



# ONE TEAM

Hey everyone and welcome back to our brand new series, where we're discovering the keys to victory and unlocking our potential as One Team.

Last week, we talked about how important it is to define the win. We can have all the talent and determination in the world but if our team isn't sure about what it means to win then we will all surely lose.

So what does it mean to win at NHCO? How do we define winning? Winning for us is when God shows up! Amen? We can be in the bottom of the fourth quarter facing impossible odds but the moment we add God to the equation, it's game over for the enemy and a win for the Church.

And that's why our series is called One Team — because when we're one, God shows us up in amazing ways. So here at NHCO, how do we know we've won? That's right, we're One; One Team all in for Jesus.

## ***In your own words, how do you think God defines winning in the Christian life?***

This week, not only does the Bible tell us how to define the win, it also tells us that you were designed to win. So we're going to talk about getting off of the bench and into the game. Turn to the person next to you and say, "Get in the game!"

Pastor Earl often gets credited as being the "Sports Pastor". But he's not the only one. In fact, growing up, I was the best basketball player in my cul de sac. Which really isn't saying much since there were only 4 of us kids, 8 if you included our sisters, and I was the oldest. I guess you could say I was a big fish in a small pond. That all changed one year when I joined a PAL Basketball team. Just like that I went from jock to joke, hero to zero. I felt like everyone was leagues ahead of me so whenever I got the ball I would immediately get rid of it.

But I'll never forget, it was the last game of the season. 4th quarter, with only seconds remaining — one of my teammates rebounded the ball and hurled it across the court to me on the opposite end. I don't know why I was down there. But I was wide open, seconds were ticking away, I caught the ball, spun around and shot. 2 pointer! The entire gym erupted in cheers. Even the parents of the other team were cheering for me. Not because it was a buzzer beater or because we won a championship but because it was my first and only time scoring the entire season and everyone was happy for me. I was that kid in the league. Needless to say, I didn't sign up for basketball the following year.



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But when it comes to being on God's team, we are called to be more than spectators in the stands; but players in the game. The author of Hebrews writes,

*"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us," (Hebrews 12:1-3).*

Church, the Bible is saying that right now, as we speak, we are surrounded by a spiritual stadium full of spectators, those who have come before us, champions of the faith, cheering us on as we take the field for Jesus each and every day.

Alongside them are hosts of heavenly angels and sitting in the skybox, the MVP, the Greatest of all Time — Jesus Himself. So let me ask you, how have you been playing? Are you in the game?

## **What do you think is the difference between a spectator and a player in the Christian life?**

Some of us feel more confident when it comes to the business game, the game of sports, or maybe video games; But when it comes to playing on God's Team, we're not so sure.

Maybe like me as a kid, you're looking at Jesus thinking, "Don't put me in Coach, don't put me in! There are so many better players on this team, you don't need me." As soon as the ball comes to you you're quick to throw it away. Maybe others of us are thinking, "You know, I had a bad experience one season so I think I'm just going to sit this one out."

If you have any insecurities about getting in the game, you're in great company! Because God never calls the equipped, He equips the called. The Bible is full of stories of men and women, none of them first round draft picks, but who answered the call. And today we're going to see how God called the most unlikely person to become His champion.

## **What are your biggest insecurities about getting in the game and playing on God's team?**

We find our story in the book of Judges. Judges begins with the death of Joshua. Joshua was the leader who took Moses' place and lead God's people into the Promised Land. One of the last things Joshua did before he died was to remind the people to be faithful to the commandments of God. If they do, they will show the rest of the world what God is like and He will bless them. You see, God was trying to show the world a better way but He could only do that if His people were, here it is, Holy or set apart. See God wants to use you to show the people in your life a better way, but He can't do that if we look like everybody else.



