

SCRIPTURE •

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7 and against you I will deploy Sisera, the commander of Jabin’s army, with his chariots and his multitude at the River Kishon; and I will deliver him into your hand?’”

8 And Barak said to her, “If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go!”

9 So she said, “I will surely go with you; nevertheless there will be no glory for you in the journey you are taking, for the LORD will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.” Then Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh.

PRAYER • spiritual gifts / move freely – by Your will / never quench / never grieve – keep us in line with truth & guidelines of scripture / “we’ll go if you go, lord, but if you will not go with us, we won’t go there!” / go with us today, lord!

INTRO • As we look at the Judge Deborah this morning, there is clearly a hotly debated ISSUE before us

Which I’d say is like a “third rail” in politics—an emotionally charged and divisive issue that no one would dare to touch and expect to survive in the next election / In fact—this is such a hot and divisive issue, a wise pastor would probably just avoid it all together / in fact, I tried to pawn this topic off on Pastor Lance, but he told me that because I was on the schedule, I had to man up and cover this!

So, as fools rush in where angels dare to tread, here we go...

We are going to talk about the role of women in ministry. *And the ushers are passing out eggs and cabbage you can throw at me if you don’t like what I say!*

SO HERE IS THE ISSUE: Deborah is serving as PROPHET and JUDGE in Israel / a position of spiritual leadership / and IN OUR TEXT we’ll see in her LEADING, FEEDING, & PROTECTING—which is how we identify the JOB of a PASTOR or ELDER

But what do you do the passages like 1 Timothy 2 or 1 Corinthians 14 that speak of women remaining silent in church, not teaching men, and not having authority over men?

• And then, what about the OTHER NT passages that clearly describe Women with gifts of PROPHECY and TEACHING who are deeply involved in MINISTRY?

Now, I don’t believe there a contradiction in scripture / but we definitely have to be very diligent with the work of interpretation as we study.

So, as we work through this tension here in Judges 4 with Deborah’s ministry, I am going to share with you a CRUCIAL COMPONENT to this complex issue that is often OVERLOOKED / & I am excited to bring to the table...

One more thing, before we begin...

HISTORICALLY, Calvary Chapels have landed on the conservative side of this topic, as we tend to interpret the NT instructions as RELEVANT for today and not just write them off as “cultural” to Bible times / And we have been criticized for it / some say that CC’s are sexist

And yet, we are also a CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT / and we believe and encourage the gift of the Holy Spirit /

and we believe that all believers are to be priests and ministers before God / So we are in this MIDDLE GROUND between...

“DON’T QUENCH THE SPIRIT” / so we want people to follow the enabling work of the Holy Spirit and use their gifts and talents to serve and edify others in the church

& “DON’T GRIEVE THE HOLY SPIRIT” / by doing things that are inappropriate, and don’t represent God properly / we don’t want there to be chaos and confusion in our ministry

So, I’m guessing that as I teach this, half of you will think I am being way too conservative / & the other half will be thinking I am being way too liberal! So, you will probably disagree—so please take it up with Pastor Lance

STUDY •

4 Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at that time.

FIRST KEY DESCRIPTION of Deborah = She was a PROPHETESS

Her name means “bee” / partly because of her industrious nature / But her name can also mean “wasp” / The gift of Prophecy often stings! / When you speak God’s truth where things need fixing, it is going to hurt!

There were many other Prophetesses in scripture / Deborah was the most prominent / *I don’t have time to list them—your homework this week is to track down all of the women with the gift of prophecy in scripture! There are a LOT of them!*

But the KEY PROMISE about women with the Spiritual gift of Prophecy is found in Acts 2:17 (Peter, quoting Joel) • in the last days “I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit... and your DAUGHTERS shall prophesy ...both men AND WOMEN;”

So—prophecy is a spiritual gift that is FREELY Poured OUT among women / and scripture is RICH with examples of this

So, WHAT IS “PROPHECY”? It is a very common term and very broad / many different variations of what prophecy looks like

- Sometimes it is speaking directly from God / “thus says the Lord”
- Sometimes it is foretelling future events / or warning – “If you don’t knock it off, this is going to happen to you...”
- The WRITING OF SCRIPTURE is called “prophecy” in 2 Peter
- Paul describes the effects of Prophecy this way—1 Cor. 14:3–4 • But one who prophesies speaks to men for EDIFICATION and EXHORTATION and CONSOLATION;

I think we see it MOST OFTEN when the Bible teacher APPLIES God’s word to the current situation and exhorts you to live it out!

BTW—I think a great way to tell when you’ve just experienced the gift of Prophecy? = When you hear the “Amens!”

There is another aspect of Deborah's prophetic gift we'll see in the next chapter = she was a PROPHETIC SINGER / SONGWRITER

Prophecy is often associated with SINGING in the Old Testament, like Miriam in Exodus / Or even an ecstatic singing and dancing experience, like King Saul at the beginning of his ministry

Deborah was a SINGER & song writer / which was preserved for us in the Bible in Judges 5 = So God WROTE THE SCRIPTURES through Deborah!

