I’m Diving In
by Chris Famisaran

All right, let's pray. Father in heaven, thank you for the opportunity to once again come together and to look at a story, Lord, that some of us know, but really the depth of it is quite profound. Be with us. In Jesus name. Amen.

Those of you who know me know I love water. I love the oceans. I love rivers, I love creeks, I love pools. If I can get in the water and jump in it, I love it. As a child, I grew up on the island of Guam for some time, and we would always be at the beach. I learned how to surf as a child, wakeboarded. Anything with the water, I love. In fact, if I could be an animal, I would love to be a dolphin. I love all things water. Which eventually led me to become a lifeguard and a water safety instructor. I taught swimming lessons. But to get to the point of learning how to swim, though, and especially jumping off like that [points to sermon title slide picture of man diving off rocks] meant I had to what? I had to learn how to swim. And I didn't learn how to swim until, like really learn how to swim until I was about six or seven years old. My aunt Linda Tiger, who was actually an Olympic diver in the 1960s Olympics, I can't remember exactly which. My mom's cousin taught me how to swim. And then we went to, I think it was the San Bernardino Country Club. They have a very nice pool. She challenged me to get on the diving board and jump in. So of course I started with a three-foot board and eventually I thought, well, maybe try the nine-foot block. Oh, that was scary. And I remember jumping off and she immediately caught me because I still was not comfortable being able to swim.

You know, as many kids like to do, they don't want to just stick in the shallow end. They want to go to the deep end. And what do they do to get to the deep end? They crawl along the wall. Okay, I know you're out there. All right. As a lifeguard, it would vex me to no end because I know, I mean, the first. I believe it was the first sermon that I preached. I shared a story of there was a young man who did not know how to swim. He was probably about 12, 13 years old. He crawled along and he thought, oh, I'm just going to go out and then grab

the wall. And what does he do? He starts to actively drown. Okay. Now, of course, you know, we jumped in and we got him. But it took a while for me to build up the confidence to do something just like this.

How many have ever been to Lake Havasu? Okay, if you've Been to Lake Havasu. You know that there's plenty of walls. I don't know what I think. Havasu, the water is relatively the same, but you could be able to go out. There's a couple of canyons where you can crawl up and jump off just like that [points to picture of man jumping off rocks] into the water. And oftentimes you start up slow, and then you build up to where we were jumping at least 20, 30ft into the water. But I also learned a very valuable lesson. Sometimes it's better to go in feet first, because if you go head first, no matter. Even if you put your hands in front of you to break the water, you're still going to hurt your neck and your shoulders. But to do so required full commitment. You couldn't just softly jump off. You had to clear any rocks below you. And to make sure that the water was deep enough, it required faith in your ability to do so. But sometimes, though, there was a few jumps where I jumped that I really should not have jumped. And I thank the Lord that he spared me a lot of pain and a lot of injury because there's a few jumps that I did that definitely, definitely could have hurt me.

And I look at life like this, too. Sometimes it requires fully being committed and diving in all the way, not halfway. You cannot jump off a cliff halfway or you're going to get hurt. It requires full commitment and the ability to know how to swim. Sometimes swimming through life can also be very challenging. It can be very uncertain.

All right, today I want to go to the Book of Judges, and I want to go to chapter six. Okay, Judges, chapter six. To kind of preface this, love, a little bit of backstory. Many of us know the story of Abraham. God calls Abraham to leave. And of course, he also has a son named Isaac, who in turn has a son named Jacob. And, of course, how many kids did Jacob have? A lot. He had 12 boys, plus a daughter that we know of. And out of the 12 sons became what we would consider different areas, different nations. And of course, what

happened? For a time, they're stuck and enslaved where Egypt for several hundreds of years. And eventually God calls Moses to go and pull the people out of Egypt to go to the promised land. And as they go through, eventually Moses would not be able to enter the promised land. And who takes over the mantle of leadership? Joshua. And after Joshua dies, what happens? There is no clear leader. And so they would set up judges to kind of rule over the different clans. There was no clear leader. King Saul and eventually King David are not established yet. And out of that rises a leader, a judge by the name of Gideon.