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Sadly, the Israelites failed to obey God and drive out the peoples of the land, and in time they even adopted their practices of idolatry and child sacrifices as their own. Let me say that again. God told the Israelites to drive out the enemy peoples from the land but instead the Israelites allowed them to stay. And before long they adopted their practices and they lost their distinction. Why? Because, here it is, the sin you permit, is the sin you promote. Whatever you condone, you own. There are things in our life that God says to get rid of but we tolerate. And what we're about to see, is the sin you tolerate will eventually dominate. Let's look at Judges chapter 6.

*"<sup>1</sup> The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord, and for seven years he gave them into the hands of the Midianites. <sup>2</sup> Because the power of Midian was so oppressive, the Israelites prepared shelters for themselves in mountain clefts, caves and strongholds. <sup>3</sup> Whenever the Israelites planted their crops, the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples invaded the country. <sup>4</sup> They camped on the land and ruined the crops all the way to Gaza and did not spare a living thing for Israel, neither sheep nor cattle nor donkeys. <sup>5</sup> They came up with their livestock and their tents like swarms of locusts. It was impossible to count them or their camels; they invaded the land to ravage it. <sup>6</sup> Midian so impoverished the Israelites that they cried out to the Lord for help," (Judges 6:1-6 NIV).*

God's people chose to live in sin rather than live in His blessing. The Bible says they were being dominated by a people called the Midianites. The sad thing is that the Midianites were not a powerful people by any means! They were unorganized, they lacked leadership, and they were more like an unruly mob than an offensive juggernaut. It'd be like if the Harlem Globetrotters were beating the LA Lakers. But the saddest part was that the Israelites actually defeated the Midianites back in Numbers chapter 31. You can read all about it, they barely broke a sweat!

But again, the Israelites allowed the Midianites to hang around, probably thinking, "We've got the situation under control now. Besides, we mostly did what God wanted us to do." And now, this little, seemingly insignificant sin they tolerated came back to dominate them years later.

***Do you believe there are certain sins the Church tolerates? What do you think the consequences have been/will be?***

God's people were so oppressed they were afraid to come out of hiding! They had to scratch a living from the rocks and even what little they produced was taken from them. They were isolated, desperate, and afraid. After seven years they had nowhere left to turn. So they turned to God who in turn called the most unlikely of heroes. God was about to show up.





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*"<sup>11</sup> The angel of the Lord came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah [No, not Winfrey] that belonged to Joash the Abiezerite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites."*

When the Bible says, "The angel of the Lord came" really it means God Himself appeared in some human form, leading some theologians to believe this was an appearance of Jesus in the Old Testament. So God came and sat under a tree where a man named Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress. I'll say that again, Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress.

If you visit parts of the Middle East today, you can still see people harvesting their wheat by placing it on a large flat surface and then throwing it in the air with a winnowing fork. This separates the grain from the chaff. Threshing floors were typically wide open spaces where the wind could blow freely and help with the separating process. A winepress, on the other hand, was the opposite of a wide open space. It was more of a hole in the ground where people would stomp on grapes to make juice. But the Bible says, Gideon was so scared of the Midianites, he was threshing his wheat in a winepress! I can just picture him cowering in this cramped little hole trying to harvest his grain and not get caught.

*"<sup>12</sup> When the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, he said, "The Lord is with you, mighty warrior."*

The funny thing, is that I imagine Gideon being terrified when this happens! Remember, he's down in a pit trying to hide from everyone and all of a sudden the Lord appears and says, "Hey Mighty Warrior!" And Gideon's like, "Jesus, you scared me!" And Jesus was like, "I'm sorry! I didn't meant to!"

But here's the thing I want you to catch — in this story, God appeared before a frightened farmer, yet addressed him as mighty warrior. God appeared before a frightened farmer, yet addressed him as mighty warrior. This is why we want to be a Church where God shows up! Because when God shows up, how your circumstances define you is replaced by how God designed you. So many people spend their lives on the bench because they look around and think, "Look where I'm at, my life is going nowhere, what can I do?" "I'm just a single mom, what do I have to offer? Or I'm just a kid, I'm too young." I'm sure, as Gideon was hiding down in that hole, the last thing he felt like was a mighty warrior. Yet that's what God said! So do you want to live your life based on how your circumstances define you or how God designed you? You were created for so much more! Next week, Pastors Glenn and Theresa are going to go deeper into our new identity in Christ but if this is you, it's time to get in the game!

