an explosion of noise, light, and a movement coming from ALL DIRECTIONS

So THEIR perception of the army was MUCH BIGGER than reality

WHY DID THEY SHOUT – a SWORD of GOD and GIDEON

Because they didn't worship God – they were afraid of GIDEON not understanding why – SO IN WISDOM – "GOD AND GIDEON:

THEY didn't KNOW GOD – but they knew GIDEON was a man of YAHWEH

PEOPLE KNOW OF GOD – but do you live in such a fear and submission to God that they see a POWER in you that THEY CANT FIGURE OUT

SO THEY RESPECT OR FEAR IN REVERNECE YOU – not knowing it is actually GOD

AND WATCH HOW THE BATTLE BEGINS AFTER the shouting and fire torches…

Judges 7:22-23 (NLT)
22 When the 300 Israelites blew their rams' horns, the Lord caused the warriors in the camp to fight against each other with their swords. Those who were not killed fled to places as far away as Beth-shittah near Zererah and to the border of Abel-meholah near Tabbath. **23** Then Gideon sent for the warriors of Naphtali, Asher, and Manasseh, who joined in chasing the army of Midian.

THE FIRST PHASE OF THE BATTLE – wasn't even between Israelites and Midianties – the Midianites fought themselves

They were confused and SO WEAK with NO POWER that God said

"since you are working by YOUR POWER, let YOUR power be the one that defeats you"

I believe God is telling the CHURCH today – YOUR POWER will be YOUR END

AND AS THE SURVIVORS FLED –

God allowed GIDEON to call on HELP from Naphtalie, Asher, and Manessah

Becaue if we would walk in the courage and boldness relying ONLY on God in our weak place –

THE TESTIMONY of that obedience and POWER that can not be attributed to anyone but you….will cause others to come out of hiding to help in the victory of an ALREADY DEFEATED enemy

IN OTHER WORDS – God gives victory through the depended remnant

And people will rise up, cause they FINALLY see that the battle had been won

Judges 7:24-25 (NLT)
24 Gideon also sent messengers throughout the hill country of Ephraim, saying, "Come down to attack the Midianites. Cut them off at the shallow crossings of the Jordan River at Beth-barah." So all the men of Ephraim did as they were told. **25** They captured Oreb and Zeeb, the two Midianite commanders, killing Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeeb at the winepress of Zeeb. And they continued to chase the Midianites. Afterward the Israelites brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon, who was by the Jordan River.

THE SOUND of victory spread SO MUCH

That as the sound of his voice – people all throughout the land responded without question

CAN YOU IMAGINE THAT DAY – when there is such victory in the SMALL that WHEN WE CALL on others to UNIFY – there is a YES rather than the doubt of question…

WE SIMPLY NEED to EMBRACE our WEAKNESS and allow GOD to show us HOW to now, rather HOW TO "ONCE"

ONCE we grow
ONCE we earn
ONCE we understand..

NO – GOD show us what you want NOW in our weak place…

AND I WANT TO RECOGNIZE SOMETHING –

They had CLAY POTS in left hand and SWORD in the right hand…

Isaiah 41:10 (NLT)
10 Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.

CARRY THE SWORD of TRUTH….that HE IS WITH YOU and HE is your strength..

AND

2 Corinthians 4:7 (NLT)
7 We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves.

IF WE WOULD ALLOW ourselves to be BROKEN BEFORE HIM
The MORE his power is released as a LIGHT tht shines forth in the DARKNESS

IT WAS AT MIDNIGHT

THE enemy only saw FIRE and it made them appear STRONGER than they really were – because they ONLY saw GOD'S strength

LET US BE the people who are only known by one thing

THE STRENGTH of God that we carry…
As we embrace our weakness of fragile clay jars READY to be broken

AMEN