

Brentview Baptist Church

'A Call To Something Bigger'

Stories of Impact



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(‘Dr. Impact’ skit) Dr. Impact has just tried to explain to us the idea of ‘The Butterfly Effect’ and how one motion, no matter how insignificant can have an affect that goes far beyond its small beginning. If you want to see that idea lived out in a more dramatic way, take a look at the moon with a pair of binoculars, and you will see the impact that meteors have made on the moon, leaving craters in the wake. There is one crater on the moon called the Barringer crater that is 1.8 km across and 170 meters deep which they believed was caused by an impact of a meteor traveling at 28,600 miles an hour. Now that kind of impact will leave a scar! But if you look at the latest pictures from the moon (that were just circulated on the internet) you will see that as they zoomed in, there on the face of the moon are clear sets of tracks left from 1972. The double lines are those of the vehicles and the single lines are of from the footprints of the astronauts. They were caused by a gentler impact than the comet strikes but they have still left a lasting impact on the moons surface.

Impact by definition: In the verb form is ‘to have an effect on something else’ or as a noun, it is ‘the force exerted on something else, to influence or affect something in a strong way’. When you came into the church this morning you saw a poster on the wall that read ‘A Year of Impact.’ Let me tell you why that poster is hanging there. About 7 or 8 months ago the Lord began to stir something within me that I just couldn’t shake. That was what the Lord is calling us as a church to set aside this year, ‘A Year of Impact’. We have seen many new people come to Brentview; we have built the building and survived the move in. We have seen many changes in this place and now the Lord has been lying on my heart that it is time to take the next step. That next step is to take even more seriously the fact that we are called to make an impact for Jesus in the Brentview area, in the area of our neighborhoods, n the area of our families and in specific areas of our world.

Now, it would be easy to say that this is already our passion and to an extent that it is what we have already been doing. And I agree, but I think this is a call to something bigger, something more focused and a call to really endeavor to live out that which we believe in our hearts, but often don’t practice enough in our lives in more practical ways. This is not about starting grand programs or running big organized outreaches, it’s making sure that you and I each and every day really take Jesus with us in all we do and with the words we say and the way we live, that during our day we are strategically attempting to leave an impact for Jesus. Why? Because I believe that all Christ followers contain the potential for world transformation within them. So I am inviting you to take a journey with me, to make a greater Impact, make a larger difference in the name of Jesus this year. My prayer is, that at the end of this year we will be able to look back and say ‘Here are the people we have had an impact on, here is the special way we have lifted up the name of Jesus in this area of town or at your work, here are our footprints of faith and here are the ways God has used us to make a mark for Jesus.

To kick this idea off, I want to take you to one of my favorite characters in Scripture, his name is Gideon a man who thought he was a nobody but a man who made a huge impact in his world.

The Amazing Story of Gideon

In (*Judges 6:1*) it says "*Yet again the people of Israel went back to doing evil in God's sight*". I don't have to read a word farther for I know that they are in trouble. Just like in our case, when we decide to step back from following God and do life without him, God steps back from us and will withdraw his protection from us. History tells us that the result of God withdrawing his protective care from them was that the Midianite armies would come swooping down at harvest time, like hordes of grasshoppers stealing their crops, killing, burning, raping and plundering all Israel had. The result was that Israel is beleaguered, destitute and ruled by fear. This is where our story begins.

In (*Judges 6*) we have a chance to meet our hero. You can almost see the story tellers start to smile with anticipation as they introduce him. Guess where we find him? We find him hiding in a wine press, (normally they would stomp the grapes at the top of the wine press and the juice would run down into the lower vat). In (*Judges 6:11*) you get this great picture of Gideon, thrashing his wheat in the lower part of the wine press. So there is chaff flying everywhere and then every so often, popping his head up, spitting out chaff and straw and then like a little trembling gopher, looking around to make sure the Midianites weren't there. Then one time as he looks around his eyes swing back, there in front of him stands this glowing Angel.

When Gideon sees the Angel, he almost jumps out of his skin. Picture his quivering little head sticking up again, above the wine press. It is then that the Angel with a smirk on his face delivers the greeting given to him by God (*Judges 6:12*) "*The Lord is with you O Mighty man of valor*". You can almost see Gideon look behind himself to see who the Angel is talking to. Then somehow, Gideon gets a little courage and he says (*Judges 6:13*) "*Let me enlighten you a little. Here I am hiding in the wine press, thrashing what little wheat I have because there are 1000's of Midianites ravaging our fields, I am not strong enough to do anything about it, and the God of the Red Sea who saved Israel way back when is nowhere to be found.*"

Do you see what is happening here? Gideon has a glowing Angel sent from God, standing just a few feet in front of him, but he is so overwhelmed with what is happening in his personal situation, that the fact that God could care for him doesn't even enter his thinking. Have you been there?

