

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 the 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 someplace 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.

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

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

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

The practice of putting out fleeces can be very dangerous.

- Fleeces are not always harmless, innocent attempts by believers to determine God's will. Fleeces can, in fact, be very dangerous and cause great harm to the person attempting to use it, or to others affected by the person's decisions. How?
 1. People use fleeces as an excuse to sin.
 - I've had people tell me they are divorcing their spouse because of a supposed fleece sign from God. They think God is "okay" with it because of a fleece God answered.
 - This is what I mean when I say that others can be ill-affected by our fleeces. Many a loved one has been deeply hurt by another family member because they were adamant that God had "led" them to do something.
 - Many a friend has been devastated by another Christian friend because that person did something sinful that supposedly God had "okayed" through a sign.
 - Many Christians use a fleece sign as an excuse for behavior that is ungodly and unbiblical. They hide behind the excuse, "God told me," or "God showed me," or "God led me." They do this rather than taking responsibility for their own decisions.
 2. People make big decisions based upon utter chance.
 - **Example:** "God, I know you would have me to quit my job if I get red lights at the first two stoplights and a green light on the third one." There is a fairly high level of probability that this could happen. "When God answered my fleece, I knew I should quit my job because He had something better for me." This is not the way of wisdom. This is foolishness attempting to disguise itself as spirituality.
 - One time I had a guy at Bible college tell me that he married his wife because of a fleece sign. He said he knew she was ugly and he wasn't attracted to her, but because of the fleece he knew it was God's will for him to marry her. He viewed her as his cross he had to bear.
 - **Example:** You are going to look at two houses to potentially buy and you say, "God, I know you will have me buy one of these if one of them has rocks in the flower beds rather than wood mulch."

- It is extremely dangerous to make big decisions based upon utter chance. Some people say there is no such thing as a coincidence or chance. Read Luke 10:31.
 - There **is** such a thing as chance, and when people make decisions based upon a fleece, they are making their decision based upon utter chance.
3. People fail to develop wise, biblical decision-making skills.
- God desires that you look at every situation with complete dependence upon Him, yield to His Holy Spirit, and apply the principles of godly wisdom to your decision making.
 - **Illustration:** When Clint was preparing to finish High School, he explored multiple college options, looked at the positives and negatives of each, and then made a decision based upon wisdom. While we gave him certain principles to consider, we desired that it be his decision.
 - In the same way, God gives us guiding principles of wisdom in His Word to help us understand true wisdom as opposed to worldly wisdom, but then desires that we exercise our free will in making those decisions. This pleases our heavenly Father. In other words, God is not about micro-managing your life.
 - God will not allow you to cop out of learning to apply His Word and godly wisdom to your decision making by giving you signs and answering fleece requests. God treats us as adults in his family, not little children.