

WHEN WE STEP OUT GOD STEPS IN (1)

Read: 1 Samuel 14:1-14

1 God loves impossible situations

Israel was in a desperate situation. The Philistines were terrorising the land.

- Overwhelming numbers (13:2,5; 14:2) – originally ten to one, and later nearly 20 to one.
- Frequent raids (13:17ff)
- No iron weapons (13:19ff). Only bows, arrows and slingshots.
- Extortion (13:21)

The result was that the people were ‘trembling’ (7, ESV) and ‘quaking with fear’ (NIV) God loves situations like this because it gives him the chance to demonstrate his love and his power! Oscar C. Eliason wrote—

*Got any rivers you think are uncrossable?
Got any mountains you can't tunnel through?
God specialises in things thought impossible
He can do just what no other can do*

See Matt 17:20; Luke 1:37; Jer 32:17, 27

2 God can do a great deal with people who don't care who gets the credit (1-3)

- No one knew when Jonathan left the camp. He was only a young man—maybe a teenager. Who was the armour bearer? No one knows. Just another ‘young man’.
- *Who* we are does not matter: it's *what* we are that counts! These two young people carved their exploits in history.

3 When we step out God steps in (6)

- Jonathan said, ‘Come, let us go over.’ Too often we sit back and wait. These two stepped out!
- Miracles are 99.999% God and only 0.001% us—but this 0.001% is still important. Eg Moses; Elisha; Peter; Jesus.
- We need to take faith steps eg in evangelism, in witnessing, in praying for the sick, in prophesying, in giving, in speaking in tongues...

4 Faith doesn't have to be perfect (6)

- Jonathan was not convinced that victory could be taken for granted—‘It may be...’ (ESV, NRSV) or, ‘Perhaps the Lord will...’ (NIV).
- Sometimes we hold back because we think our faith is not perfect. It doesn't have to be. As long as it is faith in a perfect God!
- Compare Daniel 3; Ecclesiastes 11:4; Mark 9:24.

5 When God is with us we are always in the majority (6)

- Many? Few? It doesn't matter!
- See Romans 8:31ff; 2 Corinthians 2:14.

6 Unity is crucial (7)

The armour bearer told Jonathan he would support him totally.

- GNB: 'I'm with you'
- NIV, ESV: 'I am with you heart and soul'
- NRSV: 'As your mind is, so is mine'
- MKJV, NASB: 'I am with you and your heart.'
- See Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; Matthew 18:20

7 We need to determine the will of God (9-12)

Jonathan sought a sign from God. There is a difference between faith and presumption.

- Faith = acting on God's promise
- Presumption = acting on our own ideas

How many things *are* God's will? There are dozens!

- Forgiveness
- Grace
- Peace
- Joy
- Victory over temptation
- Freedom from fear
- Hope
- Release from depression
- confidence

8 Faith can overcome impossible odds (13-15)

- They used both hands and feet to climb (ie their hands were not free for fighting). They were just two against many (15:20ff).
- It was a fulfilment of God's promise. God gave the victory!
- See Leviticus 26:8; 2 Corinthians 2:14

9 Challenge

Jesus stepped out of heaven to become a human being and to die on a cross to save us from sin. When he stepped out, God stepped in! Death could not hold him! He rose again and lives forever!

Will you step out for God now?

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

Remember: You don't have to answer all the questions. First do those that seem most helpful to you.

Read 1 Samuel 14:1-14

Biblical

1. Why do you think Jonathan did not tell his father he was going to fight the Philistines? (1). You may find it helpful to read chapter 13 here as well.
2. Do you have any thoughts on why the writer makes special note of the fact that the priest was with Saul? (3). Can you find out what 'wearing an ephod' means? See 1 Samuel 1:18; 2:28; Exodus 28:1-14.
3. How would you describe the character and attitude of the two young men (6,7)
4. Note how although it was Jonathan and his armour bearer who overcame the Philistines, to whom was the credit given? (12, 23). What can we learn from this?

Personal and practical

5. Stepping out in faith requires courage, especially when we do it on our own and no one else wants to go with us. But what happens when we seem to succeed? (16-23) What can we learn about leadership here?
6. Read verse 6 again. Discuss ways in which we can apply it to situations in our own lives.
7. How does this story illustrate the principle, 'When we step out, God steps in'?
8. In the conflicts we have with temptation and opposition, what could we learn or apply to our lives from the actions of Jonathan recorded in verses 8-12?
9. Some people seem to be always complaining that the devil is making things tough for them. What can we learn from this passage about matters like this? (13-15; James 4:7).

Memorise: 1 Samuel 14:6

Hint for memorising: You can do this as a group by repeating phrase by phrase aloud together until you can say the whole text in one hit. Don't forget to learn the reference as well.

About Dr Barry Chant

Barry Chant is Senior Pastor of the Wesley International Congregation in Sydney, Australia. He is a regular speaker at church services, seminars, conferences and conventions. Hundreds of thousands of his books have been sold around the world. He has degrees in arts, theology and ministry, a diploma in education and a PhD in history. He was the initiator and former president of Tabor College, Australia.

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