



# *MEN AND THEIR TESTS*

Pastor Mark Driscoll

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All right, you guys ready to go guys? Night out. So good to see you guys. Uh, hey, If you're new, we love you. We're glad to have you. My name's Pastor Mark, I'll be yelling at you for a little bit, and we're gonna have a good time together. You've made a good decision to be here. The reason we do real men, whether you're in the room or online, and here's what's exciting for every man in the room, there's a thousand men online, young men, all over the world tuning in. And here's why, because you matter. Your marriage matters, your career matters, your kids matter. Your legacy matters. You guys matter. That's why we're here. And you mean the world to us. It's an honor to have you and to see you. And, uh, just want to give you a little bit of an encouragement. We're gonna get into a, a story today, a guy named Gideon. He's in Judges six through eight, and we've been studying his life, and I'll wrap it up this week. Uh, but I just wanna give you a little bit of an encouragement, uh, coming up this weekend, both here at Trinity Church and live online of Real Faith. I've got Pastor Jimmy Evans coming to preach for us. He's my pastor. I love Pastor Jimmy. He's the best. He, uh, he leads in, runs Exo Marriage. It's the biggest marriage ministry in the world. And, uh, if you've, uh, if you've not heard from Pastor Jimmy, it'll be really special. And, uh, just be praying for him as he is, uh, coming to bring the word of God to us. And, uh, I'll just tell you guys this. I was thinking about it. I wasn't with you last week. Uh, I was out with my wife Grace, and I was the 36th anniversary of our first date. Our first date was March 12th, 1988. And, um, yeah, find a woman with low expectations and high pain tolerance. Those are my, those are my recommendations. And, uh, and I was thinking about it. Uh, where we started was not good. Uh, we made mistakes. We weren't versions When we met, we started sleeping together. Um, I became a Christian, realized that our whole life needed to pivot. I had a lot of things that I regretted and did wrong and messed up, uh, but I got into a good church with a, a, a man of God who taught the word of God, and he had the heart of a father. And God really used that to change my whole life. And, uh, and I'm really honored to teach you, and I love you very much. And you guys mean the world to me. Um, had, had I not done what my pastor told me, and what he told me is what the scriptures told me. Um, my whole life would be different. And, uh, and I'm happy to report, um, it best season my whole life and just tell you a little bit about where I'm at. And here's wherever you're at. Just get activated, get moving, get repenting, get reading your Bible, get praying. And here's what you'll find. Your heavenly Father, uh, he really is amazing and wonderful and gracious and good. And he's gonna help you to make progress. If it's a son, that's what you want. And he's been very, very good and gracious to me. Uh, but faithfully married to my wife. And like I said, we've been together 36 years. We've got five kids. Um, we've got grandkids, got grandkids on the way. Um, just even today, I was thinking about, as I was praying for you, uh, this is the day when I get up and I go out and I go for a walk, uh, with my daughter and my grandson. And, uh, and my day began by looking at my grandson, him looking at me, and then just started laughing. And he has a giant smile. And, uh, and to me it's like, oh my goodness. What a, what a what an amazing season of grace. Like I do love my wife. She's still there. Our five kids are walking with the Lord. Our our grandkids are here and they're coming fast. I mean, we, we apparently grabbed the be fruitful and multiply verses of family and called dibs on it. And, uh, and now I get to see, uh, I, I get to see my grandkids and I get to, I get to be in their life and I get to know them. And I just want you guys to know that the reason that we're here is because, uh, wherever you're at, it can get better. If it's bad, it can get good. If it's good, it can get great. If it's great, it can get really great. And God is a God who gives a lot of grace and wants to help you, and wants to help you to improve throughout the course of your life and enjoy those, uh, those seasons near the end of your life. And so, what we're gonna do today, we're gonna look at the story of a man named Gideon in the Bible. We've been looking at his life in Judges six through eight. And, um, we're gonna see in his life, there were tests that he took. As a men. I actually look at four tests that Gideon took. And as men throughout the course of life, these are tests that you don't just take once you keep taking. And even if you failed them, God is gracious to forgive you and help you retake and pass your test. So I don't want this to beat you down, but I do want it to build you up. And if you failed some of these tests, you need to know that that's why Jesus Christ died in your place, for your sins to forgive you, to clear the slate, and to help you get beyond what you've done because of what he's done. And if you're a man who's not yet done, uh, rather made these mistakes or failed these tests, I want you to just have a very sober warning. Please don't, please don't. Here's the first test for Gideon, the fear test. And I'm gonna pull various scriptures out of his