A SECOND DESCRIPTION is that she is a WIFE and MOTHER

She is a wife / her husband's name, Lapidoth, meant "torch" / & She was also a mother (5:7)

& I'm going to suggest that she was a VERY ORDINARY WIFE and MOTHER before God raised her up as a judge / As we saw on Wednesday night = In the first chapters of Judges, God used UNLIKELY people as heroes to bring about deliverance and revival in Israel —folks who were either disqualified, like the left-handed Ehud / or folks who were just common and ordinary—like Gideon or Jael / or folks who didn't have the right equipment—like Shamgar with his ox goad / and He worked through these unlikely folks so He could work a mighty deliverance through them and get all the Glory for it

So, based on the THEME OF JUDGES We know that a key reason God CALLED, EMPOWERED, AND ENDORSED Deborah for ministry was BECAUSE she was a simple person through whom God could work by His SPIRIT

5 And she would sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the mountains of Ephraim. And the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.

And the third KEY DESCRIPTION OF DEBORAH = she was serving Israel as JUDGE

Judges are described in Judges 2 as "deliverers" / leading Israel against their oppressors / also LEADING them in revival and into a time of peace and security / Their words were to be obeyed and followed as from God / they represented God

The role of the judge is first given in Ex. 18 / Moses & Jethro

... Why do you alone sit, and all the people stand before you from morning until evening?"

15 And Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God. When they have a difficulty, they come to me, and I judge between one and another; and I make known the statutes of God and His laws."

Deborah's prophetic gifts cover ALL OF THESE AREAS

- She EDIFIES, EXHORTS, ENCOURAGES, COMFORTS, & STRENGTHENS people with her prophetic gifts
- She TEACHES when people come asking for wisdom in difficulties
- She exercises SPIRITUAL WISDOM and insight, judging between people when there are disputes
- She speaks directly FROM God—giving instructions to go to war
- She LEADS people / into battle / into song / into victory / into truth / into revival
- She even "writes" scripture (Judges 5)

6 Then she sent and called for Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, "Has not [or "behold"] the LORD God of Israel commanded, 'Go and deploy troops at Mount Tabor; take with you ten thousand men of the sons of Naphtali and of the sons of Zebulun;

7 and against you I will deploy Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude at

the River Kishon; and I will deliver him into your hand'?"

Pretty simple instructions. Not much room for debate. / "Behold"—God has said this. Listen up. Obey these words. Do it.

"And I will deliver him into your hand."—certain victory. Trust God. He'll do it. / Don't worry about the chariots or the multitudes of soldiers he has

You just do your part to obey His clear instructions, and then trust God to do His part, giving you a victory over your enemy

8 And Barak said to her, "If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go!"

Barak knew Deborah spoke from God, so I can't blame him for demanding that she go with him / I'd probably do the same thing in his sandals going into battle / I'd want every EDGE possible over the enemy!

9 So she said, "I will surely go with you; nevertheless there will be no glory for you in the journey you are taking, for the LORD will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman." Then Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh.

This is the key verse this morning = His request for Deborah to go with him was WRONG / There was a certain level of DISOBEDIENCE or LACK OF FAITH in his request for Deborah to go with him / he comes across as a WUSS

Don't get me wrong, Barak redeems himself in the coming battle in verse 14 / But in this moment, Barak gets a STINGING REBUKE from the prophetic wasp stinger.

So, here is the CRITICAL LESSON we need to learn from Deborah's words this morning

Because Barak asked Deborah to go into battle, there would be NO GLORY for him. And he wouldn't even get to conquer his enemy—a woman would get that honor in his place.

THINK THIS THROUGH WITH ME

Deborah was CALLED, AND QUALIFIED BY GOD to JUDGE and PROPHECY over Israel. Or, as we would say = she would LEAD, and FEED them through God's word & her spiritual gifts.

But Barak also wanted Deborah to fulfill a role of PROTECTION / coming with him into the battle field / this is where God DREW THE LINE.

The policy here at Calvary Chapel of Oxnard, as Pastor Lance has clearly explained many times, is that WE ENDORSE WOMEN IN MINISTRY

But we believe that there are DIFFERING ROLES between men and women / And Deborah's words to Barak EXEMPLIFY this / But where do we draw the line between = "Don't quench the work of the Holy Spirit" and "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit"?

We believe it is this = THE ROLE OF "PROTECTION"

The role of the PASTOR / ELDER as we see in Psalm 23 is to Lead / Feed / Protect the flock / like the Good Shepherd Jesus, who laid down His life for the Sheep

We see this in the Marriage Instructions in Ephesians 5—that a husband is to LAY HIS LIFE DOWN FOR HIS WIFE, AS JESUS LAID HIS LIFE DOWN FOR THE CHURCH

Pastor Lance often uses the term that from the Apostle Paul = “Under Authority” / or “headship” / that a MAN’S ROLE is to provide protection for others

Deborah was LEADING, and she was FEEDING, but when she is put into a place of DANGER—the place of PROTECTION—this is where the God drew the line.