***If God appeared to you today, how do you think He would address you? Do you think you'd be surprised by His answer?***





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God calls Gideon a mighty warrior. Let's hear how Gideon responds from Da Good and Spesho Book.

*"Gideon, tell, "But Mista, if Da One in Charge stay wit us guys, how come all dis bad kine stuff stay happen to us? Us no can see all da awesome kind stuff He do, dat oua ancesta guys wen tell us bout. Dey tell, 'Da One in Charge wen bring us guys outta Egypt.' But now Da One in Charge wen bag from us, an let da Midian guys win ova us guys!"*

How many of us feel like we can relate to Gideon? If God is with us, why does it seem like things are only getting worse? It doesn't seem like God has been doing anything lately. You say God has a plan and a purpose for my life but I haven't seen it. You say I was designed to win but lately it feels like all I can do is lose.

***What events in your past cause you to doubt God's purpose? How could God use those events for His glory?***

Gideon almost fell into the trap of allowing his past to redefine his calling. Instead we need to allow our calling to redefine our past. See, another thing that happens when God shows up is that He is able to turn your pain into purpose. He can transform a hopeless mess into a message of hope for someone else. What the devil intended for evil against you, God will use for good. Those things that you believed disqualified you will actually qualify you to speak into someone else's life. But you have to surrender it to Jesus.

Pastor Wayne offers great advice every time you get in your car. He said, "Look at the difference between the size of the windshield vs. the size of the mirror. The rear-view-mirror is only a tiny fraction of the size of the windshield. Why? Because the manufacturer wanted you to know that what is in front of you is infinitely more important than what is behind you. And God created us the same way. When you look in the mirror, what side of your head did God put your eyeballs? He could've put them behind you but it's as if He wanted us to keep looking forward. Which way are your ears facing? Mhmm. Probably because God wants us to listen more to what He says about our future than what people are saying behind our backs. Which way did he place your feet? God is reminding us to keep moving forward. In fact, there's only one part of your anatomy He put on the other side. You're sitting on it. Probably to remind us that some things are better left behind us." So don't let your circumstances or your past define you. Allow God to show you how He designed you.



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*"<sup>14</sup> The Lord turned to him and said, "Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?" And from the Good and Spesho Book,*

*"<sup>15</sup> Gideon tell, "But Boss, how I going get da Israel peopo outa trouble? My blood line not strong. Dey da mos weak blood line inside da Manasseh Ohana. An I da younges guy inside my faddah family."*

Pastor Earl, this is my audition for a role in Da Good and Spesho Book.

*"<sup>16</sup> The Lord answered, "I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive."*

When Gideon looked in the mirror he saw a poor, frightened, weakling who was a victim of his surroundings. When God looked at Gideon He saw a mighty warrior who would bring freedom to his people. When you look in the mirror what do you see? Do you let your circumstances define you? "Well, I don't really have the time, I don't have any experience or understanding." Do you let your past define you? Or are you willing to see how God designed you? If you want to see what God has in store, what you were created for, then you need to get in the game.

Gideon responded to God's call, which sparked a revival that started in his hometown and then spread to the entire nation. He became God's champion and not only defeated the Midianites but more importantly, helped to turn the people's hearts back to God. Today, God is looking for men and women who are willing to answer the call to live Holy and set apart. God wants to show the world a better way! It doesn't matter what your circumstances have been, what has happened in your past, or who you say you are. When God looks at you He sees only who He created you to be — a winner, a world-changer, a warrior.

My prayer is that when our Church takes the field, that great cloud of witnesses would be on their feet in the stands and the Devil would be shaking in his boots. So let's get off of the bench and into the game!

***Gideon answered the Lord's call on his life, which led to revival. How is God calling you to be a part of what He is doing in the world today?***