

How To Build Your Aptitude!

Living the New Life:

Ephesians 2:8;20

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Bethany Church

Wesley J. Gabel

He had big problems. All he wanted to do was survive. He feared for his life. Some of his friends had come home to find their wives and children missing. Some discovered the m dead. Others found ransacked businesses and burnt homes. It was awful. When a child got sick, who could he call? As a farmer, if he grew anything, how could he protect it, and to whom could he sell it? He knew raiders were nearby. He knew no business could be transacted openly. He couldn't negotiate with these armies. They were ruthless. He needed food for his family. He and his people had suffered this way for seven years. For seven years, he fled to caves and hidden-shelters in the mountains. For seven years, he saw his crops and vineyards harvested by enemies and his animals stolen. For seven years, he saw his fortune shrink and his family shudder with fear. He and his neighbors prayed with tears. A prophet had told them that they were suffering because they had disobeyed God. They continued to pray. When enemy spies had difficulty seeing, he gathered sheaves of wheat from a secluded field and threshed them in a winepress where he couldn't be observed. Suddenly, an angel appeared and told him that the Lord is with him. He thought out loud, "If the Lord is with me, why are we suffering so terribly? Why are we under the power of Midian our enemies?" The Lord told him:

"Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?" (Judges 6:14, NIV)

This is the story of Gideon. He would become a great leader of Israel. He had no ability, no aptitude, no strength to overcome his enemies. What could one man do against such odds,

such overwhelming force? He had no reputation to lead anyone. He still worked for his father. Yet God told him to go in the strength he already had and begin the work of saving Israel.

Gideon's story may seem incredulous, but it is the promise of a new life in Christ. The English word *strength*, meaning aptitude or ability, appears 179 times in the Bible you have in the pew. God is a God who imparts people with extraordinary strength or aptitude to accomplish great things. The Apostle Paul testifying in the midst of adversity said:

I can do everything with the help of Christ who gives me the strength I need.
(Philippians 4:13, NLT)

Paul said there was no limit on his aptitude. "I can do everything," he said. Yet, he wasn't saying that he could sing opera. He wasn't claiming he could paint the Mona Lisa. He wasn't saying that he possessed every gift or ability in human creation. Instead, he was saying that he can do everything God calls him to do in the situations where he has been placed. He's saying, "Whatever the problem, I can face it. Whatever the challenge, I can accomplish my call in it with the ability, the strength, Christ gives me."

This is the promise for us all when we are saved by grace through faith; for then we are **God's Masterpiece**. When you welcome God's presence, God's Spirit, through faith in Christ, you see things differently. You begin to understand that God is working on you and in you. You recognize that the strength you have, your aptitude, is from God and is for a divine purpose. According to the Bible, you live, move, and have your being in God (Acts 17:28). Your breath comes from God's presence. Your abilities come from God's Spirit. Your soul comes from God. God's Spirit animates you with life; however, now through Christ you are created anew. Now you are sensitive to God's love. Now you are sensitive to God's presence. Now, infected by God's love, you are devoted to God's purpose. Like Gideon, if through faith you operate in the strength you already have, your aptitude will grow. Jesus taught his disciples that if they

have faith as small as a mustard seed, nothing will be impossible for them (Matthew 17:20). They will overcome.

That is the outcome of living the new life in Christ. Those words weren't just meant for the disciples. They were recorded for us. God planned long ago for the situations you and I face. There is not a problem in your health, there isn't a problem in your family, there isn't a problem in our church, community, state or nation, that you and I can't overcome in pivotal way with the increased aptitude that only God gives. Rather than despair about these problems, or think we have to fix them by our own strength and wisdom, we simply need to seek God's purpose for us and do his bidding in the strength he gives us. We were *created anew* so that we *can do* our calling, and we must focus on our calling

In Judges, chapter six, Gideon did not go out and face the Midianites on his own. He did not pick up a sword and presume that he alone could defeat the vast armies of his enemies. Instead, he did what he learned to do from God with the people around him. He worked with other believers in God. To build your aptitude, you need to claim your role and part in God's family. Through the death of Christ, we are only one family. We are not Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians. We are not black Christians, white Christians, American Christians Asian Christians, Catholic Christians, Protestant Christians, born-again Christians, Spirit-filled Christians, good Christians or bad Christians. We are either in Christ or not. We are one family. At different points, we are either straying (and causing people to blaspheme the name of God), or we are obeying God's Spirit in the strength we have. Whatever the case, when we marry Christ in faith, we get this one family. You can't be with Christ and choose another. We get Christ's family with Jesus; and in this family we develop our abilities and pursue our calling. We all have certain marching orders that are common to every Christian. We are one people, with one

name, one God, one faith, one baptism, one Spirit and one Lord. We all have common marching orders, commanded of us by Christ and recorded in the Scriptures. So we just heed what the Scriptures say and do it according to the strength we have. Also, in Christ we are one new person or a new order of persons born through Christ's work on the cross. As a new person each of us have unique marching orders as well. We just do it as part of the family.

Gideon had no strength, no aptitude for the task that God had for him unless he had the both the ear of God and the hand of God at work in his circumstances. Similarly, we need to hear from God, to know his direction and see his hand and blessing. Understand that happens as we live fitted together as a house in which God lives among us. Gideon operated in faith with the other Israelite believers, and he saw God's hand take 300 believers and defeat thousands of warriors. The story of Gideon is unfolding today with you and me. We are a living house being fitted together so that God lives in our community, works in our community, blesses our community and redeems our community.

Do you see Jesus suffering for your sins? Do you see his blood releasing you from guilt? Do you sense his Spirit working in your heart? Do you trust his promise that he is present for you in the bread and cup we share today? If you answer "yes," then you are God's masterpiece, God's family, and God's house where he is enthroned on this earth. Embrace his commands and his call for your life. Walk in the strength you already have, and your aptitude to change the world around you will shock you.