And NOTICE = it was DEBORAH’S OWN PROPHETIC WORDS that drew this line. Someone else didn’t come along and tell her that she had gone too far / SHE TOLD Barak that bringing her into battle was INAPPROPRIATE / that it was NOT FITTING or HONORABLE

Do you realize—the PASTOR serves in a very dangerous role...

Acts 20 warns the elders to protect the flock of God from savage wolves that come in, not sparing the flock

Paul describes ministry in terms of a fight and a battle

Jesus warned that the Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep, unlike a hired hand that runs away from the dangerous wolves!

And the pulpit is becoming more and more dangerous in our culture!

Everything I’m saying today is being broadcast, and anyone with a malicious agenda could twist my words and slander me, or even press charges. Someday soon, pastors will be going to jail for reading the Bible publicly, as in many other countries.

A few years ago I went to S. Sudan to help train their chaplains / their willingness to die for the sake of the Gospel was inspirational at the time / now, a few years later, as I’ve watched many of them do exactly that and die in their service, I understand the REALITY of the danger of representing God / I often pray for that kind of courage in my ministry

And something else to consider... PASTORS aren’t in a place of POWER & RULE...

Many churches see the Pastor or the Elder in a place at the top of a power pyramid, like a secular institution. So, if we say that this role is reserved for MEN, we are criticized as disenfranchising women...

BUT THE TRUTH is exactly opposite in the church. The so-called “pyramid” is actually INVERTED. The Pastor or Elder is actually AT THE BOTTOM of the CHURCH—serving everyone else / We don’t serve the pastor / the pastor serves the body

Like Jesus / *“So then even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give His life a ransom for man”*

In fact, the PASTOR’S ROLE is to say to the enemy—“Don’t attack my sheep, attack ME instead!” / The ROLE of SPIRITUAL PUNCHING BAG in the church is reserved for the pastor / elder. And they are GLAD to take this role, since it models Jesus!

SO—WHAT IS THE TAKEAWAY from Deborah this morning...?

1 • I have heard that we have amazing women teaching the women in this church / but I never had the privilege of

hearing them! We err on the side of “quenching the spirit” in this! I want to hear what the Spirit is saying to Calvary Chapel of Oxnard through our women!

With this in mind, I know that Pastor Lance is strategizing about how to hear from our amazing women teachers more often. It is challenging with our Sunday morning format, but we are going to be looking for more avenues to do this.

I would even suggest that when the women are having their gatherings, that they VIDEO the teachings and we can post it—so the whole church could benefit FROM THEIR FEEDING.

2 • And women, PLEASE LEAD where God is calling you to lead / if there is a ministry that needs to happen and you are gifted to lead it—go for it! Don’t wait around for a man to do it.

You see, Deborah was a JUDGE in Israel for several reasons...

ONE—God loved to use unlikely people for His purposes, in order to shine His glory through them

TWO—She was a judge because she had a spiritual gift of PROPHECY

But the THIRD reason has been suggested: because the MEN HAD DROPPED THE BALL. You see this attitude in Barak as he was fearful of going into battle without Deborah there to hold his hand!

So, ladies—I’m going to apologize for my FELLOW DUDES for the times we drop the ball—but please LEAD US as God LEADS YOU

3 • But, we need to qualify one aspect of ministry that is uniquely for men... PROTECTION / or “headship”

The Gospel is the story of Jesus laying down His life for His Bride. It is fitting and honoring to God that men take the HEAT and protect their wives and daughters from danger, because we want to be like Jesus!

So, Ladies—please USE YOUR GIFTS IN MINISTRY here at COO with complete FREEDOM and CONFIDENCE but do it under the PROTECTION of our Pastor and Elders!

Seek their wisdom. Get them on board with what you want to do. Allow them to take the heat for you. If you are criticized or attacked in what you are doing, please call on the Elders to back you up. This is what they are here for! This is their function. They are glad to do it. Allow them to serve you in this way.

I hope you aren’t offended by this. But if you are—I’ll take the heat for it!

The last thing I want to share is to us MEN...

PROBABLY the MAIN reason that the ROLE of WOMEN in the church has become such a heated and divisive issue is because the MEN haven’t done a very good job of LEADING LIKE JESUS

We tend to either lead as BULLIES or as BUMS.

Either through FEAR and having to be in control / not trusting God – we have held onto leadership like BULLIES, and LORDED over others, like Jesus warned against

OR – we have swung to the other extreme, and like BUMS, we’ve dropped the ball of leadership and put women between a rock and a hard place—where they either have to serve in ways that God didn’t intend, or else, see ministry fall apart!

LET US LEAD LIKE JESUS / as servants / laying our lives down in service / taking the heat / being
PROACTIVE and stepping out in FAITH / getting into ACTION

As we RIGHTLY IMITATE JESUS, I'm sure the women will FLOURISH IN MINISTRY
as they SERVE AS EMPOWERED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT / and
under GOD'S protective covering— which is our role / without ANY RESENTMENT or COMPETITION