

Flawed Heroes Part 2

Deborah: The Real Wonder Woman

Judges 4-5

Memory Verses: Judges 5:31

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

Heroes come in all shapes and sizes. I want you to take a second to look at this **clip** of this incredible mother. Sarah has no arms and yet she is able to do everything her child needs her to do to take care of her. Some people in Sarah's position could have just resigned themselves to being a victim their whole life, but instead she has overcome her disability, learned to use her feet in ways we will never be able to comprehend, and now lives as a devoted and caring mother for her little girl. From all angles, according to the wisdom of the world, Sarah was a flawed individual destined to fail at life, but in my book, Sarah is a hero. And that's what this series is all about... flawed hero's. Some are flawed with certain physical disadvantages like Ehud who was a left-handed Benjamite. Some, like Gideon, are flawed with a weak faith. Others, like Samson, are flawed with all kinds of sinful habits. And yet... God, in his mercy and grace, still chooses to use them to defeat his enemies, deliver his chosen people, and build his kingdom.

Which brings us to our hero today, who like Sarah, is a mother and also has a perceived flaw. She is a woman. Now, don't hear what I'm not saying. I'm not saying that being a woman is a disadvantage. We have made many strides in our world over the past few centuries to allow women to have the same freedoms as men. In many ways, women are now equal to men in a myriad of areas where they used to subservient. Take for example our very own Hillary Alderson who, along with being a very fine drummer, is one of the toughest fire fighters in Danville, and I dare say, perhaps our entire country; who knows. But we still have a long way to go in seeing, women, and all people, as Jesus sees them, and treating them all with the same dignity, respect, and fairness that our Lord treats us with.

It is true that some claim that being a woman still means that you will be paid less than your male counterparts. Some claim that being a woman will keep you from certain jobs that you may want. And I'm sure in specific cases this is true... and it shouldn't be. As a society we can always do better when it comes to the way we treat women. But, in Deborah's time it was a whole different ball game. In the time of the Judges, it was almost unheard of for a woman to be in a leadership position, much less ruling an entire region of the Middle East. And so our hero, Deborah, the Bible's very own Wonder Woman, offers us some

unique perspectives this morning as to what it means to be a hero. And as we read today, we will find out that she is not the only heroine in our story. Jael, will also show us just how brave and relentless women can be when they fight for our God and for his cause. In this story, these two women outshine their male counterparts and show us what it truly means to rise above their perceived flaws and become the heroes they were meant to be.

There is something truly heroic about women of God, isn't there? David Platt hits the nail on the head in his encouragement to our sisters in Christ, our heroic women of God. Sisters, as we begin this morning I want you to hear this; "God has created you as a woman,...and there is unique significance behind that. Sisters in Christ, as you are working out your salvation, you are not working out your salvation as just some generic person. You are working out your salvation as a woman of God, uniquely blessed, uniquely formed, uniquely gifted, and given unique opportunities for His glory to be made known through you, in a way that is distinct from His glory being made known through men. [Yes, men and women are] both beautiful, both wonderful, both unique and both extremely significant, [but] when we minimize what it means to be... a woman in the image of God, we undercut what it means to work out our salvation, and what it means to be sanctified as... women of God, with distinct giftings and opportunities to glorify His name, to thrive as a woman,... and know that women are saved... through the death of Christ. Jesus died to make [you the] woman God created [you] to be."

The main point of this story this morning is this... **The only limiting factor on what a woman can be is the measure of faith she has in our God.**

Read with me if you would **Judges 4:1-16**. This morning we are going to see three ways women can be heroes for God's glory in our culture today.

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing we see here is that... **Women Of God Become Heroes When They Preach The Words Of God**. After Ehud, Israel experiences an 80 year period of peace, but looking again at **vs. 1-4** we see that the pattern of judges again repeats itself. The Israelites forget God, God sends judgement by a foreign dictator, God's people cry out to him for deliverance, and then God answers and sends a judge to deliver them. This time the Foreign dictator is Jabin of the Canaanites and he oppresses the people of Israel for 20 years. And so, the people cry out and God sends them Deborah the prophetess. The word prophetess simply means one who speaks the words of God and Deborah would speak the words of God in two distinct ways.

