

Judges 3-5

Well, we have come to the bedtime stories, part of the Bible.

There is some gnarly and gruesome encounters in the next few chapters of the Book of Judges.

Let's pray before we start...

So let us get into it..., we are in Judges Chapter 3, verse 1...

The Nations Remaining in the Land

3:1 Now these are the nations which the Lord left, that He might test Israel by them, that is, all who had not known any of the wars in Canaan 2 (this was only so that the generations of the children of Israel might be taught to know war, at least those who had not formerly known it), 3 namely, five lords of the Philistines, all the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hivites who dwelt in Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal Hermon to the entrance of Hamath. 4 And they were left, that He might test Israel by them, to know whether they would obey the commandments of the Lord, which He had commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses.

5 Thus the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. 6 And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons; and they served their gods.

Remember after the days of Joshua' conquest, the Nation of Israel was overcome with apathy, and failed to keep taking the land, and living in obedience to God's commands.

This list of nations left in the land tell a very sad tale.

Verse 3 lists the people who lived to the southwest, namely the Philistines, and also the to the north, these are all lands Joshua did not conquer yet.

But the interesting, and sad detail is that verse 5 includes the people whom Joshua already subjected, but never completely wiped out.

And we see Israel absolutely failed the test, instead of advancing in faith, knowing their God was leading the charge, they instead chose to co-exist with the pagans.

They married unbelieving wives perhaps with the intentions of bringing them into their faith, but we see the influence went the other way, and they ended up serving false gods.

The Canaanite religion was so sensual, that it appealed to man's fleshly appetite, and they could not resist.

The conditions in Israel were drier at this point.

Remember the tribes are now segregating one from another, and they are no longer shoulder-to-shoulder in serving God's purposes, instead they are independently looking out for their own interests.

We learned the fateful words about this generation last time... **Judges 2:10**

When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel.

That mighty, conquering generation failed to pass down the knowledge and experience of their Warrior God.

They first generation engaged in the fighting, and protected their children from the dangers of warfare, and in their good intentions of wanting their children to have the good life, their kids grew up complacent and spoiled, and unskilled in battle.

They became pacifist, and lost the zeal to maintain their Holy separation unto God.

Church understand, our kids today, must be freed to experience our God, to develop their own faith, we cannot protect them from the work and warfare we are involved with.

We have to let them learn to engage in the battle.

And this is difficult for us sometimes... we want to guard them from the realities of our world.

Just the other day, Jess ran into Target, you know, to get a couple things, that turned into a couple more things.

So I was lapping around the parking lot waiting for Jess to come out, and there was this 19-20 year-old young homeless girl sitting out front.

I had my 6-year-old Sofia sitting right next to me in the middle.

And we drove by this girl 2, 3 times, and I notice Sofia getting uneasy in her seat.

And when we would drive by the young homeless girl, she was just staring intently at her.

And I am coming around the 4th time, and Sofia says, "Daddy, I think I want to pray for that girl."

Now, I am very protective of my babies.

And I start rationalizing what Sof is saying, in my mind, I am thinking of the dangers, or if she would even be brave enough, and all these doubts are rushing over me.

So I asked, "Sof are you sure, I cannot go with you, I have to stay in the truck with your brother and sister's," and I am hoping, she says "never mind daddy."

It is just easier for her not too, and you know, leave that kind of ministry to mom or dad, I could ask Jess to do it when she comes out of the store.

But I knew that I had to let her try, and if you know Sof, she is about as an extreme introvert as they come.

If you say “hi” to her here, she hides behind her hands, and turns red.

So this is totally out of character, and I know the Spirit is working in her little heart.

So I come around, and I tell her to get ready to jump out and pray for the young lady.

Sof says a little prayer that blows me away, “God give me courage.”

And she jumps out as I stop the truck, and she walked up to the girl and asked her if she needed prayer.

The young girl, emphatically says “yes,” and Sofia, my six-year-old prays for her.

I am watching just dumbfounded, and I realize I need to get a picture, this is a profound moment.

And I snapped this. [Picture of Sofia praying...](#)

Now, after all this, I thought how foolish I was to try to protect her from that moment, of being used by God, experiencing God’s Spirit overcoming her and giving her courage.

