

**BREAKING
BOUNDARIES**



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DEBORAH: PASSIONATE PATRIOT

WEEK 2 DEBORAH: PASSIONATE PATRIOT

READ: Judges 4: 1-24

MONDAY – A God of Violence?



Judges 4: 6 *She sent for Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, "The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you: 'Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead them up to Mount Tabor. I will lead Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into your hands.*

How do we deal with the violence in the story of Deborah? It has the makings of an exceptional Hollywood movie!

IF it is our view that the Bible was dictated by God, then we have to accept that these events were God-ordained. OR we can recognize the humanity of the Old Testament; in that these events were recorded by humans. Their understanding and experience of events would have been shaped by their culture and theology. Retelling these stories for generations. *They interpreted everything in the light of their covenant relationship with God.* (James Harnish).

Where does that leave us – followers of Jesus Christ? We need to read these stories from the perspective of the Gospel. Remembering that the New

Testament is not devoid of violence – eg. the persecution and killing of the early followers of Jesus. And the ultimate act of violence is the crucifixion of Jesus Himself. Nor are we immune to violence today.

Jesus taught love and forgiveness, and these stories highlight the struggle between good and evil. Violence between people and nations is a sinful rebellion against a loving, life-giving God.

Perhaps our discomfort with these stories is evidence that we are drawing closer to God and the understanding of the Gospel. Perhaps through the story of Deborah, we need to examine our response and responsibility to the violence in our country, communities, families and our own hearts.



Prayer: Lord God – the maker of all things good, draw us closer to You. Help us examine our hearts and love the way You loved.
AMEN

Stand up for Jesus: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TbnhUlj2PZ4>

TUESDAY – Push through



1 Thessalonians 2: 2 *We had previously suffered and been treated outrageously in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you His gospel in the face of strong opposition.*

Who was Deborah?

In the year 1125 BC she was certainly breaking boundaries!

She was:

- **a prophetess** – she had a deep relationship with God.
- **a judge**. Having entered the Promised Land, Israel had temporary leaders known as judges who led the people.
- **a military strategist** – she led the Israelites into battle against Sisera.
- **a great leader**.

It is unclear how Deborah came to hold so many auspicious roles, but I would guess many people were unhappy with a woman being in charge. And surely, she would have had her own internal struggle before getting to this point? But eventually, having said yes to God, she became greatly respected for her wisdom and council.

Similarly, the Apostles pushed through the opposition because

they were utterly convinced about spreading the Gospel.

What are your struggles? Has life become wearisome through long months of abnormality. Perhaps you have become discouraged and downhearted.

Don't buckle under the pressure. Don't run away from them. You were made for so much more than this!

Ask God to refresh your spirit and to energize you and to give you the drive that Deborah had. Without a doubt God still has plans for you!

Barak didn't run away, he stood up and pushed through, relying on the help of Deborah. We need to **PUSH THROUGH** in order to **BREAK THROUGH**. Jesus is standing before us beckoning and encouraging us every step of the way.

You **CAN** break those boundaries!



Prayer: Lord, there have been so many struggles in this past year, but You have said that the things that lie ahead are better than those we are going through. Help me to push through. AMEN

WEDNESDAY – Grow upward



Judges 4: 3 *Because he had nine hundred chariots fitted with iron and had cruelly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years, they cried to the Lord for help.*

“Cruelly oppressed for twenty years”.... Twenty years! What took them so long? Surely they should have realized long before this that what they were doing wasn’t working. FINALLY they cry out to God!

Is this what we tend to do? In those tough times when we are crushed, anxious, afraid, angry or when that unexpected crisis comes – do we try and fix it on our own?

Deborah knew she needed to be led by God. Similarly, we would be wise to realise that when adversity strikes, we must not take the proverbial twenty years to turn to God. He is wanting and waiting to help us.

A wonderful saying by Matt Summerfield is “**God’s judgement, is life on your terms.**” He will step

back and let you do it your way. But He is longing for you to say, “I can’t.” It is at this place of surrender, that He will step in.

Take that burden and hold it up to God’s shining light. Pray, read and meditate on the Word as you cry and talk to the Lord. In so doing, you will grow in faith, until that faith enables you to FIRST seek God. If your first reaction is to kneel at the feet of your Lord – therein lies your strength!

- Is it going to be God’s terms, or your terms?

Reach upward first, not inward.

Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. Psalm 91: 1



Prayer: Lord give us the courage to face our own inadequacies and resistance and come to Your feet in humble submission and total trust that You will help us. AMEN

THURSDAY – Step back



John 5: 15 *I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing.*

...apart from Me you can do nothing....

God raised up Deborah. The only female judge of the time. Quite a radical move! Let this be a reminder to us that God uses people for who they are, and not what is the popular norm.

God can see the potential in each one of us. He has a purpose for each one of us, but sometimes we get in the way. Do you believe that you are needed by God?

We have been entrusted to partake in building the Kingdom of God. Each in their own way. Perhaps it is time to step back and ask: Lord where is my path? Perhaps it is time to step back and examine just how much we are letting God take control of our lives.

Sometimes the dramas of life suck us in and we become overwhelmed

and believe we have nothing to offer. We need take a step back from our plans, expectations and emotions in order to view the bigger picture – God’s picture. In this way we gain perspective. NEVER FORGET HOW BIG GOD IS!

Jesus also says to us “step back from your worries. I am bigger than them.” But we find this so hard to do. In some odd way, holding onto them brings a measure of comfort, but not peace. Today give to Jesus your hurts, dreams, plans, losses and gains and then step back and say “There Lord....”

Watch and see how our faithful God will begin His work in you. It’s called FAITH.



Prayer: Lord help me to step back and gain Your perspective. Help me to trust Your promises. Ordain my steps and my path and refresh my soul. AMEN

FRIDAY – Stand shoulder to shoulder



Judges 4: 8 & 9 Barak said to her, “If you go with me, I will go; but if you don’t go with me, I won’t go.” “Certainly I will go with you,” said Deborah.

Was Barak a coward? I don’t think so. He was a highly respected general who had been into battle before. But he knew the odds and he knew he needed help. He acknowledged the Godly lead of Deborah.

We need to surround ourselves with Godly people. Do not be too proud to ask for help. Barak was able to look past stereotyping and rely on the best source of help – even if it was a woman.

Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm. Proverbs 13: 20.

Moses relied on Aaron, Timothy relied on Paul and John Mark relied on Barnabas. And they all relied on their faith communities. Who do you stand shoulder to shoulder with?

Togetherness gives each person greater strength. The isolation enforced upon us in the last 18 months has quite simply broken-down community. I have heard stories of how those facing terminal illness, relationship break-ups and other hardships, have all said how difficult it is to face, when you cannot get together.

Can Deborah energise you to stand shoulder to shoulder with others; with renewed conviction and energy despite the challenge of isolation?

From time to time we will all need to be held up by those on either side of us. Will you hold up your faith, as protection, to the one on your right and the one on your left?

And together stand for Christ.



Prayer: Lord stand among us now and help us build up what isolation has destroyed. Renew our energy and commitment to each other in Your name. AMEN

Come Together: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6VZWlylaFcg>