The interesting thing is that the Angel doesn't even answer Gideon's accusation; instead he says "*Go in your strength and deliver Israel from the Hands of the Midianites, this is the command of God*"

Here is the first thing I want you to see this morning; our potential to make an impact in our world is not dependent on us. I say that because Gideon was struggling with what he believed (*Judges 6:13*). He was saying, at Sunday school I was told that God could do all kinds of miracles, but it hasn't been my experience. He saw God as distant and aloof, his theology was all messed up. What he believed about himself wasn't any better (*Judges 6:15*). Far from being a 'Mighty Warrior' Gideon saw himself as the youngest, shortest and least talented in his family. And I can tell you from experience that if you feel that way about yourself, you will always have someone who will affirm that belief. When I was about to graduate from grade 12 and was making my plans for university, my French teacher came up to me laughing and said 'I hear you want to go to University, I bet your Social teacher bet \$20 that you won't even get your BA. Man that hurt, and it put doubt into my heart. The fact is, we all have little voices in the back of our heads that tell us we can't make an impact on our street, at the job or in our world. Here is the good news.

It is not our strength we have to rely on, it is God's

Again and again in this passage you will see that God promises to be there as Gideon steps out in faith to make a difference. God knew Gideon couldn't defeat the Midianites by himself. But God wasn't planning on asking him to defeat them by himself. All God will ever ask of us is if we are willing to give our all and to get involved in what he calls us to do. Heroes aren't born; they are made as they step out to do what God has called them to do.

The Issue is not just working Harder, it is getting closer

Often when I see people sense that God has called them to a specific ministry, I see them grit their teeth with determination and decide that the way to make it happen is to just work harder and then God will make their ministry a success. That is where the second part of this story fits in, it is a classic. (*Judges 6:17-19*) Gideon has decided he will do what God wants, but before he starts he wants to impress the Angel with his ability. So he decides to cook for the Angel. We get this great scene of Gideon in the hot morning sun starting to prepare this great meal. He takes an ephah of flour (1 bushel) and makes 10 huge loaves of bread. Then he gets a goat, kills it and puts it in a big pot. With sweat pouring down he prepares the broth and cooks the goat. Then probably 5/6 hours later, he finally comes back to the Angel with trays of bread, bowls of broth, a whole cooked goat and proudly says "look what I have done for you". The Angel, looking very unimpressed says "put the cakes on the rock and the broth on the ground beside it" then the Angel raises his staff and ZAPPO, He burns up the cake and the goat roast.

Can you picture the look on Gideon's face as the smoke rises from the toasted supper? Here is the next lesson. You see Gideon had spent the whole day showing God what he could do for him, trying to show Him what areas he was the most gifted in. God said "Pour it out, I am not impressed". Why is this so important to see? It is because if Gideon stays within the realm of where he feels he is the most talented within, what he is comfortable doing or while he may win a cook off against the Midianites, he will never attempt to walk into the area God needs him to be involved in.

To be honest as Churches, when it comes to budgets or new ministries or for us as individuals, when it comes to choosing those areas we are willing to be involved in, the first question we ask is, 'Do we presently have the resources we need and is this an area were I feel comfortable and talented enough to be involved?' And when that is our criteria with which we approach new things God is calling us to be involved in, then we very rarely will attempt God sized, world impacting thoughts. We end up having great cook offs but rarely do we attempt nation changing missions. Like Gideon we need to stop looking at what we feel comfortable doing and keep sitting close enough to Jesus (listening to his heart) to find out what he wants us involved in.

It is God who will give the Victory

Finally Gideon decides to respond to the call of God on his life; he throws his heart into it. With gusto he raises an army, he raises the biggest army he can possibly raise, 32,000 men. Remember the enemy has 140,000 soldiers. That is when the discussion starts between God and Gideon "Lord, the odds are 5-to 1, there isn't many of us but we'll do our best". And God says "Gideon you have too many men". "Excuse me". "Gideon you have to many men", "tell all who are afraid to go home". 22,000 men walk off the job, 2/3 of his army are gone. He now only has 10,000 left; the odds are now 14-to 1. "Lord it is suicide, but we'll try it anyway, for you". Then he hears that voice again "Gideon you have too many men". God said here's how you should know who I want on the mission, take them down to the stream, whoever kneels down to lap up the water and yet keeps alertly looking up, those are your men. Gideon ends up with 300 dog lapping soldiers, 31,700 men have gone home, and the odds are 467 to 1. All Gideon can say is "Lord I just don't know"

The bible says that night; Gideon was a wee bit discouraged. So God came and gave him his battle plan. "Here is the plan, take your 300 men, surround the 140,000 man enemy, blow your trumpets, break a pitcher, hold up a light and yell "For the Lord and for Gideon". You've heard the saying "Cheer up things could get worse", I cheered up and sure enough they got worse. Let me tell you if Gideon hadn't been discouraged before, he was now.

