



“An Encounter with God”  
Judges 6:22-30

**Idea:** An encounter with God is a call to join Him.

**Intro:** As human beings we love a good show. We love to be entertained. We love to be wowed. That is why we watch the latest movies, go to the circus, pack out concerts, and go to sporting events. It is no different today than it was in the days of the Bible. John the Baptist was a wild man and a mighty preacher. Matthew tells us that he wore a garment of camel’s hair with a leather belt, and he ate a consistent diet of locusts dipped in honey. The guy preached a simple yet profound message: “*Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*” (Matt 3:2). He was unlike anyone else in his time. The people flocked to listen to him (Matt 11:7-9). Although many people did hear and heed his message, the vast majority was just there to take in the show. John was there to point them to the coming Messiah, but most of the people missed the point. They left with a lot to share with others about the experience, but they didn’t have an encounter with God.

The same thing takes place today in our churches. Did you know that you can come to church and have an experience but not experience God? You can get goose bumps from the stirring music. You can be moved to tears. You can even be moved to shout and dance in the isle. You can have an emotional experience without an encounter with God. There's nothing wrong with those experiences. In fact I love when God's Word grips my heart to the point that I just have to shout. I love when the gospel overwhelms my heart to the point that I can't hold back the tears. As a follower of Christ, though, I don't live for the emotional experiences. My desire is to encounter God. I want to meet with Him. I want to speak with Him. I want to hear from Him. I long for that because it changes my life, and it's what I was created for.

In Judges 6, Gideon has an encounter with God that transforms his life. Midian, Amalek, and the peoples of the East have oppressed the people of Israel for seven years. They would sweep in and ravage the land, taking their produce and livestock. They were like locusts in number and left the land bare. As a result the Jews were devastated and cried out to God (Judges 6:1-6).

One day Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress so as to not be seen. There in the winepress the angel of the Lord appeared and called him to save Israel (Judges 6:14). Gideon encountered God. He didn't have an emotional experience. He didn't have a spiritual experience. He had an encounter with God. We learn here that an encounter with God is a call to join Him.

Read Judges 6:22-30.

**Inquiry:** Under normal circumstances the narrative should have proceeded directly from verse 24 to verses 33-35, and then on to 7:1. But the normal sequence is interrupted twice to deal with a pair of abnormalities. The first is an objective issue, the presence of a pagan cult installation in Gideon's father's own backyard. The second is a subjective problem,

Gideon's persistent resistance to the call of God. These verses teach us about what it means to encounter God. Do you want to encounter God? Or do you just want to have a spiritual experience? I want to encounter God, and I want us to encounter God. How can we tell the difference between an encounter with God and a spiritual experience? We find four truths about an encounter with God in this passage.

**1. When you encounter Christ worship is the natural response. (vs. 22-24)**

I don't know of anything more misunderstood in the church today than the concept of worship. Most Christians view worship as the singing that takes place before the preaching. We even describe it like that, but worship is more than a song. Every aspect of this service (the praying, singing, preaching, giving, fellowshiping, and serving) ought to be an act of worship. Worship is so much more than singing. So then, what is worship?

“Worship is an inward reverence, the bowing down of the soul in the presence of God, an awesome dependence on Him. It is a solemn consciousness of the Divine, a secret communion with the unseen.”

– J.H. Morrison

“To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God.” – William Temple

A simple definition would be “to ascribe worth.” In other words, worship is worthship. Worship is the natural response to an encounter with Christ because you've seen that He is worthy. You've tasted and seen that He is God. Worship is not the warm-fuzzy feeling you get when you sing your favorite song. Worship is

not an emotional high. In fact much of worship that you find in Scripture is in the depths of despair.

*17 Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, 18 yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. 19 God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places. – Habakkuk 3:17-19*

*“Though He slay me, I will hope in Him...”*  
– Job 13:15

When Gideon realized that he had encountered God, he built an altar and worshiped (vs. 24). He was in awe of God. He was in awe of God's greatness (vs. 22). He understood that such an encounter should have taken His life, for the sinner cannot come into the presence of the Holy One and survive. Therefore, Gideon was overwhelmed by the grace of God that offered him peace. His natural response was to build an altar and to make a sacrifice. We too, when we come in contact with and experience the grace of God are overwhelmed. We don't build an altar and sacrifice an animal. God wants more than that from us. No, we offer ourselves to God as a living sacrifice (Rom 12:1). Our lives become an offering of worship to God. You see an encounter with God is a call to join Him. Therefore, we give our lives, future, family, and goals to God as an act of worship. Worship becomes the practice of our life, and it is not regulated to 30 minutes on a Sunday morning.

