



## Episode 043

# Leaders Rise Up Despite Limitations

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Have you ever felt like there are more reasons to back off with our tail between our legs than to face the huge problems? That it is easier to give up than to rise up to the challenge? That the odds are simply stacked against us?

Today, I will share on how Leaders Rise Up Despite Limitations.

Great leaders know how to keep fighting on. Godly leaders know how to press on with God's help.

God intends to nurture leaders who overcome, even over the many limitations. Leaders who can rise up despite these limitations because they are confident about their God who is with them.

In this podcast we examine the rise of Gideon in Judges 6:11-32, despite the many limitations he was confronted with. From this passage we will discover how to rise up in the face of 4 major obstacles.

### **RISE UP DESPITE INCONVENIENCE**

Judges 6:11 (NIV) "The angel of the LORD came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites."

Imagine the scene where Gideon was sneaking behind winepress to thresh wheat for his family. Out of sight, to hide from Midianites. Then suddenly there is a bright glowing light, a stranger appears, sits down in clear view beside the winepress and declares in a loud voice, "Mighty warrior!" Gideon is like, "Shush! What was that all about? I am trying to do this in secret so I can feed my family! It is the worst time to disturb me! Get away from here!"



Like Gideon, I have come to realise that God does not seem to consider our timing. Whether it is convenient or not to us. I mean, isn't it simply polite to ask if it is a convenient time for us? Nope. Somehow God's agenda is far greater than ours, requiring Him to impose upon us.

Actually...it is! Hence, God's timing should over-ride our timing. Because God's timing is always the best timing. Don't say, "I am too busy! I have to finish this first! I have responsibilities!" Do you know what God says to that? "So?"

What did Jesus say to those who said, "I have to bury my dead"? "Let the dead bury their own dead (Luke 9:59-60)!" What did Jesus mean? Don't be dead to the call of God! Otherwise, you are just as good as dead!

### **How do we rise up? By responding to God's timing and call**

Judges 6:12-14 (NIV) "12 When the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon, he said, "The LORD is with you, mighty warrior." 13 "Pardon me, my lord," Gideon replied, "but if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our ancestors told us about when they said, 'Did not the LORD bring us up out of Egypt?' But now the LORD has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian." 14 The LORD turned to him and said, "Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?"

Just as Gideon complained about the Midianite oppression, the angel of the Lord basically declared that now is the time for the Israelites deliverance from the Midianites. That Gideon had been appointed to be that deliverer. The angel challenged Gideon to respond to God's timing and call for His life.

We must trust God 's timing is best. Trust that God's call is trustworthy. Despite great inconveniences to us. We must not miss God's call because we were too busy! We must understand this difference. Are we busy for ourselves or busy for God?

Remember what Elisha was doing when prophet Elijah called upon him? He was super busy supervising 12 yokes of oxen and he himself was leading one yoke. But he stopped everything to respond to God! He gave it all up to take up God's call upon his life.



I was extremely busy when God called me to join the Hope Church family and help plant a church in Melbourne! I was desperately trying to finish my PhD at that time and had in fact informed my church elder that I had to step down from leadership to focus on finishing my PhD. For my scholarship was running out. Even if I was invited to join the church-planting team, I would not have accepted at that time due to my circumstances. But God spoke very clearly for us to join. It was the most inconvenient time for me. But I knew God was calling! By faith, we responded to God's call. The rest became history.

Those who rise up despite inconvenience learn to be at God's convenience. To place God's timing and agenda ahead of our own timing and agenda. God is looking for such responsive hearts.

### **RISE UP DESPITE LACK**

Judges 6:15-16 (NIV) "15 "Pardon me, my lord," Gideon replied, "but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family." 16 The LORD answered, "I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive."

Gideon felt his lack very intensely at that moment. He felt totally insignificant and inadequate. It was not just a perception, it was reality. How could he do what God was asking of him? His clan was weakest in terms of numbers and fighting ability. He himself was not an influential person, even amongst his own people.

Are we reasoning as Gideon did? Are we holding back because of our lack? Because we don't have enough time? Enough finances? Enough skills or knowledge? Enough energy? Enough support?

### **How do we rise up? By responding to God's provision.**

Judges 6:16 (NIV) "I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive."

God is greater than our lack. God with us is more than enough!

On one hand, we should be realistic to recognise our lack. On the other, we should be faith-filled to recognise God's ability to meet and even over-supply our lack. Remember the 5 loaves and 2 fishes (John 6:1-13)? God not only met all the hunger of the 5,000 men plus women and children, He also supplied in abundance for each of the 12 disciples! Each had more than enough when they started with nothing! God supplied in over-abundance for them.



When Hope Church started to dream of our building, we were a smaller congregation and had very little. Today we have a nice land and building. Today our people have learnt to give generously to fund missions, community work and future building expansions to more effectively reach out. They have been giving almost continuously for 25 years!

I should qualify that we need wisdom to distinguish between lack that we need to grow in and lack that God will supply. It is crucial not to confuse these two. For in some areas of lack, God wants us to grow in and we need to work on those. In other areas, God will take responsibility to supply. When we expect God to supply what we ought to grow in, we wait for a divine provision that will not come. When we work hard to provide what ought to be God's provision, we overwhelm ourselves with a burden that is not ours to bear.

As a leader, I lack skills and ability in many areas. But God provided others to complement me! During the early days of our church-planting in Brisbane, it was crucial for us to evangelise. However, I am no evangelist, but I got myself trained and became good at it. I recognised that it is my responsibility to grow through my lack so that I can lead and even train others in evangelism. But God brought natural evangelists who really helped the church to grow through evangelism! In my lack, I did what I could and looked to God for the rest.

Those who rise up despite lack learn to discover abundant provision in God. We rise up to grow in areas that we lack because it is our responsibility yet also learn to rely on God to provide what we cannot.

