

Young Women Active for Christ



September 2010

Have you ever done something you thought you would never do? When I was in high school, I was on the cheerleading squad. I was the biggest Bulldog fan around. A few years after I graduated, I had a good friend who attended my rival school. He played football for the Stallions, and even though I never thought I would, I cheered for the Stallions from the stands at his games (but I did sit on my alma mater's side when the two teams played each other).

Cheering for a team you've always disliked isn't a very big deal in the grand scheme of things, but to me, it was a huge deal. I had to decide what was more important—my friend or my old high school.

This month we are going to study two women from the Bible who had to make some tough choices.

WEEK ONE

JAEL CHOOSES SIDES

Most of the time when you think of mighty warriors, you think of men, right? When you think of a judge or a leader of an army, you usually assume it is a man. We're right to think that. God designed men to be leaders of His people. God usually chose mighty men, like Saul or David, to lead His people.

But in Judges 4, God had chosen a woman named Deborah to be the judge over His people. Things had definitely been better for the Israelites—they had disobeyed God and He allowed them to be defeated by the Canaanites. Jabin was the king of Canaan, and his number one guy was Sisera. The people of Israel were scared of Sisera, because he had a big army and great weapons. Jabin and Sisera ruled over the people of Israel for twenty years, and the people cried to God for help.

Deborah knew that things were hard for God's people, so she called for Barak and told him that God wanted him to gather an army to fight Sisera. She even told him that she knew he was going to defeat Sisera. But Barak wasn't very brave; he would only go to battle if Deborah went with him.

Deborah agreed to go, but she told Barak that God was going to deliver Sisera into the hand of a woman. No doubt, Barak assumed that woman would be Deborah. What other woman would be found in the middle of a battle?

While Barak and Deborah prepared for battle, Jael was near the sight of the battle, setting up her tent. Jael's husband, Heber, was a Kenite. Usually, the Kenites fought with the Israelites, but this time they had sided with the Canaanites. Heber was a metal smith, so he helped the Canaanites with their chariots and weapons. He and Jael lived in a tent and moved around a lot. It was Jael's job to set up the tent while Heber worked with the soldiers.

When the battle started, God sent lots of rain into the valley and all of Sisera's chariots got stuck in the mud. His soldiers panicked, and Barak and his men killed all of the Canaanite soldiers. When Sisera saw this happen, he ran away. When he came to Jael's tent, she invited him inside. Because her husband was helping the Canaanites, Sisera thought Jael would help him, too.

Jael gave Sisera a blanket and some warm milk. He told her to stand watch at the door of the tent and not to let anyone know he was there. After he fell asleep, Jael snuck up to him, hammered a tent peg into his head and killed him. It turned out, she was on Israel's side.

Have you ever had to choose sides? Was it a hard choice to make?

When you have a big decision to make, who do you go to for advice?

Look up Proverbs 15:7. To whom should we go for advice?

GROUP DISCUSSION

“Choices, no matter how small, do matter. Your day-to-day decisions have a way of determining your destiny. The person you are becoming – situation by situation, decision by decision, choice by choice—is the person you will be forever.” - David Ausburger

Even the little things that we do matter a lot. Choices about how we dress, who we hang out with, where we go, how we act—these things have big impacts on our testimonies and how people view us. How do our daily choices affect our effectiveness as witnesses for Christ?

WEEK TWO

Jael's COURAGE

Okay, so you might be wondering what in the world you're supposed to learn from a woman WHO just murdered a guy with a tent peg. My twelve-year-old brother thinks Jael is pretty cool right now, but if you're anything like me, you think what she did is pretty gross. Either way, she just killed a guy. And we all know, God told us in the Ten Commandments that we're not supposed to kill. So why do Deborah and Barak, the leaders of God's people, call Jael blessed?

Jael chose to stand up for what she believed in—and she believed that she should help God's people. You have to remember that Jael lived in a time of war. She didn't kill Sisera just because she didn't like him, she killed him because he had hurt God's people.

Jael knew that she had to do something to stop Sisera and the Canaanites. Her choice took a lot of courage. Imagine what could have happened to her if Sisera had woken up before she killed him and had seen her with the tent peg in her hand. He could have definitely defended himself and probably could have hurt her. Or, what if some of King Jabin's men had found her—with Sisera lying dead on the floor of her tent?

Jael faced serious consequences for her actions, but she knew she was doing the right thing. We are probably not going to be called to kill an evil tyrant someday, but we have a lot to learn from Jael. There are injustices going on all around us all the time. We have to take a stand for God and what's right with courage and dignity.