First, she would simply tell, teach, and preach the exact words that were written down by Moses in the first 5 books of the Bible, and perhaps

even the book of Joshua at this time. She believed the words of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy to be the very words of God and so she would make sure that the people of Israel heard them and lived by them.

Secondly, she would share with the Israelites the divine revelation that God would give to her specifically for governing and judging the people. Whatever God told her to say, she then forwarded to the people – thus saith the Lord.

Now, when we are called to preach the words of God, we only have one of these options at our disposal. We are to share only what God has given us in his Word because divine revelation has ended with the completion of the canon of scripture. **Revelation 22:18-19** warn us to not add to or take away from the words of this book. Therefore, we must be very careful how we declare anything other than the words of the Bible as having come from God.

Regardless, the point is that she preached, proclaimed, and promoted God's Word to the people. She didn't judge the people according to her own wisdom.... she simply did what God told her to do and made decisions according to his wisdom. When we preach we must refrain from telling people what WE think, and preach only what GOD says. We must remember that... **There is power in God's words not ours.**

In the book *More Jesus, Less Religion*, Steve Arterburn writes: "Some time ago, I read about the work of a Wycliffe Bible translator in a remote village in Papua New Guinea. When the opening chapters of Genesis were first translated into the native language, the attitude toward women in the tribe changed overnight. They had not realized or understood that the woman had been specially formed out of the side of the man. Without even hearing this concept developed, these people immediately grasped the ideas of equality between the sexes and began adjusting their behavior. The people heard. They believed. They obeyed. They changed. Just like that." There is power in God's words.

Harriet Tubman is one of the greatest women heroes of all time. She was a spy who, even in moments of extreme danger, demonstrated nothing but raw, calm courage. Born into slavery in the 1820s, Harriet was nearly killed when her master hurled a metal object at her. She staged a daring escape in 1849, then spent years rescuing hundreds out of slavery and leading them to safety. Her code name was Moses, because she never lost a single escapee. During the Civil War, she became a secret agent for the Union Army, working behind enemy lines to scout out the territory. Despite a bounty on her head, she always managed to evade capture. A devout follower of Christ, Tubman spent much time learning, memorizing, and meditating on various verses in the Bible, such as her favorite **Isaiah 16:3**: "Hide the fugitives, do not betray the refugees." As she pondered the passages, she turned them into

prayers, and in prayer she learned to practice God's presence. 'I prayed all the time,' she told her biographer, 'about my work, everywhere; I was always talking to the Lord. When I went to the horse trough to wash my face and took up the water in my hands, I said, 'Oh, Lord, wash me, make me clean.' When I took up the towel to wipe my face and hands, I cried, 'Oh, Lord, for Jesus' sake, wipe away all my sins!' When I took up the broom and began to sweep, I groaned, 'Oh, Lord, whatsoever sin there be in my heart, sweep it out, Lord, clear and clean.'" Harriet Tubman saturated herself with God's Word, building a mind-set that transcended her background and transformed her life. Not only that, God used her to transform an entire culture, which in her day treated some people as less than human.

So, we've answered the question... what can women preach? Preach the Word of God! But still, the question remains, when can women preach, and where can women preach? Even right now the largest Christian evangelical denomination in the world, the Southern Baptist Convention, is deeply divided over this issue. Some say, women can preach anywhere and everywhere, while others take a more strict approach to some of the passages of the Bible like **1 Timothy 2:11** that forbids women to even speak in the church. It's because of this faction that Beth Moore has left the SBC. Because she has been told that because she is a woman she cannot open the Word of God and exhort the scripture to a group of people which includes men. When speaking about Beth Moore's popular speaking events, John MacArthur, who I also respect, flippantly offered one small phrase: "go home." Is this what the Bible teaches, that women like Beth just need to shut up and go home?