life. He was a man who constantly struggled with fear. And most men, if we're honest, we struggle similarly. He says, my clan is the weakest in Manas, and I'm the least in my father's house. Jesus had just told him it was time to go to war, and he's afraid. And then God says, no, I need you to go. He is like, well, show me a sign. He's, he's got fear. Alas, oh Lord God. He says, for now I've seen the angel of the Lord face to face. But the Lord said to him, peace be to him. Do not fear. He just keeps struggling with fear. You shall not die. He goes on to say, after God told him, go tear down your dad's stronghold in demonic altar he did at night because he was too afraid of his family and the men of the town to do it by day. So he did it by night. He was afraid. Later on, God tells him to do something, but rather than just doing it, he's afraid. So he says, behold, I'm laying a fleece. God will give you a test of wool on the threshing floor. If there's dew on the fleece alone and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that you, uh, will save Israel by my hand. As you have said, a few more occasions of his fear, Gideon said to God, let now your anger burn against me. Now he's afraid of God's anger. Let me speak just once more. Please. Let me just test you once more. You only test God when you have fear. Uh, he has God's word, but instead of responding in faith, he has fear. If you are afraid to go down, he says later God says, go with to the camp with pah, you're surveying. So he went with pah. So over and over and over from beginning, then He's got fear. Fear is gonna be a constant test in a man's life. And lemme just tell you, here's what happens to men who choose fear instead of faith. And let me say this, fear is gonna come, but you gotta get through it. If you don't get through it, you're not gonna arrive at the destiny that God asked for you. Here's what happens to men who really live their life by fear. Number one, they are experts in excuse making every time. Why aren't you doing that? Well, here's the reasons. Why aren't you trying that? Well, here's all the reasons. You know, why, why are you not active here? Well, here's all the reasons. Men who have fear, they don't make plans. They make excuses. Men who have faith, they make plans to overcome their fear. Men who choose fear, they make excuses and live in their fear. And oftentimes their excuses are accurate. But you find a way through them, you've gotta figure it out. For each of these, it's probably true. His family is small. He's the runt of the litter. Uh, he's not a professionally trained soldier. Um, his family is going to attack him if he tears down their stronghold. All of that is true. But they're not excuses. They're obstacles. Obstacles have to be overcome. They can't be turned into excuses. Number two, if a man lives in fear, tell me if this is true. He retreats, he withdraws. This is the guy at work. If he's afraid he's gonna get in trouble, he just disappears at work. He's the gray man. This is the guy. If, if he's, if he's got fear of his wife, he doesn't come home. And if he does, he just tries to avoid her. This is the guy. If he has fear of rejection, he just isolates. There are many men who are isolated. They are withdrawn. They have retreated. And it's because they're afraid. In addition, what happens to a man who chooses his life by fear? Eventually, he just surrenders. He just assumes and presumes, I'm a victim. Things aren't going to change. I'm not going to fight. I'm not going to work. I'm not going to change things. My fate is sealed and locked. And that's where we find Gideon. Early in his life, he is in a wine press hiding from his enemies, trying to thresh wheat in a small indoor place, which is impossible. He had completely surrendered. There was no fight left in him. In addition, men who choose fear, what they ignore or avoid is conflict. If you find a guy who is driven by fear, he does not like conflict. And lemme just say this, healthy men don't enjoy conflict, but healthy men are willing to have conflict. Gideon says, well, I can't go confront my father. I'll do it in the middle of the night. 'cause he doesn't wanna have conflict. The whole reason he doesn't want to go into battle. He doesn't want to have conflict. If you're a guy who won't do conflict, you're not a good man. And you may have reasons for that. You may say, I'm not a strong personality. I don't have a lot of resilience. I don't have a lot of emotional relational strength. God's gonna need to give that to you. And ultimately, I'll just tell you what I've seen practically. Men who live in fear for too long, they begin self-medicating. They start drinking just 'cause they avoid what they need to deal with. They get anxious. Anxiety sets in when you have fear. So all of a sudden they're eating a lot. They're drinking a lot. They're self-medicating. This can also include pornography, which we'll get into. And a lot of what men would call their addictions or bad decisions. It's just self-managing and self-medicating fear. The fear brings anxiety. The anxiety then causes them to want to do something to self-soothe, and to reduce their anxiety. So it's sex or food or drugs or alcohol. And guys who choose fear, eventually they're self-medicating. And what happens eventually is they're self-destructing. All of us are

gonna have these repeated series of fear tests in our life. And sometimes, guys, it's just fear of the unknown or something you've never done. This is why as men get older, we tend not to pick up new habits or opportunities. 'cause the older you get, the less you want to fail. And at the end of the day, if you don't wanna fail, you just say, well, I'm not gonna try anything new. But when you go to get married, there's a lot of fear there. You've never been a husband. Your wife gets pregnant, you've never been a father. There can be fear there. Your kids are starting to get older, and you're like, how do we launch them and help them navigate this weird world in which we live? There can be anxiety there. Your kids go off to college now, they're not under your roof. There could be fear there. You've never not been there for them. Then your kids fall in love and they want to get married. You're like, I, I've never married a kid. Now they're pregnant. Now you're a grandfather every season of life. It has different opportunities and obstacles for maturity and growth. Every one of those can be an opportunity for fear. I've never been unemployed before. I've never had to go find a new career. When those fear moments come, and they're gonna come for every man in those moments, you've gotta stop. You've gotta pray. You've gotta spend time with the Lord. You gotta seek the face of God. And you've gotta get through your fear because on the other side of your fear is your destiny. And the reason that the enemy brings your fear is he wants to prevent you from walking in your destiny. The second test is the bitterness test. Every man is going to be used and abused repeatedly throughout his life. If you are a man, you're gonna have people fail. You lie about you, they're gonna gut you at work. They're gonna dishonor