God can use the smallest actions on our part to accomplish mighty things. Jael stood up for God and was called blessed. When we stand up for Him like Jael did, He will call us blessed, too.

Have you ever known you needed to stand up for something that was right but you were afraid? Read Psalm 27:1-3 and write it down here.

We usually think about boys being brave or courageous. Why do you think it's important for girls to be courageous too?

GROUP DISCUSSION

“What makes a king out of a slave? ...Courage! What makes the flag on the mast wave? ...Courage! What makes the sphinx the seventh wonder? ...Courage! What makes the dawn come up like a thunder? ...Courage! ...What have they got that I ain't got? Courage!” - The Cowardly Lion, The Wizard of Oz (1939)

What are some ways you can take a courageous stand for Christ at your house, church, school, or community?

WEEK THREE

PHOEBE'S IMPOSSIBLE TASK

What would you do if your pastor came up to you after church one Sunday morning and asked you to deliver a very important letter to another church across town? You would probably hop into your car (or your mom's car) and drive (or ride) across town. You would probably put the letter in a really safe place, so it wouldn't get ripped or wet or wrinkled. And you would find the person whom your pastor told you to give the letter to. Only after checking the person's I.D. twice and having three other people confirm his or her identity, you would hand over the super important letter. (And wonder what in the world might be inside it, right?)

Now imagine that your pastor is Paul. That's right, THE Paul of the New Testament. The guy who wrote the letters to the Romans and Corinthians. The guy who taught Timothy, the guy whom God chose to take His gospel to the Gentiles.

Now imagine that Paul came to you, a young worker in the church, and asked you to deliver a letter for him. Only you don't have a car or a wagon to ride in. And you can't get your mom to go with you. And you're not just going across town, you're going across the country—to Rome. Would you accept that task?

Phoebe was a servant at the church in Cenchrea, where Paul was when he wrote his letter to the Romans. This letter was super important. Inside it was a road map for salvation (the Romans Road). The letter was going to change the lives of the people in Rome, and Paul needed Phoebe to deliver it for him.

Would you accept a task like that? Phoebe did.

Have you ever been asked to do something that you thought you couldn't do? Tell your group about that time.

Paul could have chosen anyone to take his letter to Rome, but he chose Phoebe. What does that tell you about Phoebe's character?

GROUP DISCUSSION

Do you think you are trustworthy enough for someone to give you an important task like the one Paul gave Phoebe? If not, what can you do to be more trustworthy?

WEEK FOUR

PHOEBE'S REWARD

We don't know if Phoebe went alone or if she had servants that went with her, but either way she had a hard trip. She traveled almost 800 miles, over land and sea, to take the letter to the Romans. I'm sure she wanted to protect the letter Paul had given her. She didn't want it to get ripped or stained or wrinkled. She wanted to make sure that it got to Rome in perfect condition, because she knew how important it was.

One thing's for sure – if I had made a trip like the one Phoebe made, I would want someone to welcome me with a parade, a hot meal, some clean clothes and a warm, comfy bed to collapse into.

Phoebe didn't get that kind of welcome. When she delivered the letter and the people began to read it, she wasn't mentioned at all until the end. Paul doesn't even tell the people who she is until Chapter 16. When he introduces her, he asks the people of Rome to treat her with love and respect and to provide any needs she might have.

Can you imagine how Phoebe must have felt, waiting for the people to read through all 15 chapters of the letter? I would have wanted to wave my hands and shout, "Hello! I just came 800 miles with that thing tucked into my coat! How about a foot rub?" But Phoebe didn't do that. She waited patiently as the letter was read. She never expected to be treated like a saint or hero. She waited patiently for her reward and trusted God to provide for her needs.

When we work hard for something, we want other people to notice our hard work and praise us for it. It's hard when you feel like people ignore the hard work you do or when you think that no one cares how hard you work. But even when we feel unappreciated, God sees how faithful we are.

God saw Phoebe's faithfulness, and He sees yours too.

If you were Phoebe, how would you feel if you had been ignored after such a long, hard trip to deliver Paul's letter?

Read Matthew 6:1-5. What do these verses tell you about doing good works only to be seen by other people?

Read Matthew 6:19-21. Write verse 21 here:

We might not always be rewarded for the things we do here on earth, but God has a reward for us in Heaven if we are faithful. Where is your treasure? Here on earth, or in Heaven?

GROUP DISCUSSION

Do you know someone who works really hard in your church or school and seems to get overlooked a lot? God wants us to encourage one another, so take some time as a group to make a card to thank this person for his or her service.

How else can you encourage others that are working for Christ?

MEET THE AUTHOR



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