



Spring Study Discussion Guide #5

Sermon Title: Strong Women, Weak Men

Biblical Reference: Judges 4

Date Preached: Sunday, February 12th, 2023, @ 11am

Fall Study Date: Wednesday, February 15th, 2023

Ice Breaker

To get to know each other as a group let us go around the room and have everyone answer the ice breaker question.

What was your first job, the most unpleasant job, or most unusual job?

Sermon Summary

This past Sunday we learned about Deborah, a judge of Israel. Deborah was used of God in a unique way. Deborah was the only legitimate female head of state for children of Israel in the Bible. Deborah loved the Lord and was on His side. In every other instance God chose a man to be the leader of His people.

When Moses gave instructions to choose the rulers, he instructed them to choose men (Deut 1:13-15), God instructed the people to choose men as the kings and the kings were not to multiply wives unto themselves (Deut 17:14-20). However, unusual times call for unusual measures. The spiritual climate among the Jews at the time was described in Judges 17:6 this way, *“In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.”* We are told in Isaiah 3:1-4,12, one consequence of sin would be that the men that are qualified to lead could not be found. One of the signs they were not in a good place spiritually, was a woman was ruling in the positions that Moses instructed to be filled by Godly men.

As our country moves further away from the Lord and further into a post Christian culture, we see the weakening of the men. The percentage of the population identified as having no faith is increasing year over year. Men that will take a stand for God and lead their families and communities in the right direction are fewer and fewer. We often talk to women who are in a situation where the men in their lives are not exhibiting Godly leadership. They may find themselves to be the only one in their sphere of influence who loves the Lord.

What should they do? Should they give up and let the enemy win? What did Deborah do?

Quick Review

Ask a volunteer to read:

Jdg 4:1 And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, when Ehud was dead.

Jdg 4:2 And the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor; the captain of whose host was Sisera, which dwelt in Harosheth of the Gentiles.

Jdg 4:3 And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD: for he had nine hundred chariots of iron; and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel.

Jdg 4:4 And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time.

Jdg 4:5 And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.

Jdg 4:6 And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedeshnaphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the LORD God of Israel commanded, saying, Go and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun?

Jdg 4:7 And I will draw unto thee to the river Kishon Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand.

Jdg 4:8 And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go.

- Were there any insights the Lord showed you or anything that caught your attention, challenged, or confused you? Either from the sermon or from your personal study of this passage?
- How did the Holy Spirit speak to your heart from this passage/sermon?

My Testimony

Deborah was in a situation where the person, or people, that should have been standing up and leading were not.

- Have you had the experience where the person that should be leading was not? Could you share your experience? What were the effects that had on you? Did you get involved?

Digging Deeper

1. Intro:

People will view this passage in vastly different ways depending on their worldview. On the extreme right: we have people who believe women have less value in the eyes of God than men do. They often believe a woman's role in society should be limited to being "keepers at home" and their role in the church should be severely limited (they should not even speak in church or give a prayer request or a testimony). These people downplay Deborah's significance and role. They are careful to maintain their chauvinist attitude.

On the extreme left: we have people that say this passage is proof that there should be no distinction between the sexes. They believe it is good, proper, and preferable that women hold offices in the church. They may even resent anyone that believes in traditional gender roles and take offence to the idea that there are some roles and offices that God designed to be filled by only one gender.

We do not want to fall on either extreme but have a biblical worldview. God created man and women as co-equal. Children and adults are co-equal. Pastors, deacons, and laymen are co-equal. This does not mean we all serve the same function within God's authority structure.

Ask a volunteer to read:

Jdg 4:4 And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time.

Jdg 4:5 And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.

Jdg 4:6 And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedeshnaphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the LORD God of Israel commanded, saying, Go and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun?

Discussion Questions:

- What is most significant to you in this passage? Please explain.
- Many people grew up or have been negatively impacted by a male chauvinistic or a feminist influence. Can you share your experience and any insights you have gained?
- Have you ever been made to feel discredited or dismissed because of your gender?
- Why are conversations about God's authority structure often difficult?