you at home. Extended family are going to harass you. We live in a world where many men are just seething with bitterness, because if you're a strong man, they say you're toxic. So then if you become a weak man, uh, they say that you're too weak. E either way that you go, you're the tender guy or the tough guy. Either way, you're the criticized and opposed guy. Guys go through their whole life and they just collect a series of offenses and bitterness and let just say the culture we're in, it doesn't help at all. One of the worst things that happened in Gideon's life, he failed his bitterness test. Uh, someone he loved died and he didn't forgive. And he went into vengeance and anger. I'll read it to you. Here's his bitterness test. He, Gideon said they were my brothers, uh, guys who died in battle. And so he's processed this as murder. But the truth is, if you're at war as a soldier, that's not exactly a murder. The sons of my mother. And as the Lord lives, if you have saved them alive, I would not kill you. This is vengeance. He's now gonna murder some guys and hear me in this. He's a man of God. He's in Hebrews 11, kind of the, the heroes of the faith chapter. So he said to tither, his firstborn rise and killed him. Now he's putting his bitterness in his son. Your dad's bitter. You be bitter. Your dad's gonna do evil. You help him. But the young man did not draw a sword for he was afraid because he was still a young man, a little boy. Then Zeba and zal, Muna, the enemy said, rise yourself and fall upon us for as the man is so is his strength. And Gideon arose and killed Zeba and Zal. Muna. That's murder. Okay? He's bitter. You in war killed my brothers, therefore, I will seek vengeance and murder. You. Bitterness is demonic. Most men have innately wired in us a sense of justice. Correct. You're at work, somebody steals from you and they're a customer or client. You're like, that was wrong, right? If, uh, if somebody you're dealing with is doing illegal things of breaking the law, like that's criminal. If somebody says they're a Christian and they're not obeying the Bible, you're like, that is sin and disobedience. There's something that God is hardwired in men because we're made in his image like this, then we like justice. When we don't get justice, immediately, there's an opportunity for us to fail this test of bitterness and bitterness. Sometimes it's referred to as unforgiveness or disappointment or woundedness or brokenness. Holding a grudge, being offended or just plain old hurt. You know that you're bitter when you can't talk about someone or something without escalating in emotion, especially anger as a man. If you find yourself getting angry, talking about someone or something, there's probably bitterness there. And all of a sudden you could sort of sense it and feel it. Your blood, blood pressure's rising, your voice is escalating, and all of a sudden your words become very focused and, and a bit caustic. And what happens is Satan and demons, they gain strongholds in a man's life through bitterness, uh, just verbal process for a minute. So something happens and you feel that you were wronged then if you don't forgive, and instead you choose bitterness, well, you've just done, you've opened yourself. And what Gideon did here, he opened his family to the demonic. And so, hear me in this, heaven is a culture of forgiveness. Hell is a culture of unforgiveness. All the forgiven people go to heaven. All the unforgiven

people go to hell when you feel offended, when you feel treated unjustly. And, and then we feel this, right? How many of you right now, just be honest right now, you're like, yeah, I, I feel right now. Like somebody owes me. Somebody has wronged me, somebody has frustrated me. Somebody deserves to be punished for what they've done and or doing to me, okay? When those moments hit, if you choose unforgiveness and bitterness, you're literally inviting the demonic culture of hell up into your life. And what he does here, he then involves his son. He's gonna make his bitterness a generational curse. Son, your dad is bitter. Let me put that bitterness on you. Let's work together. If you'd like to feel close to your dad, the only way you can feel close to your dad is if you're doing bitter evil with your dad. He's now going to build the relationship with his son through bitterness and evil. Do you want that for your legacy? No. And the point here is, if you have bitterness, you're going to put it on your son. This how sins become generational curses. The other option is when you feel wronged or something unjust has happened, then it is forgiving. And when you forgive, you're not pulling hell up into your life. You're inviting heaven down onto your life. What Gideon should have done in this moment, and it can be very hard in the most emotional moments, he's frustrated, he's angry. Uh, someone he loves is died. He's gotta go to the funeral. All he wants is vengeance. But at the end of the day, had he forgiven them, he would've allowed God to deal with them. And what God had just allowed him to do was to defeat, what was it? 125, I think, thousand soldiers with 300 men. God just proved, if you let me do the fighting, I'll fight for you. You don't need to fight for yourself in that moment. If Gideon would have worshiped God, God would have justified Gideon, let me say this. Um, I don't think I've ever met a man who doesn't have bitterness. I don't think I've ever met a man that doesn't have bitterness. And, and I'll just talk to you a little bit about this. Um, here's what forgiveness is not and is, uh, forgiveness is the opposite of vengeance. What Gideon does here is vengeance. You killed some guys. I care about, I'm gonna kill you. That's vengeance. In addition, uh, forgiveness allows you to shift your focus from that person to your God. See what Gideon is doing in this moment. Like, he's very hurt because people he loves died in war. Rather than looking up to God, he's looking out at them. If he would look up to God, then God could deal with them. And if you're at a place in your life when you're almost, uh, almost obsessed with someone, your ex-wife, who did you wrong? The girlfriend who cheated on you, the chick who dumped you, uh, the boss who canned you. If you're thinking about them, if you're ruminating