

(Education for Exultation) the Gideon Venture

by John Piper

The sermon emphasizes the importance of trusting in God, not man, and building a kind of people who are vigilant, alert, and willing to take risks.

Duration: 46:10

Scripture: Judges 7:2-5, Judges 7:7, Judges 7:19, Judges 7:22

Topics: "Faith And Obedience", "Gods Sovereignty"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the story of Gideon from the Bible. Gideon is in a difficult situation, feeling weak and unsure of what to do. However, God arranges for Gideon to overhear a dream that gives him encouragement and strength. Despite not having a clear plan, Gideon follows God's instructions and leads a small army against a much larger enemy. The speaker emphasizes that God is merciful and works with imperfect individuals like Gideon, showing that God's plans and strategies may seem absurd to us, but they ultimately lead to victory.

Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from Desiring God Ministries is available at www.desiringgod.org. I invite you to turn with me to the text for Pastor John's sermon this morning in Judges, chapter 7, verses 1 through 22. Then Jerobel, that is Gideon, and all the people who were with him, rose early, and camped beside the spring of Herod.

And the camp of Midian was on the north side of them, by the hill of Morah in the valley. The Lord said to Gideon, The people who are with you are too many for me to give Midian into their hands. For Israel would become boastful, saying, My own power has delivered me.

Now, therefore, come, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, Whoever is afraid and trembling, let him return and depart from Mount Gilead. So twenty-two thousand people returned, but ten thousand remained. Then the Lord said to Gideon, The people are still too many.

Bring them down to the water, and I will test them for you there. Therefore it shall be that he of whom I say to you, This one shall go with you, he shall go with you. But everyone of whom I say to you, This one shall not go with you, he shall not go.

So he brought the people down to the water. And the Lord said to Gideon, You shall separate everyone who laps the water with his tongue as a dog laps, as well as everyone who kneels to drink. Now the number of those who lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men.

But all the rest of the people kneeled to drink water. The Lord said to Gideon, I will deliver you with the three hundred men who lapped, and will give the Midianites into your hands. So let all the other people go, each man to his home.

So the three hundred men took the people's provisions and their trumpets into their hands, and Gideon sent all the other men of Israel, each to his tent, but retained the three hundred men, and the camp of Midian was below him in the valley. Now the same night it came about that the Lord said to him, Arise, go down against the camp, for I have given it into your hands. But if you are afraid to go down, go with Purah, your servant, down to the camp, and you will hear what they say, and afterward your hands will be strengthened so that you may go down against the camp.

So he went with Purah, his servant, down to the outposts of the army that was in the camp. Now the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the sons of the east were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts, and their camels were without number, as numerous as the sand on the seashore. When Gideon came, behold, a man was relating a dream to his friend, and he said, Behold, I had a dream.

A loaf of barley bread was tumbling into the camp of Midian, and it came to the tent and struck it so that it fell and turned it upside down so that the tent lay flat. His friend replied, This is nothing less than the sword of Gideon, the son of Joash, a man of Israel. God has given Midian and all the camp into his hand.

When Gideon heard the account of the dream and its interpretation, he bowed in worship. He returned to the camp of Israel and said, Arise, for the Lord has given the camp of Midian into your hands. He divided the 300 men into three companies, and he put trumpets and empty pitchers into the hands of all of them with torches inside the pitchers.

He said to them, Look at me and do likewise, and behold, when I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do. When I and all who are with me blow the trumpet, then you also blow the trumpets all around the camp and say, For the Lord and for Gideon. So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch when they had just posted the watch, and they blew the trumpets and smashed the pitchers that were in their hands.

When the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers, they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing and cried, A sword for the Lord and for Gideon. Each stood in his place around the camp, and all the army ran, crying out as they fled. When they blew the 300 trumpets, the Lord set the sword of one against another, even throughout the whole army, and the army fled as far as Beth Shittah toward Zariah, as far as the edge of Abel Mahola by Tammoth.

This is a great story about a great God, and I'd like us to pray before we get into it. Lord, your ways are not our ways and your thoughts are not our thoughts. Who would have ever conceived of such a battle strategy as this? And so humble us now and do your mighty hand that we might listen and learn.

I pray that we'd have ears to hear what you're saying to us through this story at this crucial juncture in the life of our church. Guard us from the evil one now who would love to distract us and to make us hard and unhearing and unfeeling against this word. I pray for salvation and I pray for sanctification in this room.