- Explain what unintended consequences you see happening as God's gender design and roles are abandoned in our culture?

God never delegated to man the authority to determine morality or reclassify what He said was sin. But He did delegate a certain amount of authority to husbands, fathers, mothers, church leaders, the church, and the government. Many times, the authority is not something that can be demanded but it is voluntarily given for our benefit and protection.

- Give an example of a time when we were supposed to disobey authority?
- What should we do when the authority over us abuses his or her authority?
- Can you give us an example of a Biblical way to respond to a person in God's authority position over us that we do not respect?
- Can you give us an example of a time when you did not want to obey an authority figure but later saw how the Lord was using this person in your life to help you?

2. Begin with Yourself

In the following verses we learn that when she saw the spiritual condition of her country she woke up and turned to the Lord. She did not seek a position nor was she doing it for her honor or to make a name for herself. People came to her. This was not about her reaching her potential. This was of the Lord, and He used Deborah because she began with her spiritual condition first.

Ask a volunteer to read:

Jdg 5:12 Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam.

Jdg 4:5 And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.

Jdg 4:8 And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go.

Jdg 4:9 And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the LORD shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh.

Discussion Questions:

- What, in this passage, is the most significant to you? Please explain.

- What happens when a person focuses on another's faults or sins without beginning with themselves?
- Can you give us an example of what could go wrong when we go after a position for our own pride?
- She dwelt under her palm tree. Is it hard for you to see how God could use you where you are?
- People went to her for judgment. How effective is it when we go to people and give them our unsolicited judgment? What negative consequences have you experienced?

3. Strengthen your men

In the following verses you find Barak wanted Deborah to go with him he drew strength from her she encouraged him.

Ask a volunteer to read:

Jdg 4:6 And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedeshnaphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the LORD God of Israel commanded, saying, Go and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun?

Jdg 4:7 And I will draw unto thee to the river Kishon Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand.

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Discussion Questions:

- What are some things we can take from these verses to determine if we are encouraging the leaders in our lives?
- Can you explain what kind of person encourages you and when they are with you it encourages you to do the right thing?
- How can we use verse 8 to gauge how effectively we are in supporting and encouraging the leaders that God has called us to help?

- Why do you think Barak wanted Deborah to go with him?

4. Be Willing to Stand Alone

In the following verses we see another woman who stood for the Lord even though her husband was confederate with the enemy. Jael was alone, yet she was not alone. She secured a prominent place in history among the women of the world.

Ask a volunteer to read:

Jdg 4:17 Howbeit Sisera fled away on his feet to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite: for there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite.

Jdg 4:18 And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said unto him, Turn in, my lord, turn in to me; fear not. And when he had turned in unto her into the tent, she covered him with a mantle.

Jdg 4:19 And he said unto her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water to drink; for I am thirsty. And she opened a bottle of milk, and gave him drink, and covered him.

Jdg 4:20 Again he said unto her, Stand in the door of the tent, and it shall be, when any man doth come and enquire of thee, and say, Is there any man here? that thou shalt say, No.

Jdg 4:21 Then Jael Heber's wife took a nail of the tent, and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground: for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died.

Discussion Questions:

- What, in this passage, is the most significant to you? Please explain.
- Can you explain what it is like to live in a household whose allegiances are divided?
- What questions would you ask Jael?
- How can you relate Jael's situation to your situation?
- Jael did not allow the enemy to use her place and resources to regain strength and attack God's people again. How can the enemy use our place and resources to attack God's people?

Taking It Home

The following questions are intended to be open-ended and encourage members to consider how they felt and what they can do because of discovering the truths and principles in the text:

1. What truth or principle in this text was most impactful for you?
2. How did this truth or principal challenge, change, or affirm your thinking?
3. How will you put into practice what you have learned today?