I thought of all the times I may have stifled her faith because of my own reasoning.

You see we have to let them go, and they need to experience our God for themselves, or He will be nothing more than the fairy tales they watch on TV.

They must experience conflict, and times when their faith will be tested, and tried.

It is through the conflict they will experience our God, and He will become their God, not another Disney story.

And this is what happened in Israel, they failed to let their children experience God in the battle, through conflict, and a generation rose that knew religion, but had no relationship with God.

And a verse that sums up the time period of Israel's history known as the Era of Judges, is in **Judges 17:6 In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.**

This is a selfish generation, who cares nothing for their neighbor or their God.

God will be true to His covenant with Israel, and when their hearts turn from Him, well, He promised calamity and captivity.

God will chasten His people, and in their chastening they would turn their hearts back to God in desperation, and God would send a local hero, a judge, to break their bonds of captivity loose.

And tonight we will get to meet a few of these hero's that God used during this time of apostasy in Israel.

Let us look at the story of our first hero, starting in verse 7...

Othniel

7 So the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord. They forgot the Lord their God, and served the Baals and Asherahs. 8 Therefore the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and He sold them into the hand of Cushan-Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia; and the children of Israel served Cushan-Rishathaim eight years.

Now, understand here the love and longing the Lord has for His people.

It is not acceptable for them to prostitute themselves to other gods.

Please know, that it is God's love that drives Him to chasten Israel.

Had He not loved them, He would have left them alone to their rebellion, and in the end, they would have been undiscernible from the heathen nations God was judging.

Now, we see here, this first season of chastening under this Mesopotamian king will be shorter, and each time the lesson will be prolonged as the offenses increase.

Please understand this tonight as a child of God, He will not allow His children to live like the unbelieving world without chastisement or discipline.

He loves you too much to allow you to throw your life away into the destructive ways of this sensual and licentious world.

Perhaps you are in a season of chastening tonight, and you have been angry with God, please consider, it is His love for you, that you are experiencing the miseries that you are in.

He is drawing your heart back to Him, He is drawing you back to the right path, the path of obedience, that path comes with His blessing.

So, it is His love that allows this hardship in Israel, and we see God's ways do draw them back to Himself.

9 When the children of Israel cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for the children of Israel, who delivered them: Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. 10 The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel. He went out to war, and the Lord delivered Cushan-Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed over Cushan-Rishathaim. 11 So the land had rest for forty years. Then Othniel the son of Kenaz died.

God hears the repentant cries of His people, and raises up a familiar man.

Othniel, the mighty Caleb's relative.

Othniel was one of the better judges, perhaps because he was part of the conquest of Canaan with Joshua.

But we see something interesting here, it was not Othniel's heritage or even his experience that made this man a hero.

In verse 10, we see the only factor that mattered, the Spirit of God came upon him, and it was by God's power and might that Othniel was able to make war, and deliver Israel.

We do not know much of this man, nor will we learn much of many of the judges.

They were for the most part oddities, and nobodies. Their biographies are left without glamour or prestige. Because all that mattered, was that God called them and God's Spirit equipped them.

When God moved to deliver Israel, He used ordinary men, and with the simple, God did the profound.

God's method of choosing His servants today have not changed.

He still uses the ordinary man or woman, to do extraordinary tasks.

He does this, so He gets the glory, and not man.

Church, please understand as we read through Judges, God can touch our ordinary lives and our ordinary circumstances, and make His Name Great through us.

There is only one thing needed to find success in God's Kingdom, it is to acknowledge our inadequacies, so that His Spirit has room to move among us.

So we see for forty years as long as Othniel was alive, they had rest.

It was once again through the crisis of battle that Israel learned to keep their heart loyal to their God, but once the memory of that trial began to wane.

And the leader that represented such a victory in the battle died, their hearts once again left the Lord their God.

Now, if you take a quick look back through Church History, when God's Spirit used a man to begin a new movement, and revival took place, it usually only took one generation, and the revival died off.

Once the man died that God used, it seems the movement always becomes institutionalized, and man begins bringing rigid structure to the movement of the Spirit.

And once man takes the reigns, it kills the revival, and the Spirit is grieved and eventually hindered, and religion settles in to destroy the work.

We are not immune to the ups and downs that Israel experienced today in the church.