on them, if you are even on social media or practically trying to get information about them, you need to know that you have stopped fixing your eyes on Jesus. And all of a sudden you have made them the center of your life. And a lot of your reality is going to be pursuing justice and vengeance for them rather than a relationship with him. You can't look up to him and look out at them. When you become bitter, you decide, I'm no longer looking up to him. I'm looking out at them. And this is where you'll see men just become very dark, very cold, very hardened. If you know a man who's been bitter for an extended period of time, he doesn't really see the Lord anymore. He only sees those who have hurt him or might hurt him. In addition, uh, forgiveness is, is it something, let me ask the season guys. Is, is forgiveness something you do once and then you move on? No. They came to Jesus and they asked him, like Jesus, some guys say one time, some guys say 70. Those are the real nice guys. They're like, what's the number? He said, 70 times seven. Sometimes you forgive someone, and then they, they do it again. Okay? 70 times seven. Sometimes you find out some things and you forgive them, and then you find out there's more to the story. I was talking to a guy recently, he said, I found out my wife was committing adultery on me, ran off. He said, the, the longer it goes, the more I realize it wasn't a guy, it was a parade. You know what that is? 70 times seven, 70 times seven. And sometimes you forgive someone, but then the consequence of their behavior shows up later and you gotta forgive 'em at a deeper level, right? All of a sudden, let me lemme say it this way, um, this is always a verbal process, sermon, but let's say you've got a bad dad who was violent, abusive, or absent, and he reached a point where you forgave him. Then when you become a dad and you're holding your kid, there's a whole nother level of forgiveness. Dad, how could you, how could you lay hands on me, dad? How, how could you leave? How could you bail? How many of you, again, don't raise your hand, but like, once you held your kid, you're like, man, my dad was more screwed up than I thought, right? I mean, if he could do that to me, now that I'm a dad, I realize how broken and how dysfunctional and how horrific that is. And so it is a 70 times seven process. In addition, um, what happens when you forgive? You get out of the middle. See, there's

God in them. And if you're bitter, you're in the middle. Get out of the middle. Let God heal you. Let God deal with them. And let me say this, God deals with everybody. He's just more patient than we wish. How many of you, you wish that God was less patient with them? Okay, see, what we love about God is like, God's so patient with me. God, why are you so patient with them? Right? We would, he's patient with everybody, but God will deal with him. I've been doing this long enough. I've seen God give incredible patience to me and incredible patience to others. And sometimes I've seen God give such patience to my enemies that it's really quite shocking. Their heart changes. They meet Jesus and they get healed. They get better, right? Okay. And other times, man, an anvil drops out of the sky on their life and God just takes care of it. Either way. If you're bitter, you're gonna determine the outcome. If you forgive and let God deal with them, I promise you this, the outcome will be something that you'll thank God for, because that will have been the will of God. Amen. Couple other things just on forgiveness, men, um, what happens when you forgive you? You, you get the burden off of you and you give it to Jesus. Some of you, you, you're carrying a bitterness and it's a heavy weight, and you're waiting for them to apologize. Well, why would you carry it until they apologize? What if they never apologize? You're gonna carry it until they get justice. Well, what if they don't get justice? Are you still gonna carry it? And what happens is if you're carrying that burden of bitterness, eventually it's going to crush and break you. What you do in prayer is you forgive them and you take that burden and you transfer it to Jesus. Um, Jesus says, my yoke is easy. My burden is light. He says, come to me. All you are weary and heavy laden sort of transfer that burden. One of the ways that you know that you've transferred the burden, uh, when you've forgiven someone is you can bless them blessing someone is the test of forgiving them. And if you really have forgiven them and you've transferred it over to Jesus, Jesus, it's between you and them. Jesus, you deal with it. Jesus, I don't want to carry this for the rest of my life. If you could start to pray for them and your hope is that they would turn around, then you know that you've actually forgiven them from the heart. Couple of other things too, um, I'll just, I'll give you just a couple. Um, when you forgive someone, you are deciding that you are gonna get better. If they don't, that you're gonna move forward. If they won't, and that they're going to be in your past, but they will not be in your future. If you're bitter, you're gonna get worse. You're gonna get stuck and you're gonna be with them. Even if they leave you physically, they're gonna torment you emotionally for the rest of your life. Um, I think I just, something comes to mind. So there was, I'm an old, uh, MMA fan, back to the Pride Fighting Days in Japan and the early days of UFC and some years ago, there was, I just remember there was a, there was a fighter, he was a little guy, and, uh, he won the belt and they put the belt on him and they gave him the mic. And they said, what do you wanna say? And here he said something to this effect. He's like, see, dad, I'm not worthless. Like, wow, wow. The story was when he was a little boy, his dad put a gun in his mouth and uh, said, I would pull the trigger, but I don't think you're worth the cost of the bullet. From that moment bitterness, even though his dad was no longer in his life, his dad was the center of his life. That's all he thought about. It's like you should have forgiven your dad so you could move forward and be healthy, and that he wouldn't be in your future, even if he was in your past. And what happens is men, when you get bitter, um, it's almost like a, it's