

Strength & Dignity (Week 3)

May 24th, 2026

“Standing in the Gap: The Courage of Deborah”

Series - To celebrate and display the character and personal stories of Biblical women as examples of the image and character of God in them. This week is Deborah.

Context - After the death of Joshua, the Israelites didn't follow through with the Lord's commands to drive out their enemies when they entered into the promised land. Over time they became like their pagan neighbors worshipping their idols. The Book of **Judges** is a sad part of the Israelites' history.

Judges 2:10-13 (NASB95)

- The pattern in the book of Judges is repetitive: **1)** The people rebelled through idolatry and disbelief, **2)** God brought judgment on them through their neighbors, **3)** God raised up judges to deliver the people from their oppressors, **4)** They repented and turned back to God. When the Israelites fell back into sin, the cycle started over again.
- God would use Deborah as not only a civil judge but as a prophetess to speak on His behalf. Deborah helped rescue the Israelites from the oppression of Jabin, the Canaanite King.

Who was Deborah and what did she do?

Judges 4:4-10 (NASB95)

- She was a wife of Lappidoth.
- She was a judge, where people came to settle civil disputes. Much like a judge we have in our culture today.

Foretelling vs. Forthtelling

- As a prophetess, she spoke in a foretelling sense, predictive about what would happen in advance (**vs.6-7**).
- A foreteller had no power or authority to teach. Teaching was only given to the priests.
- Forthtellers—to proclaim a message truthfully, clearly, and authoritatively to those for whom God intended.

We celebrate Deborah because she was *faithful, courageous, walked in wisdom and worshiped the Lord*. There is a time to step up and step in when God calls you.

1. Deborah was faithful to God and His message.

- She prophesied faithfully God's messages to Barak, the military man.
- She tells Barak, *'The LORD, the God of Israel, commands you.'* She did not take credit for the prophetic word, but only delivered what God told her to say.

2. Deborah had great character, wisdom and courage.

- She honored Barak's position as the military leader, exhorting him to go and conquer Jabin's army (**vs. 6**).
- In doing so, she challenged Barak's passivity to lead. The result was that he stepped up into his God-given role to lead the troops.
- She courageously accompanied Barak to the place where he assembled the troops for battle, helping him overcome his apprehension. Notice, she didn't go into battle with him.

Judges 4:14-16 (NASB95)

- Notice Deborah's words of encouragement, reminding Barak that this was the Lord's battle.
 - The result of their partnership and obedience led them to worship God, giving Him the credit (**Chapter 5**).
- #### 3. Deborah serves as an example to women on how to obediently follow God's lead in an area where it takes wisdom and courage.
- She did not become an overbearing controller.
 - She understood her area of responsibility and didn't hold on to her authority but pointed things back towards God.
 - She was truthful, but not critical or condescending.
 - She spoke life and encouragement.
 - She was courageous to do the right thing with the potential for criticism and personal harm.

- She kept her eyes on God.

Take Away:

Men: You are called to lead in your home. *Learn how*, be in a discipling relationship with someone who gets it and is doing it.

- Men, you are called to treat your wives in an understanding way (**1 Peter 3:7-9**).
- If you are passive or apathetic, how will you step into the gap that only you can fill?

Women, how will you encourage and support the men in your life to fulfill their God-given responsibilities?

Women: Some of you have husbands who don't lead well. Chances are they were never taught how to lead in a Godly way. Many men DID NOT have great models of Godly leadership in their homes.

- Be kind and understanding of this.
- Give your longings and desires to God, and pray that **HE** will guide your husband, son, father, brother, boss. Pray for Godly mentors to come into their lives.
- Criticizing them and making your disappointment in them obvious will only cause them to shut down more. Choose to have the opposite spirit towards them.
- When they start leading, praise them. Don't fight them. Don't correct them.
- Remember that as a wife, you are the most important '*mirror*' your husband will ever look into. What he sees in you, when you look at him, is how he will view himself.
- If he sees disappointment or even worse, disrespect, he will see himself as a failure.
- If he sees kindness, love, acceptance and grace, he will see himself as worthy of love, and therefore more apt to live worthy of your love.
- If he sees joy and pride in your face, he will see himself in a healthy way - as '*enough*'.
- Most importantly, pray for him - your husband, son, father, brother, boss. And pray from a heart of love, not anger or criticism.

FOR SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION:

Opening Question: Have you ever been thrust into service or responsibility in an unexpected way or at an unexpected time? How did you respond?

Main Point: During a time in Israel's history when "everyone did what they saw fit," Deborah stood out for her faith and obedience to God. Her story reminds us that God will use anyone who believes in Him, is being changed by Him, and is committed to His mission.

Main Scripture: **Judges 4-5**

Head Questions:

- What role did Deborah find herself in and why do you think she was in that position?
- Why do you think Barak asked Deborah to go with him?

Heart Questions:

- Barak initially hesitated to go into battle without Deborah. Do you hesitate when God asks you to step out in faith?
- What are some things that stand out to you from Deborah's song in Judges 5? Why is her response something we should also model in our own lives?

Hands Questions:

- How has God been at work in your life in significant ways?
- While most of us aren't poets or songwriters, how might you write your own psalm of praise to celebrate what God is doing? This week, take some time to write something like that down.

Additional Scripture: **Exodus 15:1-18; James 1:22, 4:7 (NASB95)**