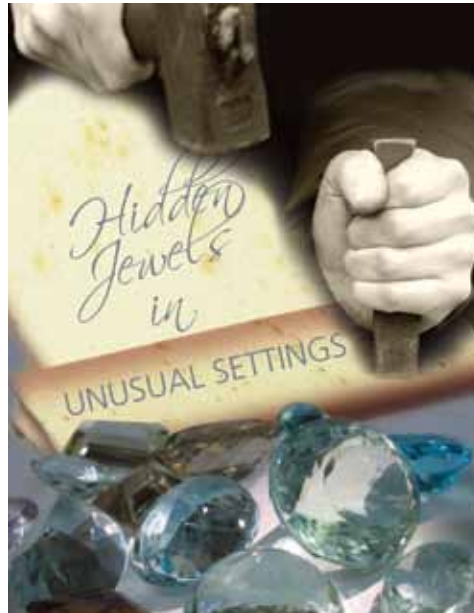


Womanhood
HIDDEN JEWELS
CHARACTER STUDIES OF SOME LESSER KNOWN WOMEN IN THE BIBLE

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE
SEPTEMBER 2010



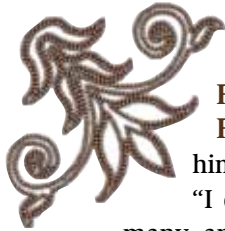
Jael & Phoebe

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Unusual Settings

JAEL AND PHOEBE



FOCUS: God desires us to shine, even when we as women find ourselves in unusual and challenging situations.

FOOTPRINT: Judges 4; Romans 16:1-2

FACETS: “Blessed above women shall Jael...be. He asked water and she gave him milk; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish” (JUDGES 5:24-25).

“I commend unto you Phebe our sister...for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also” (ROMANS 16:1-2).

FORTUNE: “We never know how high we are, Till we are asked to rise. And then if we are true to plan, Our stature touch the skies”—Emily Dickinson.

I just love when the circus comes to town. With so many things going on in a three ring circus, it stretches all your senses trying to keep track of them. Things are different, now, but the circus used to be set up in a tent. The workers would come to town early to set up the huge tents for the big top acts. They would drive the powerful stakes deep into the ground with the sound ringing out loudly.

Just imagine someone driving one of those stakes into a head? That’s what part of our study involves. The enemy of God’s people is pinned to the ground by a woman. Talk about a desperate housewife! She wasn’t satisfied with washing clothes and sweeping the dirt floor. She took matters into her own hand to help her people, the Israelites.

Jael, whose name means “wild mountain goat”, was certainly not some little petite socialite. She was probably a very strong, earthy type woman with a mind of her own. She saw an opportunity to help the cause and with a quick swing of the large hammer took away the threat sleeping in her tent. This was pretty much the end of her story, but it had far-reaching consequences.

The second part of the study involves a completely different type of woman. Phoebe, whose name means, “radiant”, was called a “saint”. She also was a strong, self-assured woman, or she would never have survived the long, arduous journey from Corinth to Rome. I see her as calm, smart, and very organized. She may have even been a teacher. She was certainly a co-laborer with Paul.

How do we mesh these two women together? They both had a task to perform. They each had a part in accomplishing God’s will. They were both a part of the bigger picture. God was at work in their lives just as He is at work in your life. Stay in such a close relationship with Him that you will recognize when He has something for you to deliver.

JAEL, THE OVERLOOKED

- ❖ Write the Facets on a 3x5 card for review and study this month.
- ❖ Go over questions 1-3, and answers for Week One, p. 16.
- ❖ Read Proverbs 15:7 aloud. Do you think it’s important to speak wisely?
- ❖ Do you always know what to say in difficult situations like funerals or when someone has a terminal illness, issues an awkward comment, or has serious trouble in their family? (Proverbs 25:11; Isaiah 50:4)
- ❖ How can we know the right words to say in these unusual settings? (Be sincere, be comforting, be loving, be encouraging, and be brief.)
- ❖ What is the most unusual setting you’ve ever encountered?
- ❖ Did you feel comfortable or uncomfortable?
- ❖ How do you think Sisera felt when he came to Jael’s tent? (Exhausted? Hungry? Thirsty? Safe?)



