



Million-Village Champions



Perhaps you can identify with Gideon. He was marginalized, oppressed, burdened by poverty, having no voice, and struggling just to survive.

Gideon was the youngest child in an insignificant family from the tribe of Manasseh, one tribe in a large nation of people that were victimized by a violent and powerful enemy. For seven years the Midianites oppressed Israel, destroying their crops, and stealing their food, sheep, cattle, and donkeys. The Midianites were like a vast swarm of locusts, ruining the land and taking almost everything the children of Israel possessed. As a result, the Israelites, including Gideon, were in extreme poverty and many were running to the mountains to hide from their tormentors in caves. Desperate, they cried out to God, begging the Lord for help.

In his own way, Gideon was fighting back. When visited by the angel of the Lord, he was threshing wheat in a wine press instead of on the threshing floor to hide the harvest from the Midianite predators. As he was threshing wheat, he contemplated how the Lord had delivered Israel from oppressors in the past. Suddenly, the angel of the Lord appeared to him saying: “The Lord is with you, O brave man”. Without hesitation, Gideon replied with what was in his heart: “Please my lord, if the Lord is with us, then why has all this happened to us...the Lord has abandoned us and put us into the hand of Midian?” (Judges 6:13).

Answering the Cry and the Call.

The angel said, “The Lord is with you”. Gideon responded by saying “if the Lord is with us...” *God was calling Gideon to be a champion.* What qualified him was not his status in the nation, but his identification with the suffering of his people. Here is the first characteristic of a champion – they identify with their people, feel their pain, and long for their deliverance. Champions are nationals called to lead their own people out of poverty and pain. *The champion hears the cry of the poor.*

There is a second principle that shouldn’t be overlooked. *The champion is called.* The angel said, “the Lord is with you (Gideon)”. God chose Gideon to save his people from poverty and oppression.

If we are to achieve the vision of Christ-centered transformation in rural poor villages, we need champions. God is looking for champions that will hear the cry of their people and His call upon their lives. He will use them to lead movements of change that will transform the lives of the world's poorest forever.

Overcoming Fear & Trusting God to Transform

What would stop us from answering the call? In a word, it is *fear*. Fear is the enemy of faith. The angel called Gideon "brave". Bravery is nothing more than a willingness to trust God in the face of insurmountable odds.

If you are hearing the cry and the call, look carefully at Gideon. He was given a God-sized task, and he was afraid. His faith was tested at every step along the way. God graciously worked with Gideon, step by step, to overcome his fear and do the big thing that God was asking of Him. This was a lesson, not only for Gideon, but for all who are called. Gideon was able to deliver his people only because he trusted the Lord and was obedient to what the Lord asked him to do.

- *Have you heard the cry of your people and the call of God?*
- *What is the God-sized task that God is calling you to?*
- *What fears stand in the way of your pursuit of his will?*

We have a network of people around the world that are willing to stand alongside those who answer the call to multiply disciples among the poor while lifting their people out of cycles of poverty and disease. For more information, please email us at info@chenetwork.org.