I pray for great joy and I pray for laughter at rolling barley loaves that level tents. What a strange thing. Lord, open our eyes to see what you're meaning by these stories.

Why do you do history this way? Oh, God, guard your church from being in a rut of worldliness, thinking the way the world thinks, doing things the way the world does them. Grant us to hear and be changed, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. June 1, 1998, I took a paper called The Gideon Venture. Should we build without debt to the elders? That's almost two years ago now.

And I had already talked with the staff about those ideas. Now we were ready to take them up more fully as a council of elders. And what I want to do this morning is take you into the sequence of thought and study and prayer that brought us from those days almost two years ago to what happened last Wednesday night, what's happening this morning as we'll give out the pledge cards at the end, and what is happening, Lord willing, in the next two years.

We're at a very, very crucial juncture, and God is putting together some remarkable things. We began even before then by thinking about debt. And as we looked at the Bible, what we noticed as a council of elders regarding debt was that almost all words about debt in the between people is in the form of a warning not to get into it.

Texts like Proverbs 22, 7, the rich rules over the poor and the borrower becomes the lender's slave. I could tell many stories that I've heard from you to that effect. Or Romans 13, 8, owe nothing to anyone except to love one another.

Now, the elders being the sensitive Bible readers that they are did not make a precipitous, hasty jump to condemn all borrowing and all lending because we saw texts and instances where there seemed to be guidelines given for borrowing and lending. And there doesn't seem to be an absolute condemnation of all debt and all lending. And yet we saw that the drift of scripture is clearly away from debt towards being free from debt.

And therefore, we took it as a cue that we should be very, very slow to get into debt again as a church. And we were confirmed in that by a couple of things that were circumstantial in the life of this church. One was that it was right at the end of 1996 that through a strategy called freeing the future, you eliminated all debt from this church and we don't have any debt.

There's no debt here. You gave 1.1 million dollars in those few months towards the end of 1996 to eliminate it. And in those same months, we had a master planning group and they produced a little booklet and had about 72 value statements in it.

One of them, number 22, under the ethos of our church is we value being debt free very highly, something like that. So the elders had the experience of getting debt free in 96 through a significant work of God. They had the value statement from the master planning committee.

They had all these texts warning against debt. And then they noticed in the Bible that the few building projects that there are, there aren't many, were all built with money up front. For example, in Exodus 35, 5, the tabernacle, take from among you a contribution to the Lord, whoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it as the Lord's contribution.

And they did that and they gathered all they needed and they built it, no debt. The temple, 1 Chronicles 9, 29, 5, David says, who then will offer willingly, consecrating himself today to the Lord, do it. And they gathered it all.

And now the point of those stories, the point of those stories is not that debt free is the only way to build a building. The point of those stories is God made the people joyfully generous and willing. That's the clear, repeated point in those stories.

He put an amazing generosity into the hearts of the people, but those stories did give us a pattern. They did hold out to us. Well, there's one way that it was done in the Bible, gather what you need to build up front, count the costs, move into it.

Don't end when you're halfway done, finish it, come out of it debt free and pour your lives and your money into mission and ministry. So we began to meditate on God's strange ways because it seemed to us at the time, and now it seems even stranger, very strange that so much money could be pursued in such a short space of time by so few people to move into a building debt free, like March, 2002 to the tune of \$9 million from this size church. Yeah.

So we began to read the Bible with our antennas up for strangeness because this is strange doing it this way is strange. And what we found is that God's normal way of acting is strange. God doesn't have a non strange way of acting.

He seems to always be doing things in a strange way. For example, build an arc in the desert or escape, not around the sea escape through the sea or when your people are thirsty, speak to a rock or when you want a city to fall and become subservient to you, walk around it seven times and blow horns or when there's a giant in the land, find a boy with a slingshot or when you want fire to fall from heaven and burn up a bunch of wood, be sure to put a lot of water on the wood or when you want to feed 5,000 people, find a little boy with a lunch and tell 12 men to divide the lunch among the 5,000. These are strange ways of getting things done.

And that's just the tip of the iceberg. God's ways are not our ways. And the elders brooded over these things.

All that I've said so far was our meat and potatoes for several months in those days. In fact, it's been on our table for two years. Now, we're not unaware of the danger here.

Handling the Bible this way can be abused. There are people who have died from drinking poison and letting snakes bite their hands and drowned. I heard of three Korean girls who drowned trying to walk on water.