Okay, so let's see. What is the backdrop, though, of when Gideon is called so Judges, chapter six, starting at verse one. And this is a pattern throughout all of Israel's history in that the Israelites did what evil in the eyes of the Lord. And for seven years, he gave them into the hands of whom? The Midianites. Okay, because the power of the Midian was so oppressive, the Israelites prepared shelters for themselves in mountain clefts, caves and strongholds. They couldn't have a normal livelihood. They couldn't just go to their normal house. They had to hide at times. And whenever the Israelites planted the crops, the Midianites, the Amalekites and other eastern peoples invaded the country. They camped on the land. They ruined the crops all the way to Gaza and did not spare a living thing for Israel. Neither sheep nor cattle nor donkeys. They came up with their livestock and their tents like swarms and locusts. It was impossible to count them or their camels. They invaded the land to ravage it. Midian so impoverished the Israelites that they cried out to the Lord for help.

All right, if you're an Israelite, how are you feeling right now? You're feeling a little vexed, okay? Despair, lack of hope. Midians were so petty. Not only are we going to come over and ruin your crops, we're going to kill all of your sheep, okay, which is a protein source. Your donkeys, which is a tool to help plow. Oh, by the way, we're going to bring our camels in their calvary. There was so many. And we're going to bring our livestock to ruin all of your fields. Now, it's easy for us to go and get groceries, right? Because at the very least, we can doordash or instacart it, and voila, Target it shows up at your doorstep. But back then, if they can't plant a crop and then wait the required time for the

food to grow, are they going to be doing well? They're struggling. So this is the backdrop we're dealing with.

Okay, so verse 7. When the Israelites cried out to the Lord because of Midian, 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 Israel, slavery. I rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians, and I delivered you from the hand of all the oppressors. I drove them out and gave you their land. I said to you, I. I am The Lord your God. Don't worship the God of the Amorites in whose land you live. But you have not. What? You've not listened to me. And this will be a theme throughout the Book of Judges. Okay? The Israelites, oh, they realize, they learn their lesson, they're good, and then what? They fall back and they regress.

Now, verse 11, the angel of the Lord came and sat down under the oak and Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abrazite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it. From who? He's hiding the food. He was able to procure some food, and he's trying to prepare it, hiding it. And when the angel of the Lord, verse 12 appeared to Gideon, he said, the Lord is with you, mighty warrior. Now, as you're going to learn, how does Gideon consider himself? He is the least of his clan. He's from the tribe of Manasseh, I believe.

Okay. And he says, pardon me, my Lord. Gideon replied, but if the Lord is with us, why has all of this happened to us? Dare I say, is Gideon kind of pushing back a little bit here? Where are all his wonders that our ancestors told us about when they said, don't bring, do not bring, do not. Did not the Lord bring us up out of Egypt? But now the Lord has abandoned us and given us into the hand of the Midians. How do you think he's feeling? I've heard a lot of good things about God, but right now there's not a lot of good to speak about. Right? So this is his mindset. And then he says, the Lord answered, I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive. And Gideon replied, if now I have found favor in your eyes, give me a sign that is really you talking to me. Please don't go away until I come back and bring my

offering and set it before you. So he goes, he gets some food, and he brings it, and essentially, he places it in front of God and it gets lit up. Okay. And so he realized, oh, it's a sign. It really is from God.

Now, just to kind of briefly, because we don't have enough time. Later that night, the Lord tells Gideon to go knock down the altar that has been erected for BAAL and also cut the Asherah pole and take your father's second bull and offer it as a sacrifice. So he then takes 10 guys. He must have had some wealth or at least some good livelihood because he had 10 servants. And it indicates that they didn't go in the middle of the day. He was fearful for his life. So they go at night, they knock the altar down, they cut the Asherah pole, they offer the cow as a sacrifice the next morning. How are his clan feeling about the altar that was for Baal. Were they happy? Very, very upset. Okay. And eventually they asked who did this, and somebody snitched it was Gideon. So they demand, they want their retribution. Who sticks up for Gideon? His father, Joash. Actually, his father says, are you really so worried about Baal if. If he actually is a God, don't you think he could actually defend himself? Why are you defending Baal? What does this sound very reminiscent of? Sounds like Elijah, right? Some very big parallels. And Gideon as well. Gideon also, as you will see, there are some parallels to Moses. He tries every which way to talk out of it. Right. And yet God always has a strong, firm no. Here's where I can help you. Okay, now many of us know. Let's jump ahead. Okay. So, oh, and by the way, after knocking down the altar and everything, he gets a new name, Jerubbael, which means to contend with Baal. He's not just Gideon, he's the guy who's going to try to go up against Baal. And that's kind of, in a way, that's kind of cheeky, but also like, they do not trust him. You're that guy.

