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**People Just Like Me**  
***“Deborah: Faith That Inspired A Nation”***  
(Part 5)

**Intro:** Who are the people that have inspired you the most? People that made you want to be more than you were. People that gave you hope? (Examples)

Today, we’re going to look at one of these kind of people. The kind that inspires!

- Summarize the story of Deborah Judges 4-5
- What does a faith that inspires look like?

**I. Deborah Had Faith To Fulfill Her Unique Calling**

**A. Deborah fulfilled a very unusual position**

*Judges 4:4-5 “Deborah, the wife of Lappidoth, was a prophet who had become a judge in Israel...the Israelites came to her to settle their disputes.” (NLT)*

1. What made Deborah’s situation so unusual is that she held a position that was usually reserved for men. She was a prophet, which meant she represented God to the people, and she was a judge. She administered justice to the people. (Very male dominated culture.)
2. Secondly what is remarkable is that this position she held wasn’t an elected position. It was established based upon her gifting and calling that other people recognized over time. She established an observable track record.
3. Over the course of time, it became apparent to all who knew her that she was speaking for God and could speak wisdom into situations. Now, being very well known, people from all over Israel came to her.
4. This also says a lot about her husband. He had to be willing to allow his wife to function in a very unusual role. He must have also recognized God’s hand upon his wife and chose not to hinder her or God in what He was doing...even if it was against cultural norms.
5. Deborah could have denied her calling, her gifting, and her responsibility simply because it was unusual. “Who am I God? I’m just a housewife? I’m a nobody. I’m a woman in a male dominated culture. No one is going to listen to me? My husband will think I’m crazy.”

6. I'm sure she could have come up with plenty of reasons why this was a bad idea. But, Deborah had a faith that allowed her to move past all these things and fulfill all that God called her to do.

*Judges 5:7 "Deborah arose as a mother for Israel." (NLT)*

## B. We must embrace our unique calling from God

- We've been given more than eternal life. We have a calling to fulfill!

*II Tim. 1:9 "who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose..." (NASB)*

*Eph. 2:10 "God planned for us to do good things and to live as He has always wanted us to live." (CEV)*

*Eph. 4:16 "Under His direction, the whole body is fitted together perfectly. As each part does it's own special work..." (NLT)*

1. God does more than give us eternal life. He gives us purpose in this life. This life is not about hanging on until we die so we can eternally retire. God has a calling upon each one of us. He has purposes that He wants us to fulfill.
2. In some ways, there are 2 conversions that need to take place in people's lives. 2 separate decisions that are life altering. What do I mean? The first is where we embrace new life through Jesus. The second though, is where we finally embrace our new purpose in Jesus. (Conversion of purpose.) Some people never embrace the second one!
3. I have been saved and called. I have been given a new life with a new purpose. God has predetermined purposes He wants me to discover and live, even if they seem unusual.
4. I can't tell you how much I wrestled with God's calling upon my life. "God, who am I? I can't be a pastor? I certainly can't stay in Molalla. All conventional wisdom says that is impossible? Start a church in my hometown? That's crazy!"
5. There comes a point where you quit fighting against God's purposes for your life and you embrace them. Where you stop telling God you will fit Him into your already busy life. Where you finally realize that this life is all about serving Him in however He chooses; even if it doesn't make sense.
6. Some of you have been telling God no for years. "I could never do that. That's too out of the box". For God's agenda to be realized for this geographic area, it will require all of us to embrace our callings.

## II. Deborah Had Faith To Reject The Status Quo

### A. Deborah wasn't satisfied with anything less than fulfillment

- What was the status quo?

*Judges 4:1-3 "...the Israelites again did what was evil in the Lord's sight. So*

*the Lord handed them over to King Jabin of Hazor, a Canaanite king. The commander of his army was Sisera... Sisera who had nine hundred iron chariots, ruthlessly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years.” (NLT)*

1. Because Israel had walked away from God, God used a neighboring King and his general Sisera to discipline Israel. He allowed them to experience bondage instead of freedom which was their right as His children.
2. Israel experienced 20 years of oppression. 20 years of Sisera’s raids into Israelite territory. 20 years of living in fear and dread. Always looking over your shoulder...thinking you hear those chariots coming.
3. Deborah knew that bondage and fear should never be the status quo for the people of God. She knew that freedom and blessing was the inheritance for her people.
4. The problem is that over time, even unacceptable conditions become normal. After 20 years in bondage and oppression, you start thinking like a slave. You start thinking like a conquered people. It becomes part of your identity.
5. Deborah talks about the current condition in the song she wrote after the victory in *Judges 5:6-8* “*people avoided the main roads and travelers stayed on the side paths...few people left in the villages...not a shield or spear could be seen among forty thousand warriors in Israel!*” (NLT)
  - Thinking and acting like slaves!

*Judges 5:7 “until Deborah arose as a mother for Israel.” (NLT)*

6. God raised Deborah up to reject the status quo of bondage. (spiritually and physically) When wrong becomes the norm, someone has to rise up and call the people of God back to their position of living like sons and daughters of the King.