So forty years, and once again we read in...

Ehud

12 And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord. So the Lord strengthened Eglon king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the Lord. 13 Then he gathered to himself the people of Ammon and Amalek, went and defeated Israel, and took possession of the City of Palms. 14 So the children of Israel served Eglon king of Moab eighteen years.

So the first king that God sent was from all the way up by Assyria, but the second king is from the tribe of Reuben's region, the land of Moab.

Remember the Moabites were the decedents of Lot and a by-product of his incestuous relationship with his daughter.

The Moabite king Eglon joins forces with their relatives through Lot's other daughter, the Ammonites, and also Israel's arch-enemies the Amalekites.

And for a much longer period of time, 18 years the Israelites served king Eglon.

But the pattern continues in verse 15... As God's mercy and patience is evident here.

15 But when the children of Israel cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for them: Ehud the son of Gera, the Benjamite, a left-handed man. By him the children of Israel sent tribute to Eglon king of Moab. 16 Now Ehud made himself a dagger (it was double-edged and a cubit in length) and fastened it

under his clothes on his right thigh. 17 So he brought the tribute to Eglon king of Moab. (Now Eglon was a very fat man.) 18 And when he had finished presenting the tribute, he sent away the people who had carried the tribute.

Now, it is interesting, there is no rhyme or reason in God's selection of His man.

This time God looks to the tribe of Benjamin, and finds a left-handed assassin.

Now, Benjamin seems to be known for this trait of being left-handed, later on in the Book of Judges, we will read about 700 left-handed stone slingers.

Now, this was an advantage for Israel's selected hero, Ehud.

Surely the king's secret service would have searched the oppressed Israelites tribute carriers.

But they would have more than likely searched the left thigh of Ehud, because most people were right handed.

But they missed the hidden dagger.

Now, this was common practice for a conquered people to bring a seasonal tribute to their overlords.

And usually it was the ruler of such people that brought the gift for the oppressing king.

But something happens to Ehud on the way back home, and he has a crisis of faith...

19 But he himself turned back from the stone images that were at Gilgal, and said, "I have a secret message for you, O king."

He said, "Keep silence!" And all who attended him went out from him.

Ehud on the way back home, sees the idols set up at Gilgal.

Maybe it was the idolatry at such a vital place for Israel during Joshua's conquest that led him to turn around.

Remember Gilgal was a place where God and Israel strategized together, and now the pagans held their worship services there.

But whatever the reason, it is the place Ehud had enough, and God's Spirit comes upon Him, he heads back alone to king Eglon.

We see the pride of king Eglon here, in his arrogance he believes he is the only one worthy enough of such a secret message.

This king had grown complacent and fat, he was full of pride, his years of receiving tribute had become a handicap for him, in his comfort, his calorie intake has made him lazy and idle.

20 So Ehud came to him (now he was sitting upstairs in his cool private chamber).

No air conditioning, so they had to rely on the breeze whisking through the upstairs room to keep this heavy man from sweating to death.

Then Ehud said, "I have a message from God for you." So he arose from his seat. 21 Then Ehud reached with his left hand, took the dagger from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly. 22 Even the hilt went in after the blade, and the fat closed over the blade, for he did not draw the dagger out of his belly; and his entrails came out. 23 Then Ehud went out through the porch and shut the doors of the upper room behind him and locked them.

And here we go, I feel as though our unknown writer is having fun writing the details of this account, as he puts incredible detail into this story.

The obese king is so fat, that when Ehud thrusts his dagger through, his whole blade and handle got lost in the guts that are spilling out all over the ground.

I'm sure your son's would love this as a bedtime story.

So Ehud pulls his hand out, but was not able to save his blade.

And he escapes, and locks the chamber's doors.

Verse 24...

24 When he had gone out, Eglon's servants came to look, and to their surprise, the doors of the upper room were locked. So they said, "He is probably

attending to his needs in the cool chamber." 25 So they waited till they were embarrassed, and still he had not opened the doors of the upper room.

Therefore they took the key and opened them. And there was their master, fallen dead on the floor.

So the servants think that their fat king is going to the restroom, but enough time goes by that they are embarrassed if that is true.

They call for a key, and open the door only to see their king dead.

The time delay allows for a timely escape...