- ❖ Do you believe they make small talk about the war, or do you think he just collapsed in relief to be away from the battle?
- ❖ Do you think Jael had a plan to commit murder, or did she act in unpremeditated violence?
LEADER'S NOTE: Jael was not some little weakling. It took strong muscles to drive the heavy pegs that held their tent houses in place. She did this every time they decided to move to another location. I believe she had muscles like a man, yet she was still a woman. In the culture of the nomadic tribes the women lived in tents apart from the men. It was a capital offense for a man to be found in the tent of a woman if she wasn't his wife. So Jael was risking her own life by taking this enemy into her tent. However, to offer someone comfort in one's home was equal to offering safety from all harm. Remember Lot and the angels in Genesis 19? He gave them sanctuary from the men of the town. Sisera probably felt no fear going into Jael's tent. Some commentaries even suggest he may have had the assault of Jael on his mind. We really don't know that to be the case, but he did see this as an opportunity for some rest.
- ❖ Jael used the power of the hammer to kill Sisera. Where else was the power of the hammer used on someone that made an impact on all humanity? (*The crucifixion recorded in each of the four Gospels: Matthew 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:33; John 19:23.*)
- ❖ What type power do we have? (*the Word of God: Romans 1:16; Hebrews 4:12; Jeremiah 23:29.*)
- ❖ How do we use this power? (*by putting on and utilizing the armour of God—Ephesians 6:13-18*)
- ❖ Where do godly women have the opportunity to strike a blow over Satan? (*By working in the home and church as God would have them, teaching their children, witnessing to others, living a Christian life, etc.*)
- ❖ Start a journal. Record your thoughts about circumstances in your life, remembering that no matter your circumstances, God can bring about good.
- ❖ Close in prayer. Ask God to protect your mind and heart during this study and to give you insight into the unusual settings that surround us on a daily basis.

Jael, the Undertaker

- ❖ Read the first facet together, Judges 5:24-25, "*Blessed above women shall Jael...be. He asked water and she gave him milk; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish.*"
- ❖ Go over all the questions and answers for Week Two, p. 17.
- ❖ How do you think Jael's husband, Heber, reacted when he found out what she had done? (*Even in the worst of circumstances today, that would be a tough one to handle. Do you wonder if he made Jael clean all the blood from the tent walls or if he had to go get a completely new tent? Just a thought...*)
- ❖ Was there celebration in the camp after Sisera died? Who buried him?
- ❖ Does Jael seem to you like an unusual deliverer for her people?
- ❖ Jael did undertake a task that you and I would not even consider. What or who gave her the courage to do this? (*God*)
- ❖ Read Deuteronomy 6:5-7 and Deuteronomy 11:18-19. Since she was a Kenite, Jael could have been taught from an early age about God and His Word. (Moses' father-in-law was a Kenite.)
- ❖ Who actually was the deliverer? (*God: 2 Samuel 22:2; Daniel 6:27; Jeremiah 1:8; 2 Corinthians 1:10; Hebrews 2:15.*)
- ❖ Don't you imagine the Israelites had had numerous prayer meetings pleading for help against King Jabin? Read Judges 4:3. (*This tells us they cried (prayed) unto the Lord.*)
- ❖ Why did Barak want Deborah to go with him to the battle? (*Judges 4:8*)
- ❖ Was he a coward, faint-hearted, or of the belief that Deborah could somehow help?
- ❖ What did Deborah tell Barak? (*Judges 4:9. He probably thought that Deborah was that woman. However, it turned out that it wasn't her.*)

- ✧ We find, however, that Barak had faith in God. Even though he reused to go without Deborah. He was included in the heroes of the faith. (*Hebrews 11:32*)
- ✧ Once Jael told Barak what she had done, did she fade into the background again? Or did she rise to a place of prominence in Israel (*We don't know what happened to her, but the Jews never forgot her—Judges 5:24.*)
- ✧ After Sisera is killed, what did Barak and Deborah do? (*Sang songs of victory—Judges 5:1-2. Judges 5 is the entire song.*)
- ✧ What characteristics can you note about Jael? (*Courage, determination and fulfillment of God's will*)
- ✧ Are women useful to God? (*We know the answer is yes, but read Galatians 3:28 for encouragement. This is not the last we'll see of this verse. Mark it in your Bible.*)
- ✧ Make an entry in your journal and describe how you can be used of God where you are.
- ✧ Close in prayer, asking God to give us the jewel qualities and characteristics of Jael.