We're not unaware that the Bible can be misused, mishandled and abused by trying to be more radical so that God gets more glory and children die because their parents won't give them medicine. So we're not unaware of that. However, we do see some things that make us think that probably most Christians play most things too safe and too worldly.

We just look around and say, how does the world do this now? How does the world get \$9 million out of 1300 members and five or 600 giving units? The arithmetic doesn't work, by the way. You may as well put your calculators away. This doesn't work.

There's absolutely no reason to do any computing here. It's so far off the charts. You will only be discouraged.

And so just put the calculators away. Forget the arithmetic. This is not about arithmetic.

I've not even tried it. I'm afraid of what those numbers would look like. They are ridiculously high and it isn't going to happen that way.

It's going to happen in a way nobody can imagine it happening. And that's the point of this story that we're going to look at in just a moment. We saw a pattern in the Bible.

We're not about to come to you with any sense of triumphal. This is the way it's got to be done. God says it has to be done this way.

Not to do it this way is to be disobedient. We're not condemning you if you do your personal finances differently than this. We're not condemning other churches if they are led into another strategy.

We did it with another strategy. That's not the point to point any finger at any body. We're not saying that God is bound to bless this thing.

We're not saying it's going to necessarily succeed. Well, what are you saying? Here's what we're saying. We see a pattern in the Bible of counter-cultural, unusual, God-exalting, non-man-dependent, but God-dependent ways of doing things that look out of sync with the ordinary way the world does them.

And we hear a beckoning from our Father. Test me. Try me.

Come this way, not that way. Move toward the radical, not toward the comfortable, the easy, the predictable. And we fast, we pray, we wrestle, and we sense that education for exaltation should be pursued along with a nine million dollar building program built in two years, debt-free, is something God would be pleased with.

That's all. That's all. So let's go to judges.

I'll show you what was in that paper that I laid before the elders two years ago and what we saw as we meditated for quite a while on this text. Now, let's get the background in judges here. You know, you know when the judges happen.

You got Moses leading the people out of Israel, out of Egypt, through the wilderness. Then you have Joshua takes them into the promised land and defeats lots of the cities. And then Joshua dies and there's this huge leadership void.

And the point of the book of judges is when there's no king, the people do what is right in their own eyes. Says that twice at least. So what happens? As they do what is right in their own eyes, God gives them over into the hands of their enemies.

Then a cry goes up. God has mercy upon them. He raises up judges.

They're called judges. The judge takes the bull by the horns and in the name and the power of God, he defeats the enemy and gets 20, 30, 40 years of peace for the people. And then they sin again.

He hands them over again. This is an awful rhythm of the book of judges or the glorious rhythm, depending on whether you're focusing on the sin or the mercy of God, which is great. So one of those folks is Gideon.

Now in chapter six, verse one, the chapter before the one Kenny just read, God comes to Gideon and he says he's going to rescue the people from the Midianites. Verse 14 of chapter six, God says to Gideon, go in this your strength and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian. But Gideon is like Moses here.

Verse 15. And he says, oh, Lord, how shall I deliver Israel? Behold, my family is the least in Manasseh and I am the youngest in my father's house. Stop.

He doesn't get it. Gideon doesn't get it. That's why the Bible is being written here.

Gideon, your family is small and you're a nobody. Therefore, I'm coming to you. You're my man.

You don't use that as an argument for why I shouldn't use you. It's my argument why I use you. This is God's way.

Gideon doesn't get it. Many of us don't get it. Take heart.

Nobody's. You are God's kind of people. God gets things done through nobody's.

Oh, Lord, how shall I deliver Israel? Behold, my family is least in Manasseh and I'm the youngest in my father's house. I can just imagine God rolling his eyes, shaking his head and said, yes, yes, that's the point. Verse 16, God always answers that kind of objection this way.

Surely I will be with you and you shall defeat Midian as one man. So God already has in his mind, this is going to be some spectacular deliverance. You're going to defeat them as one man.

Now we come to chapter seven. Here's the situation. Thirty two thousand troops in Israel.

I see that in verse three. Thirty two thousand troops in Israel. How many among the media nights in the Amalekites? Verse 12.

They were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts and their camels were without number as numerous as the sand on the seashore. I take that to mean that as you stand at a distance and look out over this huge valley, the camels are so many they merge into a beach of camel humps. It just looks like one vast, long stretch of beach of camel fur.

There are so many you can't distinguish them and count. So there is an outnumbering here, even while Israel has thirty two thousand troops. Now, what does God do? God sees thirty two thousand of his own people.