26 But Ehud had escaped while they delayed, and passed beyond the stone images and escaped to Seirah. 27 And it happened, when he arrived, that he blew the trumpet in the mountains of Ephraim, and the children of Israel went down with him from the mountains; and he led them. 28 Then he said to them, "Follow me, for the Lord has delivered your enemies the Moabites into your hand." So they went down after him, seized the fords of the Jordan leading to Moab, and did not allow anyone to cross over. 29 And at that time they killed about ten thousand men of Moab, all stout men of valor; not a man escaped. 30 So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest for eighty years.

So Ehud runs passed the idols again at Gilgal.

And he arrives in at the mountains of Ephraim, and he courageously musters the warriors of Israel for a battle.

He explains his own personal victory, and it creates courage and trust in their God, and they charge into battle.

They strategically cut off the passages across the Jordan River, and isolated the Moabites in Israel's territory.

They were able to kill ten thousand men of Moab. It says all stout, and men of valor.

Now that word stout, means 'fat' as well.

So they like their king, have grown fat in their comfort, and off Israel's tribute.

For 18 years, they were able to control the people of God, and take from all their labors.

But God has saved them, and it seems this time the lesson was learned, 18 years of the Lord's discipline allowed for 80 years of rest.

But this will be the best Israel will ever do in regards to longevity.

And it seems as though it was only because of the longevity of Ehud's life that Israel remained faithful this long.

Because in the next chapter his death will allow the nation to once again, fall into apostasy.

But first we read of another, perhaps local judge, maybe a contemporary of Ehud or the next judge Deborah.

It is an obscure account, and we know very little of this next man...

Shamgar

31 After him was Shamgar the son of Anath, who killed six hundred men of the Philistines with an ox goad; and he also delivered Israel.

This minor judge is interesting, his name Shamgar is not Hebrew, and some think it is Hurrian, an ancient Mesopotamian people group.

This means he may have been a Canaanite convert to the Hebrew God.

This is linked to the mixed marriages in Canaan.

And God here, once again uses an unlikely character, who uses whatever is available to him, and God uses him to deliver Israel.

An ox goad was a pole about 8 feet long that had a metal sharp end and they would goad the livestock with it while they were plowing.

Some of these goads were as much as 6 inches thick.

So you can imagine the supernatural strength that Shamgar experienced in this victory over six hundred Philistines.

Once again, we see this principle, that God uses the most unlikely men and women in His work.

God selects those that would normally be overlooked, and He does not choose the most gifted, the best trained, the rising star, or on the basis of any human ability.

He found this farmer, who only had a tool used to prod his oxen along, and God said, “Yep, I can get glory from Shamgar.”

And equipped with only the Spirit of God, this man uses what is available to him, and God grants the victory.

God still uses the most unlikely people, who do not have much to offer for His work.

I remember when I still had a hammer in my hand everyday swinging that hammer.

I knew God was calling me into the ministry.

And I shared this with an outgoing youth pastor, and word had spread through him, that I believed I had a calling on my life, and I believed God had called me to serve in fulltime ministry.

And out of nowhere I got an email from a woman, she was a doctor’s wife, professional and wealthy.

And she informed me of how foolish I was for believing that I was called into the ministry.

She explained any one going into the ministry should have a minimum of a master's degree.

She said I was untrained, uneducated, and disqualified.

I don't know why she felt she had the authority to speak this into my life, but she thought her status in society gave her that authority.

It was devastating to me, because I was sure I heard God's voice on the matter.

But she was right, I had no training or special education regarding ministry.

So this derailed me for a while.

Until my pastor revealed to me, he too had no training, no schooling, and in fact, when he told his pastor that he was called into the ministry, and wanted to take his pastoral training class, he was denied.

So he served in the parking lot ministry for many years faithfully.

And eventually through unforeseen circumstances, God established him as a pastor there in Lake Havasu.

Well, that was encouraging, and he told me to just stay faithful.

Now, it is incredible to me, that that lady was completely wrong, she was judging on a worldly scale,

and God never considers the world's assessments, in fact, He usually does the complete opposite of what the world does.

The woman ended up leaving the church, divorcing her prestigious husband, and I never heard from that Sanballet again.