## **2. When you encounter Christ an undivided allegiance develops. (vs. 25-26)**

Gideon's construction of the altar to Yahweh at Ophrah (vs. 24) represents a direct challenge to prevailing

religious practices and perceptions in the area, symbolized by the altar of Baal at Ophrah. The narrator's reference to this altar catches the reader by surprise. On the other hand, it may help account for Gideon's ignorance of Yahweh and his doubts concerning Yahweh's interest in his people (6:13). Like many others in Israel, this village has been paganized, and, while Gideon is aware of the traditions of Yahweh, for all practical purposes he and his family are Baalists. Accordingly, just as Moses' son had to be circumcised before Moses could deliver Israel, before he can embark on God's mission of deliverance Gideon must cut out the mark of apostasy at home. Pagan gods may tolerate the simultaneous worship of more than one deity, but Yahweh will have no rivals. There is no room for syncretism in Judaism, and there is no room for it in Christianity. God clearly commanded that we should have no other God's before Him (Ex 20:3).

Therefore, for Gideon to serve as an agent of God in battle while his family was worshiping Baal at home posed a fundamental incongruity. At the same time, in charging Gideon to demolish the altar of Baal, God is pointing to the real problem in Israel. More serious than the oppression of the Midianites is their bondage to the spiritual forces of the land.

What is it that you have syncretized with the gospel? What is it that you are putting your trust in along with Christ? No matter what it is, God will have no rivals. He demands complete allegiance, and He alone is worthy of it. Like Gideon we must pull down the strongholds and cut down the idols in our lives (6:25). And we must build the worship of God in their place (6:26). We cannot serve two masters.

**3. When you encounter Christ obedience is necessary.**  
(vs. 27)

Gideon was presented with a choice. He could do as the Lord commanded or refuse to do what the Lord commanded. It was his choice to make. God had clearly pointed out idolatry in his home, and He gave instructions for how to remove it. Now it was up to Gideon to follow through on what God had instructed.

The same is true for us today. When God points out an area of our lives that is idolatrous, it is up to us to pull it down. An encounter with God is a call to join Him. It is a call to join Him in relationship and in mission, but you can't join Him and continue to live in sin.

Gideon chose to remove the idolatry from his home. He chose to obey God. He took ten of his servants and tore down the altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah. I believe this highlights a principle that we need to incorporate into our lives. There are times when you need to enlist the help of others to remove the sin from your life. You need the accountability of others to rid the sin from your life. You just can't do it alone. And you need the accountability of others to make sure that the idol isn't reconstructed in your life.

#### **4. When you encounter Christ the real fight begins.**

(vs. 28-30)

We would expect the text to read that after Gideon did what the Lord instructed his life was filled with blessings and everyone loved him. But that is not what we read at all. In fact his act of destroying the altar set the village in an uproar. He had touched their worship. He had messed with their religion. They in turn wanted his blood. How could obedience to God lead to a man being put on trial for his life? Well, we learn here that when a person encounters Christ and is obedient, it will many times result in worse conditions than before. Jesus said that He didn't come to bring peace but a sword (Matt 10:34).

I believe the fight that we fight is twofold: internal and external. The fight is internal in the fact that you will constantly be tempted to turn away from God. The difficulty of walking with God in a godless world will tempt you to give up and take the easy path. The fight is external in the fact that there will be people who stand against you. The battle will be waged against you. Thus, you need other believers to hold you accountable, to pray for you, to strengthen you in the Word, and to walk with you. The fight is real, and the fight is difficult. But the fight is worth it.

Even though the men from his village wanted to kill him for destroying their altar to Baal, they grew to respect him for his stance. When Gideon sounded the call for the men of warfare to assemble, the Abiezrites answered and followed Gideon. When you take your stand for God...when you stand your live out what God has called you to do others will take notice. They will be influenced. The fight is real, but it is worth it.

**Conclusion:** An encounter with God is a call to join Him. When you come into His presence, worship will be the natural response. Your desire will be to make much of Christ. You will have an undivided allegiance. You will be obedient to His Word. And when you encounter Christ, the real fight will begin.

Have you encountered Christ? Have you had a life-changing experience with Him? Today, He is calling and His arms are opened wide.