He sees an innumerable host of Amalekites and Midianites coming against each other. What does he do now? That's where the paper started in June of ninety eight. And we saw six things.

And I'll just tell you what the elders saw and how they applied to our situation. Number one, verse two. Let's read it.

The Lord said to Gideon, the people who are with you are too many for me to give Midian into your hands, for Israel would become boastful. God does not like boasting. Saying my own power has delivered me.

Stop. So we inferred this as a council of elders. It seems as though God would want us to pursue a way of building a building in this church.

That would be harder for humans to take responsibility for and get credit for rather than easier. So we are pushed by many stories, but this one in particular, we feel ourselves pushed towards a strategy that would make us lean more on God and less on man. That's point number one.

Number two, God pairs down the thirty two thousand to ten thousand by letting the faint hearted go home. Two thirds are faint hearted and they get to go home. Now he's got ten thousand left and he is not ready to move with ten thousand.

He does a little test. I don't know what's going on here. I really don't.

Here's what here's what he does. He says, send people down to the water to drink. Ten thousand people go get a drink.

Nine thousand seven hundred of these people kneel down to get their drink. I don't know what they do after they kneel down, but they kneel. Three hundred don't kneel.

They lap using their hands. Now, how do they do that? Well, I don't know. I suggested in the first service they stay standing and they scoop with their hands and they lap like this.

A guy came up to me and he said, I don't think that's what happened. I think they laid down flat on their faces and and went like this. And God was showing that prostrate people are the kind he'll use.

Well, maybe, maybe. I thought it was vigilant alert people with the kind he use who don't kneel down and take risks. I don't know what's going on here.

But here's the point the elders drew from this observation. God seems to say I can do this. Not without reference to quantity, but with reference to a certain kind of people.

Forget quantity, forget the thirty two thousand, forget the ten thousand. I'll take three hundred lappers, dog lappers, dog like lappers. I don't know what he was looking for in that, but he found it.

So we simply generalize this way. Forget the numbers at Bethlehem. Don't compute.

Think in terms of devoting your energies to build a kind of people at Bethlehem, build a kind of people. So I've been preaching now, what, nine weeks, eight weeks on education for exaltation. And it's all about a kind of people.

It's not about a building, mainly the building we got to do. We think in order to press on with the vision we have for the kind of people, but it's the people we want to be get. Let me give you a teeny illustration, because in this room right now, there are no doubt this kind of people.

Suppose you live in the Twin Cities. You're twenty five, thirty five, forty five years old. You just moved to the cities.

You're a believer, but kind of haven't been to church for a long time, maybe. And you live alone and you have no contacts in this city. And you just start feeling lonely and like you'd like to go to church somewhere.

So you flop open the phone book or drive by one of our signs on the freeway or whatever. You say, well, I wonder when their services are. You check it out.

Nine, ten, forty five. And you showed up here. You're in this room right now.

What I want more than I want a thousand people in this room is people who won't let that person get out of this room without being spoken to. Would you be that this morning as you walk out the aisle? Don't just zero in on your tried and true little friend click. Open your eyes.

Look around. There's eight hundred people you do not know in this room and find one of them and say, hi, my name's John. Are you new? I've been here 20 years.

Let's see what they say. Who knows what they might say? I've been here 50 years or this is my first Sunday. Doesn't matter.

What matters is you had the grace to get beyond your little world and to pour yourself out in some little teeny weeny risk and be the kind of a person that might make their day, win them to Christ, plug them into a family and change their future forever. Let's be that kind of people. So the point on number two was I don't know what's going on with the dog lappers, but it was something.

And so I know what kind of people God wants to be breeding in the church today. Christlike, loving, humble, vengeful, bold people. And so that's what education for exaltation is about.

Mainly number three observation. The Lord is merciful to work with a less than ideal person and people like Gideon. Where do we get that? Look at verse nine, nine to 11.

Now, the same night it came about that the Lord said to him, arise, talking to Gideon, arise, go down against the camp. For I have given it into your hands. Stop.

God says to Gideon, you go down and deliver them. I mean, he's already said, I will deliver them as by one man. So in the middle of the night, he says, all right, go do it.

The next verse. But if you're afraid. I got a plan B. Is that incredible? Here's what the elders heard there.

If you're afraid, go down with poor, your servant to the camp, you will hear what they say. And afterward, your hands will be strengthened and you may go down to the camp. So go down now.

Go down. If you're afraid to go down, then take your servant and just go stand on the edge. And I've got a word for you.