You see God did not look for a mighty warrior here in Israel, but he used a foreigner, who was skilled not for war, but farming, and God used his farming equipment to bring deliverance against a people group who were fierce in battle.

The Philistines, if you remember were so fierce when Moses was leading the nation out of Israel, that God went around them, until the nation was more prepared.

And the Philistines will be Israel's greatest foe in the years ahead.

But for this moment, a farmer was able to weaken them.

You see what's possible, when you surrender your will and life over to God, anything is possible.

So the next two chapters continue this narrative of God using the most unlikely hero to deliver Israel.

These two chapters give us the encounter of Deborah and Barak, chapter 4 being the historical record, and chapter 5 being the poetically illustrated record.

Deborah

4:1 When Ehud was dead, the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord. 2 So the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. The commander of his army was Sisera, who dwelt in Harosheth Hagoyim. 3 And the children of Israel cried out to the Lord; for Jabin had nine hundred chariots of iron, and for twenty years he had harshly oppressed the children of Israel.

So God raises up a new king, from the once conquered city of Hazor.

This king Jabin had a fierce general who is named Sisera, and they controlled Israel with a force of 900 terrorizing chariots of iron.

This was a hopeless scene here, as the children of Israel could never outmatch that kind of strength.

And they were oppressed for 20 years this time, under the threat of these weapons of mass destruction.

But once again, God only needs one loyal heart, and God with any person is the majority.

And here, we see the depravity of Israel has reached an all-time low in the spiritual condition, the men, who are called to lead are nowhere to be found, only a woman, whose heart is loyal to her God is being used as the leader in Israel.

Verse 4 reads...

4 Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at that time. 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. 6 Then she sent and called for Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, "Has not 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'?"

So this wife and mother in Israel, is set apart as a prophetess, and she is judging Israel between Ramah and Bethel, under a tree named after her.

Now, Deborah was quite the woman, she lived in a world where women did not lead, yet the nation was responding to her as their leader.

Her ear was to God, and she spoke on behalf of God.

Understand, women are not to be viewed unequally to men.

Now, biblically, a man's role and a woman's role is different.

Men are called by God to lead, and women are called to help and nurture.

The different roles are not to belittle one or the other, but to bring order.

But what happens when men do not step up to their calling?

We see this often in the church, the husband is a spiritual weakling, and although he is called to lead the household, he negates his responsibility.

Now, I am often amazed at the strength and endurance of a woman, when the man is not in this place of leadership and provision.

The women often adapt, and overcome, and we see this often in the church today, many times they lead spiritually, lead in the bread winning, and at the same time they are nurturing toward the children, and caring for the home.

A woman, if she has too will do it all.

But that is not the design of God, and it is a sign of spiritual rebellion when the household is led by the weaker vessel.

And here in Israel, Deborah is forced to lead, because no men are willing.

And when we meet Israel's general, we will see how far the men have sunk into a spiritual cowardice.

I remember my sister Jacquie, she came out of her meth addiction, saved by Jesus, and miraculously healed.

She ended up marrying a pastor, who was in the foursquare movement at the time.

And in that movement, they get a little unbiblical, and call the wives pastors as well.

And you know this is a big no, no in our particular movement Calvary Chapel.

I remember telling some brothers in Havasu that my sister was pastor now, and they became indignant.

And they demanded to know what my father, a Calvary Chapel pastor thought of this.

And I said, well, he surely is very happy and blessed by the fact that my sister is no longer called a tweaker, but now carries the title pastor.

I remember another pastor Ken Graves, defended my sister, he said, "If more men, would do what God called them to do, then women would not have too!"

And he was right, none of those judgmental religious people were willing to step into the calling of God.

They rather arm chair quarter back the ministry.

Anyway, no men in Israel were stepping up to the plate so Deborah fills the void wonderfully.

And she calls Barak to lead, who seemingly is ducking his calling.

She reminds him of his position and purpose, and assures him he will be victorious, and now, look at this cowardly man in verse 8...

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!"

His faith in God is nonexistent; he is riding on the faith of the mighty Deborah.

This tells us the spiritual condition of Israel, God has become an idea, not a Person.

And Barak the faithless, has to be propped up by Deborah the faithful.

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. 10 And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; he went up with ten thousand men under his command, and Deborah went up with him.