almost like a suicide bomber. I guess I'm just verbal processing since it's just us. But doesn't it, isn't it crazy when you meet someone and they're like, I'm gonna blow you up. You're like, well, you're gonna blow yourself up. And their answer is, I'm okay with that. That's what bitterness is like. Like, I'm gonna blow you up. Well, you're gonna blow yourself up. You're gonna blow your marriage up, you're gonna blow your kids up, you're gonna blow your life up. And they're like, that's okay. And basically, if you look at this scene in Gideon's life, he's blowing up himself. He's blowing up his son. He's like, we gotta kill those guys. So son, here we go. Let's strap it on together and get 'em like, no, no, no. Am I making sense? You guys are quiet tonight. Making sense? Okay. Um, so, you know, something is of the Lord. When it's a win-win. You know, something is of the flesh. When it's a win-lose. You know, something is of the devil. When it's a lose lose, If you're bitter, do you win? No. Do they win? No. Who wins? The devil wins. If you forgive, that's a win for you. If you don't forgive, that's a loss for you. And some guys reach the point, they're like, I don't mind losing as long as they lose. Well, lemme just say this, um, I think God loves you more than you love you. Um, I've got three sons and two grandsons that I met, and we'll see who's coming next. But, uh, if one of my sons came to me and said,

dad, I wanna hurt myself, I would say, no son, no grandson, I love you. Don't hurt yourself. But, But they hurt me. Well, if they hurt you, why do you wanna hurt you? Well, because if I hurt me, um, at the same time, I'll be hurting them. What, what would you tell your son or your grandson? No, because I love you more than you love you. When God tells you to forgive someone and not be bitter against them, it's because he doesn't want you to hurt and destroy yourself. And you're thinking about how you can hurt and destroy them. And he's like, let me deal with them, son, I'm worried about you. Don't hurt yourself. Don't destroy yourself. And, and maybe, maybe this is the word for you. Maybe you have a father who loves you more than you love you, and he doesn't want you to hurt you, and he doesn't want you to destroy you. So he wants you to forgive them and then he will deal with them. A couple other things. Forgiveness is not, um, just a few things. You don't have to forgive because they apologized. This is one of the great, this is the bitter man's go-to. You need to forgive them. Well, they've not, they've not apologized. Your forgiving them has nothing to do with them. It has everything to do with him. Some of you, you're never going to get an apology. Some of you, it's gonna be in 20 years. So why live a broken, dysfunctional, unhealthy life waiting for 20 years? In addition, have you ever seen a situation where two people just never agree? It's called marriage. Okay? Um, and so you just forgive them. Even if they don't say they're sorry, you forgive them. Even if they don't change, you forgive them. Even if they don't agree with you, and then you let God deal with them, you talk. I would love to talk to your wife. Um, I'm bucked up, uh, but I'll pray about it. All right? So, um, um, lemme just let me wrap this up. And you guys are girls are all looking at me like, yeah, this is great for my wife. Um, which I'm sure that it is. Um, how many of you know a man? He's just locked up by bitterness, right? You talk to him and it's always about the past. It's always about who wronged him, who did what? And every offense gets layered on the other. Lemme tell you about my dad. Lemme tell you about my wife. Lemme tell you about my boss. You're like, man, do you ever look forward? Nope. Always backward. Did anything good ever happen? Nope. Uh, this pain has only caused a negative narrative. There's nothing good in my life. Well, do you want to get away from this? No, actually, I'm gonna carry this to the grave. Bitter men are broken men. Bitter men are unhappy men, bitter men cannot laugh and have joy. Make a joke, take a joke, have fun. Bitter men are lonely men because no one wants to be with a bitter, angry, grumpy man, especially as he gets older. I love you guys too much. I'm sorry for what you've been through. Some of you, what your wife has done. Terrifying, horrifying. Some of you. What family members have done to you and friends have done to you, what employees and employers have done to you is horrifying. For some of you, it's pastors and churches. I'm sorry for all of it, but because I love you, I want you to forgive them so that he can bless you and he can deal with them. Okay? Number three, uh, the success test. So Gideon, he half passes this test, judges 8 21, 27, he took the crescent ornaments that were on the neck of their camels after he defeats his enemies. Uh, he shouldn't have done that. Then the minute his Israel, Israel said to Gideon, rule over us, your son, your grandson, set up a dynasty. Be king. You've saved us. Gideon said, no, I'm not gonna rule over you. My son won't rule over you. The Lord will roll over you. So this is a success test. Like we want you to be president. He is like, I don't wanna be president. So he passed. And then Gideon said, let me make a request of you and he's gonna fail. This one, every one of you. Give me your earrings from his spoil for that golden earrings. They were ish Israelites. These are idols. And he's now plundering bad guys. And they answered, we will willingly give them, and they spread a cloak. And every man threw it on. The earrings of his spoil goes on after the weight of the gold earrings, which he requested was 1700 shekels of gold. It's a good day. 40 pounds of gold beside the crescent ornaments, the demonic idols and the pendants and the purple garments sworn by the kings of Midian. And beside the collars that were all around the neck of their Campbells. And Gideon made an eef thought of it. That's a religious symbol for a priest. He's not supposed to wear it. Put it in his city, in Oprah. And all Israel hoarded after it there. And it became a snare to get in. And his family, let me say this, man, if you will do what the Bible says, you will increase your odds of success, right? If you do what the Bible says, you're not gonna be a drug addict or an alcoholic. If you do what the Bible says, you're not gonna just live with some chick and knock her up and get stuck in a difficult position. If you do what the Bible says, you're not gonna commit adultery. Take half your money and split it down the middle and set piles of cash on fire for a divorce attorney. If you do what the Bible says and you, you honor God, the odds are you're gonna get married. And then