So let's continue. Let's go forward. Okay, let's see. All right, now, all the verse 33 of chapter 6. Now, all the Midianites, the Amalekites, and all the other eastern forces joined together and crossed over the Jordan, camped in the valley of Jezreel. Then the Spirit of the Lord came on Gideon and he blew a trumpet, summoning all the Abarites to follow him. He sent messengers throughout Manasseh calling to arms, and also into Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali, so that they too went to meet them. Gideon said to God, if you will

save Israel by my hand, as you have promised. So he knows, and he's following God, but still a little, little. I don't. I want to fully trust you, but need some confirmation.

So verse 36, Gideon said to him, if you save Israel by my hand, as you have promised, Look, I will place. What kind of fleece? A wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there's 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. And this is what happened Gideon rose early the next day. He squeezed the fleece and wrung out the dew. How much dew? A bow full.

Okay, verse 39. Then Gideon said, don't be angry with me, though. Hold on, let me make one more request. One more request. Allow me one more test of the fleece, but this time make the fleece dry and let the ground be covered with what dew? And that night, God did so. Only the fleece was dry and all of the ground was covered with dew. So Gideon has faith, but has he fully trusted and invested and dived into what God has called him to do? He still has some hesitancy. The first one where God scorched the food that he brought. The second act of faith is placing the dew. The second two times with the fleece. Dew on the fleece, dew off the fleece, and around. He has three. Three experiences already.

Now, chapter seven. Gideon is called so early in the morning. Jerubbaal, Chapter 7. That is, Gideon and all his men camped at the spring of Herod. And the camp of Midian was north of them in the valley near the hill of Moreh. The Lord said to Gideon, you have too many men. I can't deliver Midian into their hands or Israel will boast, what against me. Basically, God is saying, you have too many people. And if you guys are successful, you're not going to trust me. You're going to say, I did it.

Okay, so verse 4. But the Lord so, so sorry. My own strength to save me now announced in the army, anyone who trembles with fear, turn back and leave Mount Gilead. So how many people leave? 22,000. Okay, you'll find that there were over 32,000 people in this army, but 22,000 people. 22,000 men left, and only 10,000 remain. But then the Lord said to Gideon again, there are still too

many. Take them down to the water, and I will send them out for you there. If I say this one shall go with you, he shall go. But if I say this one shall not go with you, he shall not go. So Gideon took the men down to the water, and the Lord said to him, separate those who lap the water with their tongues as a dog laps from those who kneel down to drink. All right. And you know, when you really think about this, like, let's actually.

Okay, it's just as a demonstration. God wants to separate the men by people who literally get on their knee, take their hand in and get some water, versus a dog who will literally get on their hands and knees and put their head down. Into the water. Which position do you think is more vulnerable? The second one. And I get it. I mean, why are you just get in the water. In my opinion, there's a sense of vulnerability. But guess who God [does not] chooses? The ones who got their face basically into the water. And how many of that. How many of the men lapped the water? 300. That sounds like another famous story. I wonder if they ripped that off.

So Gideon took the men down, starting verse five. Then the Lord said to them, separate those who lap the water with their tongues, as a dog laps, from those who kneel down to drink. 300 of them drank from cupped hands, lapping like dogs. All the rest got down on their knees to drink.

In verse seven, the Lord said to Gideon, with the 300 men that left, I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands. Let all the others go home. So Gideon sent the rest of the Israelites home, but kept the 300 who took over the provisions and trumpets of the others.

Originally 32,000 down to 10,000, down to 300. That's. If you take. Think about it. How much is that? That's less than 1% of what he had, right? Math was not my strong suit. Less than 1%. That's faith. And they still went forward. But did Gideon.... Was he fully confident? No. In fact, it says. It says that as they. The camp was before them, lay below them in the valley during the night, Gideon. God goes to Gideon and says, get up. Go down and take the camp. I'm going to give it into your hands. But then he says, if you're afraid to attack, oh, take your servant and go down there, check it out and then come back. Now, if I know

that there's a huge army below, what, I want to go down by myself with my servant and check it out? No. But he does. He goes in and he hands out. He listens and he hears. There's a man who has a dream. And as he recounts it, essentially they indicate that the camp is Gideon's. It's basically there for the taking. And it's there. And he doesn't just leave. He hears this and he. He worships the Lord. And then he goes back up.