11 Now Heber the Kenite, of the children of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, had separated himself from the Kenites and pitched his tent near the terebinth tree at Zaanaim, which is beside Kedesh.

12 And they reported to Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor. 13 So Sisera gathered together all his chariots, nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people who were with him, from Harosheth Hagoyim to the River Kishon.

14 Then Deborah said to Barak, "Up! For this is the day in which the Lord has delivered Sisera into your hand. Has not the Lord gone out before you?" So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand men following him. 15 And the Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army with the edge of the sword before Barak; and Sisera alighted from his chariot and fled away on foot. 16 But Barak pursued the chariots and the army as far as Harosheth Hagoyim, and all the army of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword; not a man was left.

Now, when we get to the song of Deborah in the next chapter, we will see that this battle was not won by the timid Barak, but God intervened Himself, using possibly flooding rains and even an angel army.

There is a slaughter as the chariots are bogged down in the rain and terrain, and the Israelite army is allowed to do the cleanup mission.

But the powerful pagan general is able to escape, let's continue on...

17 However, Sisera had fled away on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite; for there was peace between Jabin king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite. 18 And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said to him, "Turn aside, my lord, turn aside to me; do not fear." And when he had turned aside with her into the tent, she covered him with a blanket.

Now, Heber was a decedent of Moses' father-in-law. They became a nomadic, Bedouin type of people in the land of Israel.

When you go to Israel today, there are still these Bedouins living throughout the deserts there.

I remember being in Jerusalem, and one of these Bedouin men were strolling through the streets of this 21st century people, yet looking as though he was from another time.

He spoke English, and asked me where I was from, I replied, "California." He threw his hands up in the air, and gave a great shout of joy, and grabbed my face, and gave me a huge customary kiss on the lips.

Then he grabbed the young man next to me, and kissed him.

And we were transported to another time and custom. But these nomadic types are still very much in this region.

And here the general sees their tent, and knows there is peace between them and his king, so he finds refuge there.

Which these people are very courteous and hospitable. So he said to the wife of Heber, Jael...

19 ~~Then he said to her,~~ "Please give me a little water to drink, for I am thirsty." So she opened a jug of milk,

gave him a drink, and covered him. 20 And he said to her, "Stand at the door of the tent, and if any man comes and inquires of you, and says, 'Is there any man here?' you shall say, 'No.'"

I don't know your experience in hot deserts, but when your body needs water, and you drink milk instead, it is like drinking a brick that sits at the bottom of your stomach, and lays you out flat.

In Havasu, I got in my head one day, after framing houses in the 120 degree hell there, that I wanted Strawberry Nesquick and Milk when I got home.

I necked to big glasses of that stuff when I got home, and I thought I was going to die from the effects of that cream in my gut.

Sisera's first clue here was this woman giving him this cream instead of water, but he is exhausted and thirsty so he drinks it down.

And he fell asleep, I imagine him holding his hurting tummy.

He asks her to stand guard, while he rests up.

Then our bedtime story gets interesting...

21 Then Jael, Heber's wife, took a tent peg and took a hammer in her hand, and went softly to him and drove the peg into his temple, and it went down into the ground; for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died. 22 And then, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to

meet him, and said to him, "Come, I will show you the man whom you seek." And when he went into her tent, there lay Sisera, dead with the peg in his temple.

Heber had an alliance with the losing side, so his wife acts for the family, and once again, God uses an ordinary person, with a very ordinary tool, to bring about the victory.

It is not uncommon for these nomadic women to be the ones to pitch the tents.

This was her skill, and she had a sure swing and precise hit, through the skull her tent peg went.

She calls in the Israelite general to see that her family's allegiance is on the right side.

And Deborah's prophecy is fulfilled.

Because Barak was too weak to go alone, and he only went with the security of Deborah's faith, this obscure woman is chosen to free Israel, and Barak is not allowed to be the hero here.

But of course, God used this woman Jael, because it brought Him Glory... and we read in verse 23...

23 So on that day God subdued Jabin king of Canaan in the presence of the children of Israel. 24 And the hand of the children of Israel grew stronger and stronger against Jabin king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin king of Canaan.

After king Jabin lost his fleet of chariots and his mighty general, it was only a matter of time before he too was defeated by God's people.