you're gonna have a kid and you're gonna make more money and God is gonna bless your life. And over time, you're not going to self-destruct. Some of you men in this room are incredible, and some of you men online, incredibly successful right now. I know in the room we've got professional athletes, we've got very wealthy business leaders, we've got massive landowners. We have people who are very influential in politics. And the key is, can you sustain your success? When you get success, you get more money. What are you gonna do with that money? When you get success, you get more power. What are you gonna do with that power? When you have success, you get more influence. What are you gonna do with that influence? When you have success, you have more fans. Hmm. How are you gonna interact with them? When you have success, you get more critics. Are they going to rob your joy? When you have more success, you have more distortion, you lose sight of normal life. The more wealth and fame and money and power you have, the less you realize what the average person is dealing with, right? I was talking to a guy recently comes to real men. He's very, very wealthy. He said it's very helpful to come. He said, I realize that other guys got a lot bigger problems than me. I said, what do you mean? He said, uh, he said, well, my wife is a bit moody. And, uh, he said, no, I thought that was a big deal till I got at the table and realized a couple of guys have wives with boyfriends. He's like, those are big problems. I was like, yeah, I'd take grumpy. You know, like all of a sudden you go home and you're like, honey, I'm so glad you're grumpy. Like, you know, it's you, you have a little perspective, but the more that you don't get your hands dirty, the more you don't have to deal with the issues of life, the more that others are serving you and you're distant from reality, you get a distorted perspective of what's going on in the world. And so what Gideon is struggling with here, he's struggling with managing his success. When we met him, he's broke. Now he's rich. When we met him, nobody ever heard of him. Now he's famous. When we met him, nobody was following him. And now they want him to be the king of Israel. Uh, when we met him, uh, he was totally alone. And now he has an army that follows him. See what happens is if you meet with Jesus and you obey him, sometimes that man's life, it becomes successful. And I'll just tell you guys this. Sometimes success is harder to manage than failure, right? It's harder to, it's harder to manage power than it is no power. It's hard to steward money than it is to steward no money. Um, I don't want you guys to self-destruct. And I think of it in this way. This is what I tell my sons. I said, you're gonna work your whole life to get your plane in the air, your career, your marriage, your family. But then the goal is keep it in the air. Too many guys go up and they come down, they made money, nose dive, got married, crashed the plane, had kids wrecked the family, serve the Lord when apostate had a great testimony and then became Judas. Some of you guys right now, the test that you're in, I just sense this in the spirit right now. The test you're in is a success test. You got a job, what are you gonna do with it? You got a girl? How are you gonna treat her? You got a promotion? What's your next move? You made a little money. Are you gonna give to the Lord and steward it? Well, some of you, you've got a little power and influence. Some of you got a promotion, some of you got a, a career advancement opportunity. Some of you, God's brought along a big client and now there's, there's some blue sky to chase for you. What Gideon is doing here, he's struggling to pass his success test. What he says is, I don't need to be king, but I would like to be rich. And then, and then he's going to, he's gonna need to decide, am I going to self-destruct? Um, there's gonna reach a point in your life, man, when it's almost like a war and every day, like you're fighting your way through it, and then you wake up one day, there's no enemy. You gotta be careful that you don't become your own enemy. I've met too many men. They fight through all their enemies, and as soon as there's no enemy, they become their own enemy, right? Like, you didn't, you were single. You met a girl, there was difficulty. You married her, you got married, you know, you work through your problems. Now you're together and you commit adultery. Like what? Uh, your wife was infertile. You couldn't have kids. You got pregnant, you had kids, and then you were so busy at work, you didn't raise the kids. What? Um, I, I want you guys to know these two things. You're probably gonna succeed. And when you do, you're probably your greatest enemy. Um, I didn't know I was gonna say this. Um, I won't share too many details and too many names. Some men that I care about very deeply. Um, they succeeded and then they imploded. It's, it's, I've seen guys that fought through business. I've got one former friend he killed himself, put a gun in his mouth, he fought through everything and he got to somebody. He's like, I got his wife, he's got his kid, he's got his platform. He is got his income, he is got his house. There was no