Can you just see Gideon handing out the tools of war to his 300 troupes? Here is your picture, trumpet and your flash light. Can you imagine taking the idea to the Elders Board? The only people who would be there for that would be a couple of our guys in our B-true ministry. In this case, unless God stepped in, there was no way they could win this battle. Without God this was impossible (*Judges 7:19-22*).

It is then that the story teller would begin to move back and forth, laughing as he explained how Gideon deployed his troops, how they stood in the dark above the 100's of watch fires of the enemy in the valley below. Then Gideon took a deep breath, gave the order and 300 pitchers were smashed, trumpets blasted out of tune as loud as they could be blown, lights were held high and with a mighty force they yelled "For the Lord and For Gideon". And the impossible happened, the enemy thinking they were surrounded by a tremendous force panicked in the dark as they began fleeing in every direction and killing each other. Before the evening was over 120,000 Midianites were dead and not one Israelite soldier had died.

The chance of that happening was impossible, but it happened because one man with very little ability decided to listen to what God told him to do, that made an impact on the whole region and changed the lot of an entire nation. One man, who accepted a call to be involved in something bigger, made his mark; he made an impact on his nation.

Lessons for Today: I have rehearsed this great story because I believe that....

1. There is a call on us to do something Bigger.

I believe that history is made in the present. As followers of Jesus Christ our call is to be involved in making a difference in our world today. We love to look back at Gideon in the Bible or Luther King in history or some large church in other parts of the world and say "Isn't it wonderful what God did in the past or is doing in some other place." We miss the fact that as authentic followers of Jesus, we need to be involved right here, right now, in things bigger than ourselves. Perry Noble says "I believe we're going to see some of the greatest moves of God that our world has seen in the next 20 years because the local church finally is deciding to be the church who follows Jesus with their whole hearts". Honestly, I am not sure about what all will happen this year, so we ask you to dream with us in how to make a bigger impact around this church, in this city and across the world. I am confident that if like Gideon, we will let God take us beyond our theology, beyond our small thinking that something truly amazing really is possible. While I am not sure what it will look like, I am confident in where this call is coming from.

2. The Power of One

Can one person make a difference? Next week is the Terry Fox run for Cancer. It began because one man 'Terry Fox' set out to run across Canada because he wanted to raise the profile for the need of Cancer research. On his trips he raised \$24 million dollars and over the years the runs have become larger, over \$500 million has been raised. If you watched the show 'Erin Brockovich' you saw a true story about a woman who 'took on the system' and raised \$333 millions for people who had been hurt by toxic waste in a town called Hinkley. One man standing in front of tank gave hope to millions. It is amazing what can happen if people will reach out and become involved, especially if that person is a believer. We can so quickly forget that all of Jesus' people have the potential for world transformation within them.

If you asked Gideon if it was possible to be involved in making the kind of impact that he did, he would have probably said 'No chance, I am just a farmer with very few talents'. But he did, because he had the power of God with him. If you read the New Testament you will find that a few people were touched by Jesus attempt to something bigger than themselves, they attempted to shake the culture and world with the power of Jesus. And a movement began that continues to shake our world today. How did they do it? Well they had the teaching of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. They didn't even have the writings of the New Testament like we do, but with Jesus words to guide their lives and his Holy Spirit to empower their lives, something life changing and eventually world changing happened.

Here is what I know; the reality is that it doesn't take millions of admirers to start a movement that can change a world. What are needed are a few people who have been personally transformed and committed enough to Jesus cause, to put their lives into his service. And I want us to increasingly be that church this year.

1. Will you consider giving 1 hour a week for this whole year to some type of service for Jesus? If we do that by the end of the year we will together have given over 10,000 hours of service in Jesus' name.

2. Each month we will be looking at different ways to impact our world. Will you prayerfully ask God what part you need to play and if He gives you ideas of things we are called to do together that you share them with us so that we can pray about it and seek His leading?

3. Will you begin to form the habit of each day as you wake up asking "Jesus what do you want me to be involved in today to make a difference in your world?"

For when we do that, we will be leaving footprints on our world that will make an impact. This will become A Year of Impact and in some small and large ways His Kingdom will come among us.