I'm going to land on this issue where men I respect like David Platt and Matt Chandler have landed. When we look at the specific cultural context of the church in Ephesus which Paul is addressing in 1 Timothy 2:11, and when we look at the complete counsel of scripture which includes women like Deborah, Ruth, Esther, Mary, Priscilla and Phoebe, and when we look at the myriad of passages of the Bible which tells all believers, men and women, to preach, teach, and share the Gospel with everyone, we cannot, in good conscience, say that God has forbidden women to preach, whether in a one on one setting with a woman or a child, or in a large group setting like this - as long as what is preached is done in concordance with the word of God, and as long as it is done under the approval and blessing of the elders of the church. This is why we have had Rena DeAndrea with TPS come and speak, and this is why at any Quarterly Conference any woman who is a covenant partner can speak their mind, and this is why our sister Becky Smith can stand here as she did a couple months ago, and boldly proclaim the glory of our God in his mercy and grace on the healing of her husband Al. God is glorified when women full of faith boldly share the Gospel, and unashamedly preach the words of God. **The only limiting factor on what a woman can be is the measure of faith she has in our**

God.

Secondly, we see that... **Women Of God Become Heroes When They Lead In The Ways Of God.** Looking again at this battle between Israel and Canaan in **vs. 4-10, 12-16** we see a couple of things about Deborah's leadership. She is the leader of the entire region of Israel. When the people need answers, they turn to her wisdom. When she needs armies, she summons generals. When her generals need battle plans she reveals the strategy. She's not unlike a president or any other head of state. We get no info as to how she rose to power or how God chose her... just that she is made a judge by His divine providence.

And, what kind of leader is she? She is a righteous judge. It is obvious that the people trust her judgment. She is honest, fair, and just. It's also clear that she is dependent upon God's decrees. It is because of God's revelation that she goes to war and lays out a full battle strategy. She is bold. She has no problem summoning and ordering Barak, an Alpha male, to lead her army. She is revered. Barak makes it clear that he will not go into battle without her. Why? Because he respects her as his leader. Her people, and her generals all love her and honor her. But most of all... she is concerned for the Lord's glory. She makes it clear that Barak will not get the glory... now will she get the glory... God alone will get the glory for this battle, because the battle will be won by a woman.

God wants strong, bold, wise, courageous, daring, and revered women promoting his kingdom. He wants more Kay Arthurs, Beth Moores, Elizabeth Elliots, and Mother Therasas. God is all about women's empowerment. But not the way the world sees it. No matter how big of a pedestal the world puts you on... remember the only reason God has allowed you to get to where you are is for his glory! **By all means... be the most empowered woman you can be... but remember its because of God's power.**

So if Deborah is this great leader of Israel, then why do we have so much controversy when it comes to women in leadership in the church? In order to answer that question we must look at what the Bible tells us about women in leadership. The first is the most obvious; if God appointed Deborah as the head of state for Israel it stands to reason that God has no problem with women holding high positions of power, even the highest of positions. It should not be uncommon for women to be Judges, Lawyers, Doctors, CEO's of large corporations, Governors, Senators, or even Heads of State. What or who they lead is way less important than how they lead. In all things Godly women should lead others to see the glory of God.

Secondly, the only position of leadership not available to women, according to the Bible, is the role of Elder / Pastor. Look with me at **1**

Timothy 2:12-14. When we sift through the cultural and contextual issues of this passage we are left with this principal; a woman should not exercise authority over a man in the church as an elder.

Why? Well there are some reasons given here, which we don't have time to flesh out, mainly; God created man first, and Eve was deceived first. Also, when looking at **1 Timothy 3** and the qualifications for elders, the pronoun He is used for elders and it mentions that the are to be the husbands of one wife. The way it's written tells us that it's a position only for men. And, these may seem unfair to some of us. Let me remind you, God has his reasons, and they are good, because God is good and we can trust him.

And remember this, God isn't saying women can't be leaders in the church. He's merely excluding them from one role, elder / Pastor. Within the church, God has given women a plethora of complimentary roles as servant leaders within the body. In fact, we actually have more women leaders at Stone Creek than we do men; women SC Kids leaders, women heads of boards, women on boards, and women in staff positions. If it weren't for women leadership at Stone Creek, we simply couldn't exist, we wouldn't have a church. And think about this.... if I as Pastor, and our Deacons as our elders are leading according to biblical wisdom, then we will seek the counsel of the covenant partners which inevitably includes women. Listen, no man in this church makes any decision for this church that is not made without the counsel of the women of this church.

