

Putting Out the Fleece: Right or Wrong? **Judges 6**

Introduction:

1. When it comes to determining God's will, some people use a method called "putting out a fleece." It involves establishing some type of circumstantial sign by which God can indicate the right decision.
 - **For example:** We need a car so we say to God, "God, if you want me to buy a car today, send me some place that has a red car with black interior, and they are asking less than \$5,000." If all those circumstances fall into place we assume, "This is God's will," and we buy the car.
 - **For example:** "God, I have two job offers. Whichever one you want me to take, have them call my phone this morning by 9:30 AM."
2. People call this "putting out the fleece." They base this on an Old Testament story involving one of Israel's judges named Gideon. Israel was in bondage to the Midianites and God desired to use Gideon to deliver them. vs. 11-16
3. Right before they were to go out to battle, Gideon got cold feet. Due to his unbelief, Gideon decided to make sure that God really meant what he said, so he "put out the fleece" - a literal wool fleece. vs. 36-40
 - Gideon placed a fleece, which was simply a piece of wool shorn from a sheep, on the outside ground.
 - The first time, Gideon wanted God to have dew on the fleece, but not on the earth around the fleece. vs. 36-38
 - The second time, Gideon wanted God to have the fleece be dry, but have dew on the ground all around the fleece. This would be even more miraculous because wool would tend to soak in the water. vs. 39-40
4. God granted Gideon's request and the battle was miraculously won in Judges 7.
5. So here is the question we seek to answer: Does this Scripture passage teach, encourage, and promote the practice of "putting out a fleece?" Does God desire that members of the body of Christ today put out fleeces, so to speak? (Nobody seems to do it literally, as it is in the Bible.)
6. That is, does God desire that we walk in His will by means of circumstantial signs? Is this the standard mode of practice that God uses to communicate with us? Is this even an occasional method that we can expect God to use to communicate with us?
 - Some believers only resort to it when they have a "big" decision and don't know what to do. They don't fleece God over what color socks to wear.
7. When you truly examine God's Word and rightly divide it, the modern-day practice of "putting out fleeces" begins to break down in every respect. I want to say emphatically that God's Word does **not** teach the believer today to put out fleeces to God, and it can, in fact, be a very dangerous practice.
8. Consider these facts from our passage about Gideon:

Gideon's fleece was not a circumstantial sign, but rather a miraculous display of supernatural power.

1. Gideon wasn't simply asking for a particular circumstance to occur. He wasn't simply looking for a set of circumstances to align themselves together.
2. Gideon was looking for nothing less than a miracle.
 - For example, there is a big difference between saying, "God if you want me to do this, make the phone to ring at 9:30 AM" and saying, "I want the phone to have smoke come out of it and fly through the house at 9:30 AM."
 - One is simply circumstantial; the other is miraculous.
 - Many people call things miracles that are not truly miracles. A miracle, by biblical definition, is unnatural phenomena that violate natural laws.
 - Somebody says, "We were hungry, had no money and no groceries, a knock came at the door, and there were people from our church with 10 bags of groceries. It was a miracle."
 - Somebody says, "We were hungry, had no money and no groceries, we went out in our yard, and there was manna from heaven all over our yard. We picked it up, went in and ate it."
 - One is miracle; one is not.
3. Most people that put out fleeces are simply looking for a particular circumstance to occur. Gideon wasn't asking for something circumstantial to happen; he wanted to see a miracle.
4. This makes sense considering he had already communicated with an angel and had an offering miraculously consumed by angelic fire in this chapter. vs. 12, 17-22
5. So when people ask God for circumstantial signs to help them determine God's will, this is a misuse of this text. This is **not** what Gideon was doing with the fleece. He wanted a **miraculous** sign, not a circumstantial sign.

Gideon's fleece was not for the purpose of obtaining guidance from God, but rather to gain confirmation of guidance already given.