Here's the lesson we heard. God is not an all or nothing God in his mercy toward us. He doesn't come to you one time and says, OK, now here's the kind of life you're supposed to live.

Live it. You blow it. OK, I'm done.

Next person. You live it. OK, you blow it.

All right. That's not the God of this passage or any other passage in the Bible. He says, I want you to go down there.

Go. I'm telling you to go. If you're afraid, here's what we'll do.

And Gideon opts for plan B. We heard this elders of Bethlehem. You've got fears. You've got misgivings.

You've got uncertainties. You know what? You're not disqualified from a great work because Gideon wasn't disqualified from a great work by his fears. Plan B is a great plan.

Number four. In his mercy and patience, God gives this fearful man Gideon a providential encounter with a dream and an interpretation of a dream, the content of which is phenomenally relevant to his situation. Let's read it.

Verses 13 and 14. This is simply amazing. I mean, put yourself in the position of Gideon.

You just went out on plan A. You've gone down in obedience to plan B just to listen at the edge of the camp. And you're supposed to overhear something that might encourage you and make you strong with 300 men to come against an innumerable host. What could you possibly hear that would do that? So here's what God arranged.

This is God. There's no coincidence. Verse 13.

When Gideon came, behold, a man was relating a dream to his friend. So here's Gideon and his servant sneaking up behind a rock or something, listening to two guys talking. And he said, behold, I had a dream.

A loaf of barley bread was tumbling into the camp of Midian, and it came to the tent and struck it so that it fell and turned it upside down that the tent lay flat. You can hear Gideon listening to this thing, barley bread rolling into the camp, knocking over a tent. What's this? Is this me? Barley bread? And then comes the interpretation of verse 14.

His friend replied. Now, where in the world does this come from? This is nothing less than the sort of Gideon, the son of Joash, a man of Israel. God has given Midian and all the camp into his hand.

That's a Midianite talking. So that Gideon could overhear it. So that plan B would work.

Then he would have courage not to wimp out on this one, but to go back and rally his 300 men. That's an incredible mercy on God's part. I mean, he had already done this, right? God had told him, do this.

And he said, Can we lay out a fleece? Yes. Lay out your fleece dry. Can we lay out another one? I mean, Gideon is a very anxious, tentative leader, and God is so mercifully so patient.

And the elders heard that. And we really took heart and we ask ourselves, where has God been speaking to us that kind of language of a dream and. I'll give it into your hand.

I'll give it into your hand. Do it. It was June 1998.

Some of you been around a while. Remember this. How did December 1997 end in this church? A lot of you don't know the details.

Some of so much of it was happening behind the scenes. We came up to the month of December in 1997. So far behind our budget.

We were coming off a very flat period in the life of this church. We were so far. We had no idea where the money would come from or how it would happen.

On top of that, the masterworks building five doors down here, which we own and in which Tim Glatter has a ministry needed \$90,000 worth of repair so it could be used or just shut down or either start charging Tim big bucks or what. And the elders were faced with a very immediate crisis of how to handle that \$90,000 need. And we already have a budget that we don't know how we're going to pay for at the end of 97.

And the suggestion was made, let's borrow the 90,000 short term, get it done and figure out a way to finance it. And then we'll move ahead. I praise God for one.

I think there were two elders, one of them in particular. I remember I won't name his name unless you get a big spiritual head, although he knows who it is. Um, said, wait a minute, it's not the end of the year yet.

Why don't we pray? Let's call some special prayer meetings and pray that God would not only bring in all the money needed for this budget, but \$90,000 over budget to pay for that front end, no debt. And that's exactly what God did to the penny almost. Now here are the elders six months later talking about this coming building and how to fund it and how to finance it.

And we feel like in all of our misgivings, we're a little Gideon and God has taken us plopped us down behind a rock to let us over here dream. And it was he who spoke the dream. I did that.

I did that. One elder had the courage to stand up and say, forget that debt for another two months. Let's ask God to do it.

And God did it way beyond anybody's dream. That was number four. Number five observation is that, um, there was a strategy that Gideon had.

He didn't go without a strategy. Verse 20, when the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pictures, they held the torches in their hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing and cried a sword for the Lord. And for Gideon, that's the strategy.

That's an absolutely absurd strategy, because if I were one of those 300 men and Gideon said, here's what we're going to do. We're going to take some, uh, pitchers can have in it some, uh, torches and we're going to have a trumpet and, uh, we'll divide into three troops. Now you have a sea of camels.