**B. We must reject the status quo for our lives and churches**

*Gal. 4:9 “And now that you have found God,...why do you want to go back again and become slaves once more to the weak and useless spiritual powers of this world?” (NLT) Why do you want to think and act like slaves again?*

*Gal. 5:1 So Christ has really set us free. Now make sure that you stay free...” (NLT) I think the church has a hard time staying free!*

1. I think the church of today has a “defeatist” mentality...A slave mentality. The perspective that we can’t make much difference in this world corporately and we can’t live with freedom and power individually.
2. Statistics reveal this. There is a steady decline in church attendance across America. Even locally, I have heard pastors talk about how hard it is to minister in the Molalla area. “This is a hard place”. We hear about Oregon being one of the most unchurched states in the US...and we accept it!
3. Jesus saved us to set us free. The church is the greatest change agent the world has ever seen. We are sons and daughters of the King of Kings with all the

rights and privileges that come with that. So why aren't we living like this? We have accepted the status quo.

4. We have kept our faith private instead of public. We have lived in fear of the opinions of others. We've retreated behind the walls of our churches instead of confronting culture. We've traded the power of God for political correctness. We've turned our churches into clubs that feed the apathy instead of rescue stations that risk all to find the lost.
5. Have you embraced the status quo in your spiritual life? Well, this is just the way it is. There's really not any more to experience in my relationship with God.
6. Have you embraced the status quo as you think about the church? Well, this is as good as it gets. We really can't expect much more. We shouldn't expect to transform an entire geographic area. That's just too big.
  - Faith that inspires always REJECTS the status quo for God's people!

### III. Deborah Had Faith To Overcome The Odds

A. Deborah simply took God at His word to overcome the odds

*Judges 4:6-7 "One day she sent for Barak... 'This is what the Lord, the God of Israel commands you: 'Assemble ten thousand warriors...at Mt. Tabor. I will lure Sisera,...along with his chariots and warriors, to the Kishon River. There I will give you victory over him.'" (NLT)*

*Judges 4:14 "Then Deborah said to Barak, 'Get ready! Today the Lord will give you victory over Sisera, for the Lord is marching ahead of you.'" (NLT)*

1. Now, 10,000 warriors sounds like a lot, but Barak and the Israelites were hopelessly outnumbered and underpowered. Sisera had 900 iron chariots plus ground infantry. (One scholar put that number at 100,000) They are trained and have been involved in military campaigns for 20 years. Israel has acted like cowards for 20 years. (Impossible odds!)
2. God is going to lure Sisera into a trap by the Kishon river where his chariots will be useless. God will march ahead of you. Deborah is reminding Barak of God's provision and protection. Barak is given enough information to help him trust God.
3. Deborah's faith was so confident in God that she was even willing to put herself in harms way. Barak refused to do this unless Deborah went with him to the battle. This just shows you how respected she was and how much her presence symbolized the presence of God to Barak.
4. I love the simplicity of Deborah's faith. In fact, this is really a quality that you see from many of the Biblical characters we study. Their faith doesn't get more complex over time, it gets more simple.
5. They simply do whatever the Lord tells them to do without the need for detailed explanations or if it makes sense to them or not. Simply taking God at His word overcomes whatever the odds are.

B. We must simply take God at His word to overcome the odds

*James 2:17* “So you see, it isn’t enough just to have faith. Faith that doesn’t show itself by good deeds is no faith at all – it is dead and useless.” (NLT) It is dead and useless because we don’t take God at His word!

1. How many of us are quick to say that we have faith that God can overcome the odds; faith in His power / faith in His provision and yet never put ourselves in situations where that can become a reality?
2. We can be guilty of having a dead and useless faith. A faith that is all words and no action. We say we take God at His word, yet our actions reveal that we never confront the overwhelming odds.
3. God has put this church here to confront the overwhelming odds by simply taking Him at His word. What are the overwhelming odds we face?
  - Majority of population unchurched
  - Oregon ranks as one of the highest for people who hunger
  - Drugs and alcohol are tearing communities apart
  - Our prisons are overcrowded
  - Marriages and families are suffering
  - People are walking around wounded from various forms abuse / and violence with no where to turn to get help.
  - Most churches are apathetic towards it all. There’s “nothing we can do” attitude! No attempts being made to address the issues!
4. Can we simply take God at His word and overcome the odds?

*Philp. 4:13* “For I can do everything with the help of Christ who gives me the strength I need.” (NLT)

*Eph. 3:20* “By His mighty power at work within us, He is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope.” (NLT)

*II Cor. 10:3-4* “We are human, but we don’t wage war with human plans and methods. We use God’s mighty weapons, not mere worldly weapons, to knock down the Devil’s strongholds.” (NLT)

5. What would happen if a group of people simply took God at His word and faced the overwhelming odds of our culture? What if they believed that God was marching ahead of them? That culture would be transformed!
6. This type of faith is inspiring / it’s contagious / and it is what God is calling each one of us to.

Can we have a faith that inspires others?

- Requires a faith that fulfills our unique calling? Are you willing to discover what God is calling you to? (Get involved this fall)

- Requires a faith that rejects the status quo? (Are you willing to let yourself desire more than what you are currently experiencing? There's more to life than this! / more to God / more to church / Tired of feeling like a slave? )
- Requires a faith that overcomes the odds? (Will you begin to ask God what it looks like for you to simply take Him at His word?)