



Week of June 3, 2019: Judges Series: Deborah (Judges 4-5)

Discussion Questions Set #1

“Now Deborah, a prophet, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time. She held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites went up to her to have their disputes decided.” (Judges 4:4-5)

“God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.” (1 Corinthians 1:27)

Of all the judges, Deborah sticks out like a sore thumb due to her gender. Women in such an influential position in the ancient world were few and far between and, culturally, a nation led by a woman would have been seen as weak and despised. Deborah was an incredible woman - she was a prophet, a judge, a wife, a singer-songwriter, and possibly a mother – and God used her in a mighty way in her role as judge over Israel. Additionally in our text, God used Jael – a non-Israelite woman – to quite literally drive a stake into the heart of pagan culture.

1. Why do you think God chooses unlikely heroes like Deborah or Jael to work through in this incredible way? What is it about unlikely heroes that permits them to be such a consistent part of God’s plan?
2. Note that unlike the majority of leaders in Israel, Deborah held court not at the traditional position of the city gates, but under the Palm of Deborah in the hill country. Deborah created a new place in culture to perform a unique function. What might this teach us about how we go about creating or cultivating Godly culture?
3. What do you think this narrative teaches us about the role of God-empowered women in the life of a community of believers?
4. We live in a culture that seems to promote the empowerment of women, yet we also live in a world where women increasingly are valued for their appearance or utility, evidenced through the proliferation of pornography even in mainstream media. How might our community combat the development of this within our culture? Might we permit the objectification of women in our church culture? In what ways?

Discussion Questions Set #2

“If you go with me, I will go, but if you don’t go with me, I won’t go.” (Judges 4:8)

“Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.” (1 Peter 1:13-14)

In sermon, we contrasted the behaviour of Deborah and Jael with that of the Israelite commander Barak, whose name, ironically, means “lightning” or “flash”. Whereas both Deborah and Jael evidenced a ready obedience to God, Barak manifested a reluctant or conditional obedience to God. While the “Flash” failed to react speedily to the command of God, the Bee and the Mountain Goat preserved Israel’s place in the “land flowing with milk and honey” from the onslaught of oppositional culture.

1. In our text, Barak’s reluctance resulted in consistent missed opportunities to act in a way that both put to death pagan culture and glorified God. Have you ever found yourself in such a position? Discuss.
2. In our world, what might a reluctant or conditional obedience to God result in when seeking to create or cultivate Godly culture? What might this attitude result in when combatting oppositional culture?
3. Why might ready obedience or an alertness to opportunity be crucial to the creation or cultivation of Godly culture in our rapidly changing world?



Discussion Questions Set #3

“Do not be surprised, my brothers and sisters, if the world hates you.” (1 John 3:13)

“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.” (John 15:18-19)

Deborah and Jael both were called to act in ways that might have resulted in unfavourable cultural repercussions. Deborah’s assumption of leadership as a woman likely caused many to despise her – it might have even caused strife within her own family. Jael’s decisive and swift action was far from “lady-like” and might also have been poorly received by Barak or perhaps, even her husband Heber.

1. How significant a difference do you think unfavourable cultural repercussions make to our obedience in creating or cultivating Godly culture?
2. In what ways might we be able to support those within our church who feel called to obey in a way that might lead to unfavourable cultural repercussions?