1. When people put out fleeces, they usually are seeking guidance from God in a gray area not specifically addressed in the Bible ("Which house do I buy?" "Should I marry him?" "Should I take this job offer?" etc.).
 - Again, this is a misuse of this text. This is not what Gideon was doing with his fleece.
2. Gideon had received **explicit** instruction from God by supernatural revelation. vs. 12, 14, 16, 20, 23, 25
3. Gideon wasn't asking God for guidance and instruction. He wasn't seeking to make the right decision, but rather he was lacking faith to do what God had already said to do.
 - He was lacking the faith to believe that God's deliverance would come through him as God had said.
 - Notice what Gideon says in verses 36-37. He tells God, "...as thou hast said."

- God had already given Gideon His Word and revealed to him His divine will.
4. What is the point? People use fleeces to try to obtain guidance in what to do, and to try to discern God's will. This practice cannot be substantiated from this text. This wasn't the purpose of Gideon's fleece. He already **knew** God's will - that God would save Israel by his hand.
 5. Unfortunately, many times people use "fleeces" as an excuse to **violate** God's will already revealed through His Word, or to violate a scriptural principle, or to go against sound wisdom.
 - **Example:** "God, if you want me to play the lotto this week, please provide \$20 extra this week." Then they say, "I couldn't believe it. When I went to my car after work, there was a \$20 bill lying on the ground in the parking lot."

Gideon's fleece was not a noble act of faith, but an expression of fear and doubt.

1. Rather than being an example of a noble and proper way to approach God, Gideon's demands for additional signs were an expression of his own fears and doubts.
2. God's instructions to Gideon were already very clear. God had given Gideon His Word and His promise.
3. God graciously cooperated with Gideon's desire for the fleece sign, but not because of Gideon's faith or because God had instructed him to do this. This was "all Gideon." It was Gideon's idea, and it came from his own fear, doubt, and insecurities.
 - We must remember that, in the Old Testament, they did not have the many spiritual benefits and privileges that we do today. They did not have God's completed Word, nor did they have God's indwelling Holy Spirit residing in them. They were not one with Christ as we are today.
 - Because of these factors, God was many times very patient with His saints and would often give miraculous signs to Israel to bolster their faith.
Example: Moses' reluctance to lead Israel
 - Today, the Bible is clear that we need not ever fear. We have God's Spirit living inside of us (2 Timothy 1:7), we are clothed in God's armor (Ephesians 6:10-16), we have God's completed Word (Ephesians 6:17), and we have total and complete access to God in prayer (Ephesians 2:18; Hebrews 4:16).
4. God cooperated with Gideon's fleece because God had already chosen Gideon for this special task and had made him promises. God would keep His Word to Gideon even if it meant acceding to Gideon's ridiculous and faithless fleece request.
5. Even Gideon himself appeared to know that he was walking on shaky ground when he apologetically asked for the second fleece sign. vs. 39
6. What is Christ's attitude today towards those who desire signs from God? Matthew 12:38-39
 - **Example:** Zacharias (Luke 1:11-20)

Gideon's fleece is not practiced or taught anywhere in the New Testament.

1. If fleeces were a common, divinely approved method for determining God's will, would it not be taught, or at least exemplified by the apostle Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles?
2. There is a total absence of any mention of it not only in Paul's writings, but in any New Testament teaching. We are to walk by faith, not by sight.
3. Paul taught that the Word of God "*thoroughly furnishes the believer unto all good works.*" 2 Timothy 3:16-17
4. Every believer is complete in Christ and is fully equipped by God to make wise, prudent, expedient decisions in this life.
5. God does not communicate with believers today through fleeces. Believers may think that their fleece requests have been answered by God, but it is strictly in their minds.
6. To determine God's will by putting out a fleece (asking for a circumstantial sign) is equivalent to rolling dice or flipping a coin. It simply is not a means of determining "God's will."
 - **Illustration:** When you were a kid, did you ever flip a coin and say, "Heads I'll do this and tails I'll do that?" If you didn't get the result you wanted, you said, "Okay, let me do best two out of three."
 - People do this with fleeces. If the result of the fleece isn't what I want, I'll put out another fleece that will overrule the first fleece.