And once again, the nation of Israel, is walking in faith, and they are strong, as long as Deborah is leading them.

So next chapter, is the poetic version of the story, the song of Deborah....

The Song of Deborah

5:1 Then Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam sang on that day, saying:

2 "When leaders lead in Israel, When the people willingly offer themselves, Bless the Lord!

3 "Hear, O kings! Give ear, O princes! I, even I, will sing to the Lord; I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel.

4 Lord, when You went out from Seir, When You marched from the field of Edom, The earth trembled and the heavens poured, The clouds also poured water; 5 The mountains gushed before the Lord, This Sinai, before the Lord God of Israel.

6 "In the days of Shamgar, son of Anath, In the days of Jael, The highways were deserted, And the travelers walked along the byways.

We see the drier conditions in Israel during the time of these incidents.

Their enemies have taken control of all the main roads, they were forced to take little trails and side roads out of fear.

We see now in verse seven...

7 Village life ceased, it ceased in Israel, Until I, Deborah, arose, Arose a mother in Israel. 8 They chose new gods; Then there was war in the gates; Not a shield or spear was seen among forty thousand in Israel. 9 My heart is with the rulers of Israel Who offered themselves willingly with the people. Bless the Lord!

10 "Speak, you who ride on white donkeys, Who sit in judges' attire, And who walk along the road. 11 Far from the noise of the archers, among the watering places, There they shall recount the righteous acts of the Lord, The righteous acts for His villagers in Israel; Then the people of the Lord shall go down to the gates.

12 "Awake, awake, Deborah! Awake, awake, sing a song! Arise, Barak, and lead your captives away, O son of Abinoam!

13 "Then the survivors came down, the people against the nobles; The Lord came down for me against the mighty. 14 From Ephraim were those whose roots were in Amalek. After you, Benjamin, with your peoples, From Machir rulers came down, And from Zebulun those who bear the recruiter's staff. 15 And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah; As Issachar,

so was Barak Sent into the valley under his command;
Among the divisions of Reuben There were great
resolves of heart.

So first Deborah acknowledges all the tribes and
people who came to help.

She is talking to those who sent warriors to fight and
join in the battle.

Yet, she ends the positive with Reuben, saying he was
verbally supportive, but he did not go beyond words,
they stayed on their side of the river as we read next....

16 Why did you sit among the sheepfolds, To hear the
pipings for the flocks? The divisions of Reuben have
great searchings of heart.

They stayed where it was safe, they were big talkers,
but did not back up their speech.

Doesn't it seem this way in the church, those who are
the biggest talkers, those demanding the most of the
church, do the least in the church?

I remember meeting with a bunch of men in a Bible
Study, and these were seasoned Christians, and I was a
baby in the Lord.

We were a praying group, we were asking the Lord to
speak to us regarding how He could use us in the
church, and God spoke to us, regarding starting a
street witnessing group.

And we went to our pastor and told him what God had been speaking.

They selected me as the mouthpiece, and in my young foolish zeal, I went ahead.

Pastor Ray, gave me the green light to start the ministry.

And I went back to the men, and told them, I had a night, a time, a park for us to meet in, and those guys praised the Lord.

It truly was God speaking to us, and I was so excited to step out in faith with these men I looked up to so much.

But the first night of ministry, no one but my faithful wife joined me.

I was so disappointed, and went to the Bible study that week, and those men, talked so big, and how they are so gifted in evangelism, and how they needed to be out there.

And the next week came, and again, no one showed up.

And I went back to Bible Study, and I realized what was taking place, these men had no desire to do anything, but sit around and talk about what God wanted us to do.

They were big talkers, but little walkers.

That was my first experience to Christian apathy, for the 2 years Jess and I did the street team, not one of those boisterous men joined us.

Like Reuben, they said no you go ahead, we will stay comfortable.

Church don't be the tribe of Reuben, engage in the work of God, but Reuben is not the only excuse maker, look next as Deborah calls out the apathetic.

17 Gilead (Half tribe of Manasseh) stayed beyond the Jordan, And why did Dan remain on ships? Asher continued at the seashore, And stayed by his inlets. 18 Zebulun is a people who jeopardized their lives to the point of death, Naphtali also, on the heights of the battlefield.