enemies left. And he literally just became his own enemy. And see, you just need to know that sometimes the hardest fight is the fight to not be your own enemy. And I just would beg you guys as God gives you success, that's a test. And don't self-destruct. Does that make sense? Last one, and I know this is really encouraging and uplifting and you know, they're probably gonna write worship songs about all of this, but, um, the sex test judges eight 30 through 31. Now Gideon had 70 sons, just so you know, that's more than one girl involved in that process. So let's say he had 70 daughters, he's got got 140 kids at this point. Gideon is retired, but he's still busy. You know what I'm saying? Uh, You're like, get in here. Retired. Yeah, but I'm busy. Uh, hi. His own offspring for he had many wives and his concubine, that's like a girlfriend, not wife, stripper baby mama, drama friend with benefits situation, who was in also born his son. He called his name ab. And so what is happening here? Um, Gideon has a test and it's the sex test. Okay? Lemme just ask you two things. Does every man have the sex test? Yes. The only two men that don't. I always say dead men and liars. Okay? Everybody else has got the sex test. Does Gideon seem to pass his sex test? No. No. Okay. Um, let me say a little bit about sex, which is weird in the room filled with men. Um, and if it's not weird to you, you're a weird man. Um, um, sex is great. It's the first thing men's I've gotten all night, okay? Even the non-Christian guys are like, finally a point I can agree with. Um, so let me say this. Um, the most beautiful thing that God made is a Woman. Woman. A woman is totally true. Is a woman more beautiful than a sunset? Yeah. Is a woman more beautiful, uh, than a perfectly restored classic car? You guys have some nice cars then. Okay, I get it. You know? Yes. Because you can have a sunset with a car and a woman in front of it, and the guy doesn't know that there's a car or a woman in the photo. That's why, right? And so God is hardwired men to be uniquely attracted and drawn toward women, but that needs to be uniquely directed toward a woman, okay? Um, and what Gideon is doing here, he is failing his sex test. Let me say this. The average guy today sees more naked women in a day than a king used to see in a lifetime. And so for us, the test is now constant. How many of you guys are my age? And there, this will shock the young guys. If you wanted to sleep with a woman, you had to try. Do you remember those days? It's a long time ago. Okay? Today you gotta try not to sleep with a woman. It's crazy. It's weird, yeah. Us, us older guys are like, I had to work so hard. Uh, you know, and, and, and when you were younger, true or false for us older guys, you had to work hard to see a picture of a naked woman. It was in a, I'll tell you young guys how this worked. It was in a thing called a magazine, okay? They'd have to cut down a tree, like there was a process to this. They'd have to mill the tree, they'd have to turn it into paper. Somebody would need to get a camera, they needed to take a photo of a woman, then they'd need to put it on the paper. Then they need to staple it all together. And then they would send it to a store. And it was always in the store underneath the counter with a creepy elderly person. And if you really wanted to see it, you had to go ask a creepy elderly person. If you could buy the magazine, okay? You had to work for it today. You don't have to work for it today. You don't have to go find it, it finds you today. You don't have to do anything because ultimately it shifted from a man activating to go see or do something to the whole world is sending all of that to the man. And he needs to activate to defend himself against all this temptation. And so what Gideon is doing here, he's failing his sex test. And I'll just say this, um, my, when I wrote a book called Real Romance, sex is not God. It's not the most important thing. Sex is not gross. Sex is a gift that God gives for marriage. Lemme just say a few things. In closing, all of us men, all of us, we've all failed the sex test because the sex test includes our mind. Even if you're like, I'm a virgin, are you a virgin in your mind? Like, no, I'm, I'm a naughty son of a gun in my mind, you know, okay, so if we're honest, you know, Jesus says, if you look at a woman lustfully, you've committed adultery in your heart. So let's just say the the sex test for a man is a test for his whole life. We've all failed the test. Okay? But let me, let me give you men some reasons why I want you to, to fight for sexual purity. Um, first of all, because you love God. And if you say you love God, and then you go do some things that harm his reputation and break his heart, you are doing great damage to the reputation of your father and your relationship with him. So, so that, that should matter. In addition, I'm at the age now, um, that I just see things in a, a different way. How many of you guys are single? Just be honest. Raise your hand. Okay? So if you start sleeping with a girl before you marry her, you can never lead her. Because leadership is about following God and walking with integrity and having honor and having authority. If you're single and you start sleeping with a gal and then you marry her, you've

already sacrificed and compromised your headship and leadership integrity because you can't look at that woman and say, uh, honey, uh, I was reading in the Bible and God said, she's like, oh, do you want me to put my shirt on? Now you've lost your moral high ground. So at the end of the day, um, if you want to not just have sex, but have marriage, you need to be the leader. And if sexually you are surrendering, then you are the follower, not the leader. You are not the head. And what happens is many men will get sexually active and then they'll try and make it into a marriage and they can't because that's not marriage. So you need to reset. If you've been sleeping with a gal, um, you're done. By the way, text her right now. Pastor Mark says we're done. Um, I was sleeping with grace before I married her. I became a Christian. And had we just continued sleeping together, trying to make this into a marriage, we would not be here 36 years later. That wasn't a foundation we could build a family on. So we had to stop, reset, didn't sleep together, met with our pastor, did things God's way, built a foundation, built a marriage on it. For you, single guys, you need to know that if you're compromising your integrity, you are destroying your potential marriage. Okay? How many of you guys are married like me and you got kids? Okay, here's what I want you to know. When you're thinking about, you know, committing adultery or being the porn head, just know this, that, that is going to damage and affect your relationship with your kids. If you're a guy, I'm 53 now, um, if you're a guy who's older and you're always looking at porn of young girls or young women, what happens when your daughter hits that age? You are a very confused man. 