And then as they go back, so verse 14, the guys, he says, this can be nothing more than the sword of Gideon, son of Joash, Israelites. God has given the Midianites and the whole camp into his hands. Now, when Gideon hears the dream, he bowed down. He goes back. And then he prepares the men a sword in one hand, okay? And trumpets Sorry. The jars in one hand and then trumpets. They surround. They blow the trumpets, and everyone. The enemy. The Midianites are so confused. They think that they're surrounded, and yet there was not. If they knew the actual number of people, they would not have been so scared. But the sound was so big that everybody realized, oh, we're surrounded. They're going to destroy us. And in their fear, they. They were confused. And what happened? They destroyed each other. And then Gideon went in.

So, quite a fascinating story. Okay, so what can we take from this? Number one, **God's choices at times can be unconventional**. Okay, God's choices can be unconventional at times. Gideon did not feel he was qualified. The thing that we know, God calls what God calls. **God calls the unqualified and qualifies them.** Gideon did not think he was worthy. Gideon thought he was the least, if anything. Sometimes how often, too, do we look around and we see God called that person. And yet what does God do? God does amazing things in Gideon's life.

But **faith requires trusting God and not our own abilities**. Okay, Faith requires trusting God and not our own abilities. I'm pretty sure Gideon was probably smart, but to take on a whole army with 300 men when he had 32,000 already, it took tremendous faith. And at times, too, though, did he fully trust God from the very beginning? If anything, he questioned God. He

questioned God's existence. Like, yeah, we heard great things in the past, but where has God been, especially the last seven years? Don't hear anything recently.

Faith, though, is moving one step forward in spite of our fears and insecurities. Anything great, I think you should actually be scared. You know why? It keeps you humble. Being nervous keeps you humble. There are people when they say, oh, we're going to do this, this, and this, but they have so much confidence that sometimes it's easy to overlook things that could be a potential problem or a weakness in the future. If you're nervous and you tend to check things over and over to make sure everything is all right, will you be more successful? Now, you don't want to get so mired, though, and checking everything that you can actually do that, what you're called to do, though, right? So there's a balance there.

How many individuals, characters in the Bible just went out so strongly, so confident that they could just do anything? Majority of the characters in the Bible were humbled at some point. So moving forward, faith. Faith doesn't mean we're arrogant. We can have confidence in God and that God will help us. God will win the battle for Us because Gideon, for the most part, he played a part, but not the biggest part. He helped to lead and to kind of hold people moving forward. But at the end of the day, the battle was not won by Gideon's hand. It was God. So faith is moving one step forward. In spite of our fears and our insecurities, Gideon, did he still express fear? Yeah, he asked for three miracles.

Now, the hardest part sometimes is to **let go and let God**, because what does that mean? We have to relinquish control. When I travel, especially in the car, just so you know, I like to be the driver because I can control my destiny everywhere I go. If I can drive, I will be the one to want to drive. Also, I've just generally I've had the ability to kind of figure things out. You know, I know Southern California enough to where I know the general direction of where I need to go. Right. I can hop on the highways. And then there are just some is like, where do I get to here? And they need to have GPS. I've been around

Southern California enough to know to get to. At least I know where to get to the city. And for me, that's always. Maybe that's just been me nervous, but I. It's one of my the things that's in a sense of weakness. Because if I can control things, I think I'm in charge. But the truth is I'm not really in charge of my life. I cannot control everything, much like I cannot control where God wants me to go. I can accept and humbly follow and listen. And there are many times where God has revealed in plain view of like, what I'm called to do, but yet sometimes I'm scared. Can you relate? Can you relate?

So lessons from getting is that God calls you where you're at, and God will qualify you. You may be an unconventional choice of what it seems like, but let's not look at our detractors. Who cares what they think? You're always going to have people who question things. If you're being faithful to God, it doesn't matter. Oh, boy.

So **what fears and insecurities are holding you back from living a life of deep faith?** What holds you back from living a life of deep faith? Faith this week.

Today, dive in. Jump off the metaphorical cliff or bridge and into the water. **Dive in with full faith that God will lead and guide you as you navigate life's challenges. One step in decision at a time.** I'm not asking, by the way. I'm not saying go forward with perfection because we're human, right? Even though as faithful as you can be, you've been in the church, you've been following God for a year, five years, 75 years. We are humans and we tend to make mistakes at times, right? But learn from them and grow in faith. Dive in with full commitment. May God lead and guide you.

Father in heaven. Thank you Lord for the lessons that we can take from Gideon. Lord, you can use anybody. Don't let our shortcomings and our failures, Lord, help us not to define. Help us not to see them as this is all that can be. Lord, you have a greater life, Lord for us. May we be faithful to you and Lord, as a church continue to lead and guide us. May we be one community faithfully serving Downing wherever we go. In Jesus name. Everybody said amen.

Grace and peace everyone.