These tribes were busy trading and making a life, they did not have time to engage in the work of the Lord. Commerce and money making was more important than serving the Lord.

And today, so many miss out on the benefits and blessings of serving the Lord.

You know I looked in on Sunday at our children's ministry.

And my heart was so blessed at what I saw.

I saw so many faithful servants engaged in the work of the Lord, and it just blessed me to see that so many are finding the truly blessed life.

It is not found in the rat race of this world, but in selfless service to our God.

But so many today, they are not willing to leave their merchant ships, or worldly pursuits to find the secret to a blessed life.

We were made to engage in the battle, and serve His purposes, anything else is a meaningless pursuit.

So these tribes missed out, then we read in verse 19...

19 "The kings came and fought, Then the kings of Canaan fought In Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo; They took no spoils of silver. 20 They fought from the heavens; The stars from their courses fought against Sisera. 21 The torrent of Kishon swept them away, That ancient torrent, the torrent of Kishon. O my soul, march on in strength! 22 Then the horses' hooves pounded, The galloping, galloping of his steeds. 23 'Curse Meroz,' said the angel of the Lord, 'Curse its inhabitants bitterly, Because they did not come to the help of the Lord, To the help of the Lord against the mighty.'

This is where we see the supernatural intervention of this battle, the stars from heaven, possibly being the angelic army, and the Kishon being flooded to stall the chariots, and the galloping speaking to the fleeing army.

We see a curse is given to an unknown city, and perhaps Meroz is unknown because of this curse.

But they did not join in the work of the Lord.

This being the curse of doing nothing.

We here sometimes the excuse, "Well I didn't do anything."

Well that is the problem, get involved, get busy, doing nothing is not right way to approach God's work.

Then we see a blessing is given to God's chosen servant.

24 "Most blessed among women is Jael, The wife of Heber the Kenite; Blessed is she among women in tents. 25 He asked for water, she gave milk; She brought out cream in a lordly bowl. 26 She stretched her hand to the tent peg, Her right hand to the workmen's hammer; She pounded Sisera, she pierced his head, She split and struck through his temple. 27 At her feet he sank, he fell, he lay still; At her feet he sank, he fell; Where he sank, there he fell dead.

Now Deborah is a mother herself, so she mentions the mother of this fallen general Sisera, and kind of mocks her.

28 "The mother of Sisera looked through the window, And cried out through the lattice, 'Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why tarries the clatter of his chariots?'

And there are weeks my wife and children have coined this scripture for me.

They look out our window and say, 'Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why tarried the clatter of his truck? I know this, because every night I get out of my truck, and open the garage, and I hear screaming and yelling, "Daddy is home!" And I get trampled as I come through the door.

But Sisera is not coming home, and Deborah pictures his mother waiting for him.

And she imagines the comfort of her friends...

29 Her wisest ladies answered her, Yes, she answered herself, 30 'Are they not finding and dividing the spoil: To every man a girl or two; For Sisera, plunder of dyed garments, Plunder of garments embroidered and dyed, Two pieces of dyed embroidery for the neck of the looter?'

31 "Thus let all Your enemies perish, O Lord! But let those who love Him be like the sun When it comes out in full strength."

So the land had rest for forty years.

What a wonderful picture we have in Deborah and these other judges.

Tonight we have seen God's choice is not what man looks for at all.

God looks for the weak, the left-handers, the overlooked mother and wife; He will even use the timid and cowardly.

Rom 2:11 For there is no partiality with God.

God can use anyone for His glory

Picture of Sofia.

Even a six year old, who is obedient to the leading of the Holy Spirit can be effective in the work.

God can and will use your life, know this tonight, even if you only have an ox goad or a tent peg to offer into His service, God will do the extraordinary with it.

Church, I hope you know this tonight, none of us are good enough or amazing enough to get God's attention and praise, and that is the very thing that makes us usable, we are ordinary, and that makes us a mighty force to be used for His Glory.

I will end with one of the most empowering scriptures in the Bible for ordinary people like us...

1 Cor. 1:26-31 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. 27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; 28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, 29 that no flesh should glory in His presence. 30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God — and righteousness and sanctification and

redemption — 31 that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord."

We are just the people God looks to use.

Let's pray...

These guys are up here to pray with you tonight.