

Finishing Your Journey: Godly Diplomacy – Discussion Notes¹

(Pas. Baines, Jr. 2/2019)

Read Judges 8:1-3 --- *Now the Ephraimites asked Gideon, “Why have you treated us like this? Why didn’t you call us when you went to fight Midian?” And they challenged him vigorously. 2 But he answered them, “What have I accomplished compared to you? Aren’t the gleanings of Ephraim’s grapes better than the full grape harvest of Abiezer? 3 God gave Oreb and Zeeb, the Midianite leaders, into your hands. What was I able to do compared to you?” At this, their resentment against him subsided.*

Introduction: As we think about our journeys coming to an end, most of us want to finish strong. This series will give us some helpful principles related to finishing our journeys. The thesis for this discussion is, *“We should work on godly diplomacy.”*

Key Points:

1. We have some unfinished business. As in Judges 7-8:3, Gideon should have been thankful for what had been accomplished (e.g., Ehud, Shamgar, Midianites, etc.), while also understanding that more needed to be accomplished (i.e., the last 15k Midianites). First, African American believers should be thankful for what has already been accomplished (e.g., heroes and sheroes from Africa to current leaders in politics, business, entertainment, etc.). We have church and personal stories of accomplishment. Second, we all have some unfinished business. As a church family, there are more souls that need to be saved, more members who need to grow in their discipleship, more ministry needed for members and community. We need more love of one another and enthusiastic worship of God. And we can add our individual lists of unfinished business items with our personal stewardship (i.e., mindset, health, wealth, relationships, and contributions). *Let’s be mindful of our unfinished business.*

2. We can expect to run into some unreasonably angry people. As in Judges 8:1-3, we can expect to run into some unreasonably angry people. We see jealous hearted, ego centric, and foolish people in our churches and in our personal lives. “Haters will hate on you” because of your commitment to living your best life, without their participation or control, similar to what Jesus encountered in Mark 6:3. *Let’s be aware that the more progress we make on our journey, the more unreasonably angry people we can expect to run into.*

3. We should seek God’s wisdom about diplomacy. Notice in Judges 8:1-3 that Gideon used diplomacy and was able to get back to finishing his journey. Romans 12:18; Philippians 2:3b-4; and Proverbs 15:1 support the use of diplomacy – peace making skills. James 1:5 urges us to seek God’s wisdom about using diplomacy. *Let’s seek God’s wisdom about using diplomacy.* This application calls for discernment, humility, and courage.

¹ Prepare to discuss the following: What is the point, what scripture supports the point, what is the application sentence, and what is an example of living by the material? After the material is covered, be prepared to answer the following: Which point do you want to spend extra time on, why do you think this point is so important, and what tips do you have for living by this material, in spite of the challenges? **What is one thing you will take from this session and work on, in regard to your discipleship goals?**

4. There are some more assertive passages. Notice that in Judges 8:4-9 that Gideon was more assertive. Passages like John 12:15-16; Matthew 7:15; Titus 1:10-13; and Ecclesiastes 3:1, 7-8 support the idea that there are times to be more assertive. James 1:5 urges us to seek God's wisdom about when to be diplomatic and when to be more assertive. *Let's seek God's wisdom about when to be more assertive.* This application calls for discernment and courage.

5. We should avoid being as petty as the Ephraimites. Notice in Judges 8:1-3 that the Ephraimites were unreasonably angry and petty with Gideon. On one hand, we are all human and are subject to getting our feelings hurt (e.g., feeling disrespected, being angry, etc.). And no one can help us "get into our feelings" like those we love and spend time with (e.g., family, friends, co-workers, neighbors, and even church members). But on the other hand, as disciples of Christ, we should bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit (see Gal. 5:22-23a), which includes self-control and anger management. *Let's work on controlling ourselves, no matter how angry we get.*