'cause all of a sudden your daughter is your fantasy. This is why at that age, some men, they don't hug their daughter anymore. Not 'cause there's anything wrong with their daughter, there's something wrong with them. This is why they don't snuggle with their daughter. They don't hold their daughter's hand. They don't kiss their daughter on the head because when they're around her, if she hits a certain age and she starts to become a woman, and that's sort of his fantasy and his object of desire, all of a sudden he feels very awkward around his daughter. Question, does the daughter pick that up? Oh yeah. Why is my dad not pursuing me? Why is my dad not close with me? Why would I go to hug my dad? Does he kind of bristle away. She feels and senses rejection, and then she becomes vulnerable to a boy giving her affection. And so you don't wanna be that guy that when your daughter hits a certain age, you withdraw from her when she needs you the most. And I will say this too, um, Don't think just about a good time, man, but think about a good legacy. Gideon didn't leave a good legacy. He had 70 sons, a bialek that was named there. He murdered 68 of them. One of the brothers runs for his life. He had a good time, but he didn't have a good legacy. Um, I'll close the couple of stories. Uh, it was a week ago, grace and I celebrated 36 years since our first date. I, I'm not a perfect man. I'm not Jesus, none of that. But I, I can tell you, I've been faithful for 36 years to one woman. I have been, I have been, okay. And you, some of you guys, I know 'em over time, but some of you guys, you'd be like, I don't know if I could just be with one woman. Lemme tell you, this one woman changes a lot. You will get variety, okay? You just, well, right, right. Um, two things happened in my life that I want to share with you. Um, just stories that come to mind. Then I'll pray for you. Um, there's some years ago, I was sitting on the couch snuggling with my daughter. She was like, in high school, teen years we're just hanging out, visiting. And an alert came up on her phone and, um, it was a, well-known pastor, I won't say his name. And it came out that he had been repeatedly committing for years, adultery on his wife. And I didn't know what the alert was. My daughter burst into tears and I said, honey, what's going on? What's that? And she said, so and so he's been cheating on his wife the whole time. And she clicked on the photo and she said, and he's got daughters. He's got daughters. And uh, I looked at her, I said, honey, be totally honest with me. Um, if I was running around on your mom, what would you think? She said, I wouldn't believe anything you've ever said, including everything you've ever taught from the Bible. Okay? So, so my credibility as a father is based upon my character. I looked at her, I said, uh, I said, honey, I'm happy to tell you I've been a hundred percent faithful to your mom. She said, I know dad, and that's why I go to your church. Um, I'll give you one other story. Um, because when we do things as men, it affects the women and children for generations. Um, I've got, uh, three sons, two are married, uh, happily married. And uh, some years ago we were driving in my truck and I had the three boys and they were younger. And, uh, I said, Hey boys, I'm your dad open book. Be honest. Is there any question you want to ask me? Anything you want to, anything you want to know about your dad? Okay? My one kid out of the back, first shot, fired. He's like,

have you cheated on mom? What? It's my kid. You know? So it's a genetic defect apparently. Um, I Was like, wow, I've been preparing my whole life to answer this question. How I'd answer this question is gonna affect three sons and multiple generations. I, I said, boys, what do you think? They're like, we think you've been faithful to mom. I said, you know what? I, I'm very happy to answer that question. I have been faithful to your mom, Right? I, I've been faithful to your mom. I love your mom. We've had our issues, we've had our problems, but I've been faithful to your mom. I said, no, boys, I want you, I want you to be faithful to your wives because what we're gonna do is we're gonna be generations of men who obey God. That's who we are. Okay? That's who we're, and if you're a guy here and you're hearing like, I've blown it, repent. Jesus passed your test. He died for your sins. He forgives you and gives you grace. And the next time you go to pa, take that test. Jesus will help you pass that test, okay? Jesus will help you pass that test. Alright, You guys are quiets awkward. We talked about bitterness and sex. Now you get to discuss more awkwardly in a group. Okay? So here's your, uh, what in the talk did the Holy Spirit highlight for you? It might be, I'm glad I don't have Mark's job. Uh, which of the four tests fear, bitterness, success, sex did the Holy Spirit highlight for you? Um, I'll be honest for you, in this season of my life, it's success. God's really blessed me. It's a good season. I need to not trip over my own two feet in the red zone. And then how can we pray for you? Lord, thanks for time together and my rambling. I thank you for the grace that men give me to listen. God, we confess as men, we face fear. Uh, we, we do, we do face fear, we face bitterness. Uh, when we succeed, we have other struggles. And Lord, we'll just confess sex is a constant struggle. Uh, I pray God, that all of these things would drive us to pursue you and our wives and our kids with passion and with joy, and that we would find satisfaction in who you've made us to be. For those men who feel convicted because they fallen short, I pray that they would repent to Jesus, be forgiven, cleansed, restored, healed, and that you would help them to pass the test the next time it is for them to take it. And, uh, Lord God, we pray for generations. The decisions that we're making around the table tonight, uh, and the decisions that are being made online tonight, this affects literally hundreds of thousands, maybe millions over generations of women and children. And Lord, it's because we love women and children, that we want to be men who are like Jesus and whose name we pray. Amen. Love you guys. Thanks.