### **RISE UP DESPITE UNCERTAINTY**

Judges 6:17-18 (NIV) "17 Gideon replied, "If now I have found favor in your eyes, give me a sign that it is really you talking to me. 18 Please do not go away until I come back and bring my offering and set it before you." And the LORD said, "I will wait until you return."

Gideon did not have confidence yet that it was God speaking to him. He was uncertain about whether he heard from God. He was uncertain if he was meant to deliver the Israelites. Have you ever felt uncertain about whether you heard God? Whether something is God's will? Whether what was the right way to go?



**How do we rise up? By responding to God's assurances.**

Judges 6:20-23 (NIV) “20 The angel of God said to him, “Take the meat and the unleavened bread, place them on this rock, and pour out the broth.” And Gideon did so. 21 Then the angel of the LORD touched the meat and the unleavened bread with the tip of the staff that was in his hand. Fire flared from the rock, consuming the meat and the bread. And the angel of the LORD disappeared. 22 When Gideon realized that it was the angel of the LORD, he exclaimed, “Alas, Sovereign LORD! I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face!” 23 But the LORD said to him, “Peace! Do not be afraid. You are not going to die.”

God assured Gideon of His divine presence. By supernaturally burning up the meat and bread. By the angel of the Lord disappearing right before Gideon’s eyes. God also assured Gideon that he would not die.

In the midst of our uncertainties, God will provide us assurances. Will we see it? Sense it? Hear it? Will it be enough? There is a limit to the assurances God will provide. A point comes when we need to respond with faith to God’s assurances despite any remaining uncertainties.

A dear pastor friend of ours in India and his leaders have been rising up despite many troubling uncertainties. There are financial uncertainties for the church especially in poorer rural areas. Uncertainties due to persecution from Hindu extremist and a government that is allowing these to happen. Nevertheless they continue to press forward in faith.

We will not have certainty in all areas. Part of a leader's growth is learning to move forward in the midst of uncertainties. This requires us walking with God enough to sense His leading. The key is to have a sense of God's leading enough to have the assurance.



## RISE UP DESPITE CHALLENGES

Judges 6:25-26 (NIV) "25 That same night the LORD said to him, "Take the second bull from your father's herd, the one seven years old. Tear down your father's altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole beside it. 26 Then build a proper kind of altar to the LORD your God on the top of this height. Using the wood of the Asherah pole that you cut down, offer the second bull as a burnt offering."

God challenged Gideon to deal with his own father's idolatry. For sins of the house had to be dealt with. Big family challenges laid ahead of Gideon. He also knew this could put his life at risk because the community reaction to the destruction of their idols. Yet Gideon rose up the challenge. Do we face challenges to respond to God? To do His will? To obey Him?

### How do we rise up? By stepping out in faith

Judges 6:27-32 (NIV) "27 So Gideon took ten of his servants and did as the LORD told him. But because he was afraid of his family and the townspeople, he did it at night rather than in the daytime. 28 In the morning when the people of the town got up, there was Baal's altar, demolished, with the Asherah pole beside it cut down and the second bull sacrificed on the newly built altar! 29 They asked each other, "Who did this?" When they carefully investigated, they were told, "Gideon son of Joash did it." 30 The people of the town demanded of Joash, "Bring out your son. He must die, because he has broken down Baal's altar and cut down the Asherah pole beside it." 31 But Joash replied to the hostile crowd around him, "Are you going to plead Baal's cause? Are you trying to save him? Whoever fights for him shall be put to death by morning! If Baal really is a god, he can defend himself when someone breaks down his altar." 32 So because Gideon broke down Baal's altar, they gave him the name Jerub-Baal that day, saying, "Let Baal contend with him."

Gideon stepped out in faith, risking his own life. But God came through for him. This faith venture grew Gideon's faith to tackle even much bigger challenges later on. In the same way, the challenges we face will grow us. We leaders should learn to face these challenges with faith. And to keep on facing bigger and bigger ones! So that we grow in our faith, our maturity, our wisdom in dealing with it.



I discovered that with every challenge I was willing to rise up to, it helped me grow in my faith and convictions. I grew in better understanding the way God works. It grew my resilience. I am not suggesting we blindly rise up to every challenge. We need to learn to assess the challenges realistically so that our eyes are wide open. Yet to step out in faith when God has clearly spoken, even when the challenge seems impossible.

Recall the incredible parting of the Red Sea, where Moses rose up to the impossible situation in response to God and saw God's impossible solution! This was because God had been preparing Moses to rise up against that incredible challenge. How? Through every challenge that Moses faced against Pharaoh back in Egypt. 10 times Moses confronted Pharaoh with the judgment of God and 10 times Pharaoh rejected Moses. 10 times Moses saw the powerful hand of God moved.

God wants to prepare us for bigger missions. It starts by rising up to our current challenges. It will grow us for bigger things to come.

## CONCLUSION

God wants to stir His leaders to rise up despite the many limitations and obstacles we are confronted with. When we rise up, God can do more with our lives. It will grow us, for bigger challenges that lie ahead. And God will receive greater glory!



## Discussion Questions

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These questions could be done personally or as part of a group discussion.

1. When faced with tough challenges, what has been your norm? To give up or to rise up? Why? Has this lesson inspired you to rise up?
2. What has been the biggest hindrance against you rising up? Is it inconvenience? Is it lack? Is it uncertainty? Is it the size of the challenge? Or something else? Discuss.

## Actionable Steps

Following questions are to prompt us on suitable actions. Importantly, come up with steps you will take to make progress. Give them datelines and priority.

1. Having identified the biggest hindrance against you rising up, what are some steps you can take to overcome it? Are there some ideas that you have learnt from this lesson that can help?







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