You can barely see across this sea of camels. So you got a hundred men across the sea over there and a hundred men over there and a hundred men here. And, uh, he says, now here's what we'll do when I blow my trumpet and light my torch and break it and lift it and say the sword of the Lord and for Gideon, you all do the same.

Okay. And you would say back to him. Okay.

Then what? Well, I don't have any plan after that. I have people coming to me, not many, and some say, okay, you're going to, you're going to take the pledges in two weeks and you want \$9 million. And then what are you going to do? We have no plan after that.

What was God's plan? He didn't tell Gideon. And that's the sixth point. God did it.

22 verse 22, when they blew 300 trumpets, the Lord set the sword of one against another, even throughout the whole army and the army fled. Now, could they have imagined that maybe they could have, maybe they could have imagined that maybe a few of them said in their, in their hearts, what God's going to do when we blow the trumpets is they're going to start killing each other. I don't think anybody would

have believed him.

So here we are now with \$9 million battle in front of us. Let me say a word to parents. My big prayer for marriages is that this will result in some major, major reconciliation as Noel and I bowed over the breakfast table last night in our kitchen last night.

And, and I said, here's some ideas of where this money could come from, but I need you to say amen to this because these are big, big hits. And, uh, and for us to talk over that, then to pray and then to talk some more, that's going to be hard for some of you couples to do, but good for you. Really good for you.

Um, Talitha is our four-year-old. And I heard Noel say to her yesterday now, Talitha, what did mommy say about not crying before lunch? If you don't cry before lunch at all, what are you going to get? And she said a quarter. She did.

I don't think knows what a quarter is, but we've taught her you can have a quarter and we have a bank. And so she's going to start being bribed in these various ways. Call it a, call it an allowance if you like, and she'll be put to work in various ways around the house.

And then she will, under our guidance, make a pledge to buy two or 10 or 20 or 30 bricks over the next several months. And the goal is for the children to buy all the bricks, 89,444 bricks or something like that for this new building, 50 cents a piece. So that's \$40,000 or so for the kids under 12 years old.

Let me say one other thing about the Gideon venture, that paper you see in June of 1998, Grace Church, Richfield was not even on the screen. Nobody was thinking. Grace Church, Richfield is going to come along.

And in 1999, lay before us a vision of partnering with our church to send them a pastor and some of our people that was not in the Gideon venture in 1998. All that the Gideon venture meant in 1998 was do it hard and do it debt-free and be wild and crazy in your timeframe and everything. Just do it hard.

This Sunday was not planned when we put the how many sermons are going to do 12, I think when we put those together and put dates on them, we did not have in mind what happened at the beginning of this service. God has simply blown my mind by not only bringing Grace Church, Richfield on to the scene, but timing it such that the sending out of those people happened on the very Sunday I'm preaching about the Gideon venture, where they send away people so that it's harder to do. That was all God's providence.

I did not plan it and didn't even think of it in June of 1998 when I wrote this paper, nor did I put these sermons together in a way so that that sermon would fall on this Sunday, because I didn't know Rick was going to preach next Sunday as his first Sunday. I stand amazed at the circumstantial blessings. It's all I want to call them.

Doesn't prove anything to me because it's not that biblical authority, but oh, how it says to me, God may well be so mercifully talking to us that he's pleased that we send people away at the very moment we need their money more than we've ever needed it. And I am so glad it's happening that way. Oh, God in heaven, we can't manage this any farther than we have.

We've reached the end now of our managing. All we can do now is pray. This is our torch.

This is our jar. This is our trumpet. And now how you will defeat a nine million dollar challenge, I do not know, you know.

And I ask that you would come in power through the lives of your people and beyond in ways we never dreamed to move us to have five or 4.5 million dollars in the bank in October. 4.5 million pledged for March of 2002 and that we move into a new building that March, two years from today, debt free. That's my request.

In Jesus name. Amen. You're dismissed.

We invite you to visit Desiring God online at www.desiringgod.org. There you'll find hundreds of sermons, articles, radio broadcasts and much more all available to you at no charge. Our online store carries all of Pastor John's books, audio and video resources. You can also stay up to date on what's new at Desiring God.

Again, our website is www.desiringgod.org or call us toll free at 1-888-346-4700. Our mailing address is Desiring God 2601 East Franklin Avenue, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55406. Desiring God exists to help you make God your treasure because God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/7/SID7154.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-piper/education-for-exultation-the-gideon-venture/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net