PHOEBE, THE LETTER CARRIER

- ✧ Read the second facet together as a group: "I commend unto you Phebe our sister...for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself, also" (Romans 16:1-2).
- ✧ Go over the questions and answers for Week Three, pp. 18-19 together.
- ✧ Can you relate to Phoebe? Are you a helper of many?
- ✧ Have you ever gone completely out of your way to help accomplish something in the church?
- ✧ Do you consider yourself a servant of others or is that word distasteful to you?
- ✧ Are we to serve our fellowman? (*Matthew 25:33-36; Hebrews 10:24*)
- ✧ Why is this important? (*Matthew 25:40*)
- ✧ Christ, Himself, gave us the example of servitude. Read Matthew 20:28; John 13:4-5; Philippians 2:7.
- ✧ Why do you suppose Paul chose Phoebe to be the carrier of this important document which we know as Romans? (*She was possibly on her way to Rome, she was a sister in the faith, he knew she was a servant of the church, and she was a trusted friend of Paul's.*)
- ✧ Should there be joy in service? (*Psalms 40:8; Psalm 126:6; John 4:36*)
- ✧ What does God demand of us? (*Service to Him and godly fear: Deuteronomy 10:12; Exodus 23:35; Psalm 2:11; Hebrews 12:28*)
- ✧ Why is it our duty to serve men?*
- (1.) It's Christlike—John 13:4.
- (2.) It demonstrates love—John 21:16.
- (3.) It lightens life's burdens—Galatians 6:2, 10.
- (4.) It exemplifies neighborliness—Luke 10:36-37
- *Taken from the Thompson Chain Link Reference Study Bible.
- ✧ Did Phoebe succeed in the role Paul placed her in?
- ✧ Make an entry in your journal and list ways you can be a servant to your fellowman.
- ✧ Close in prayer. Thank God for the example He left us of humbleness and servitude to our fellowman.

PHOEBE, THE PERSEVERANT

- ✧ Read the Facet together.
- ✧ Go over the questions and answers for Week Four, pp. 19-20.



- ✧ What does persevere mean? (*The dictionary says, "Persevere: to persist in or remain constant to a purpose, idea, or task in the face of obstacles or discouragement."*)
- ✧ Do you feel that you persevere?
 - ✧ What positions do you hold where you have to “keep on keeping on”?
- ✧ How did the church at Rome receive the letter brought by Phoebe? (*I would imagine some loved every word and some just chuckled to themselves and said, “We don’t know about all of this.”*)

LEADER’S NOTE: Try to count the names in Romans 16. Not easy is it? Author Ray Stedman did the counting and he said there are 33. Another source I found said 35. Whichever number it is, that’s a lot of names for one chapter when they aren’t “begetting.” We find that there were 24 in Rome and nine people with Paul in Corinth.

- ✧ Why do you think these names would have been listed? (*They were personal friends of Paul’s in Rome or they were with him in Corinth where he wrote the letter. It’s interesting that included among these friends were slaves and relatives.*)
- ✧ Do you like to see your name in print?
- ✧ Have you ever carved your name on a tree, written it on a wall, rock or in a yearbook? (*These are all methods of preserving a name for remembrance. If you have a Facebook page, your name is reaching new heights.*)
- ✧ Phebe’s (Phoebe) name (spelled either way) is noted for her commitment, servitude, and faithfulness to the Gospel. (*Read Romans 16:1-2 again. Notice she was called a sister, a servant, and a saint.*)
- ✧ What is your favorite verse in Romans? (*Mine, without a doubt, is Romans 8:28.*)
- ✧ Without Phoebe’s perseverance in reaching her goal and accomplishing the task Paul gave her, we might not have all these wonderful words in the Bible. Do you think Phoebe would “fit in” at your church?
- ✧ How does Galatians 3:28 help you understand Paul’s feelings for women, men, and slaves? (*It shows us that in Christ we are all equal.*)
- ✧ How does this verse help you in regard to ministry? (*It’s liberating to know we have freedom in Christ, and we can all be used.*)
- ✧ Make a list in your journal of names you want to remember and, next to each one, jot down why. Try to expand this list beyond your immediate family.
- ✧ Close in prayer and thank God for Phoebe’s obedience in delivering this most precious letter of Paul’s to the Romans.

In Closing

I love to travel, but an 800 mile trip by foot, ~~donkey~~, or ship over desert, rugged terrain and water is not my idea of fun. Yet, Phoebe endured and succeeded in making sure that what some call the “Constitution of Christianity” reached the Roman church. I, for one, am so thankful she didn’t give up or quit—that she kept her steadfast zeal in doing this not only for them but for us as well. I can hardly wait to sit down and hear all the details of that infamous journey. Then let’s draw Jael in and ask her the facts behind that eventful scene in her tent. I’m sure we’re going to spend eternity trying to sort out the reasons for her actions. Until then, let us not let their efforts be in vain. Read, study, and memorize Scriptures in order to keep the Word of God fresh in our hearts.