Women of God, in society, lead in any area you desire. And, in the church, lead as servant leaders according to God's design. Regardless of where you lead, lead according to God's way. **The only limiting factor on what a woman can be is the measure of faith she has in our God.**

Lastly... **Women Of God Become Heroes When They Refuse To Compromise Their Worship Of God.** Let's read **vs. 11, 17-24.** After the main battle there is the sub-story concerning Sisera's escape. He flees the battle and seeks refuge at Heber the Kenite's house. Verse **11** lets us know that Heber has left his people the Kenites and now lives near Kedesh where the battle took place. Heber and Jabin have apparently had some type of agreement, so Sisera thinks he'll be safe there. But he wasn't aware that Heber's wife Jael was loyal to Israel. Somehow, she was aware of the battle, and she was aware of who Sisera was, and in faith she was led to kill Sisera with a tent peg. Why?

Well, **Judges 1:16** tells us that the Kenites aligned themselves with the tribe of Judah; they were adopted Israelites, and because of this they no doubt knew the God of the Israelites. As a part of Israel the Kenites were most likely oppressed along side the Israelites, and thus Heber separated himself and went out on his own. He abandoned Israel. As a coward in hiding, he tried to side with the enemy, but his wife Jael never defected.

She stayed true to her people and her God and when the opportunity came, she made it count for the glory of God. I know it's hard to see it, but Jael's tent pegging of Sisera's head was an act of worship. Jael was letting it be known that she would not abandon her God. **Judges 5:24-27** tells us that Jael was the most blessed of women because she saw the Lord's justice done. We know the words of Jesus in **Matthew 10:32-33**; if we reject Jesus before men we will be rejected by him. Jael, unlike her husband, would never abandon God. **The most heroic women are those who refuse to reject their Lord when called upon to acknowledge Him.** So, do you publicly and unashamedly worship Jesus, or is your faith hidden?

The song of Deborah and Jael's heroics detailed in Judges 5 ends with this – **Judges 5:31**: “may all your enemies perish Lord and your friends rise like the sun in his might.” The point being... those who fight for God's glory and his kingdom will be empowered. **The only limiting factor on what a woman can be is the measure of faith she has in our God**

Application

Heroic women preach God's word, lead in God's way, and refuse to compromise their worship of Christ. So, as a woman of God how do you preach his word? At work? At home? With your children? With your neighbors? As a woman of God how do you lead in his ways? Are you righteous, wise, bold, and revered? Above all, are you leading people to see the glory of God instead of your empowerment? And, as a woman of God are you taking every opportunity to let others know where your allegiance lies... with Christ your Lord? Deborah and Jael show us that God uses women for his glory. Biblically, it is completely and utterly ridiculous to even suggest that it is a flaw to be a woman. The only flaw any of us have, whether male or female, is a lack of faith in God. **The only limiting factor on what a woman can be is the measure of faith she has in our God.**

Conclusion

The modern women's empowerment movement; the feminist movement, defines an empowered woman as one who has moved beyond traditional women's roles of mothers, and house wives to being leaders in all facets of our society. I would argue that you can be a leader and still be a mother. I would argue that you can be a leader and still be a house wife if that's what you want to be. The point isn't whether you've left tradition behind or not... the point is whether you've taken Christ with you where you've gone. The modern women's empowerment movement defines an empowered woman as someone who fights for a woman's right to have equal pay, equal job opportunities, and equal

political power. The Bible agrees that women should have equality in all of these areas... But equality should never outweigh a desire to glorify God. The modern women's empowerment movement defines an empowered woman as someone who fights for their rights to have sexual freedom and abort their unborn children. The Bible defines women's empowerment as those who fight for purity and to help the helpless. The world needs women heroes, but more so the world needs women of God.