



## Week One

### Opening Praying

God, thank you for creating us equal and in your image. Be with us today as we reflect on the story of Deborah and the strength you call us into as we follow you by walking out our purpose.

### Talk It Over

Deborah was a judge and a prophet, or a person who spoke about the will of God. Deborah exercised complete religious, political, judicial, and military authority over the people of Israel. The Bible tells us she would hold court under a palm tree settling disputes, and speaking truth and wisdom to the people. Deborah wore many hats as a wife, counselor, and arbitrator. It seems her way of living and leading earned her favor and respect. She was a woman with dignity, integrity, and high moral standards.

- Did you grow up with strong women in your life? Share a little about that with the group.
- When you reflect on the story of Deborah what words come to mind as you hear her described?

### Read Judges 5:31 and Matthew 6:33 (NCV)

Seeking God's leadership first takes us to a place of submission. The word submission, as depicted in the New Testament, has nothing to do with being a doormat, losing one's voice, being forced to do something, or belittlement of any kind. The word has been misused in terrible and infuriating ways that do not reflect God's heart. Submission is about surrendering our will to God because we know his will is good for us.

- What is your relationship with the word 'submission'?
- Is submission something that you fight or something that brings up a less empowered feeling inside of you? If so, where do you think that comes from?
- In what ways can we begin to change the meaning of submission in our lives? How can we practice submission differently?

### Read Ephesians 1:11 (MSG)

Understanding who we are in Christ, grounds our identity in this life. It's in God we find who we are and hear God call each of us his beloved. We are sons and daughters of the King of Kings. We are loved and chosen by God. He delights in us. Once we understand that we can begin to move on to other things, but without securing our identity first, we often struggle.

Identity -----> Sustenance -----> Significance----->Achievement

- Looking at the graph and based on your current way of living how would you order these?
- Have you set your identity in Christ? How do you maintain a regular practice of starting there?
- Can you think of a time where you got this backwards? Reflect on how keeping this order might change outcomes. *(Continue on the next page.)*

**Read Hebrews 12:1-3 (CSB)**

Rather than compare and compete, God invites and or calls us into celebrating others. By encouraging, mentoring, and genuinely cheering others on, we experience the joy of being a connected people.

- Can you recall someone important in your life that helped mold, shape, and celebrate you?
- Have you ever made someone else the hero of the story? How did that feel?
- How can you celebrate your children and call out the hero in them?

**Read Isaiah 43:2 (NIV)**

There is no doubt Deborah had fight in her! As we look at the details of her story, you can see she felt the need to fight in order to achieve her goal of peace. Sometimes God invites us into an empowerment that requires a level of fight. We're not talking physical violence, but a commitment to stand up for justice, mercy, peace, and love in our lives and the lives of others. Battles are not easy and pretending things are fine when they are not is detrimental to our spiritual lives and connection with God. Knowing what we are fighting for is the first step and hearing from God must be a part of that process.

- How do you invite God into your grief, stress, or turmoil?
- What are you passionate about? What keeps you up at night? How is God calling you into empowerment in certain areas of your life?

**Closing Prayer**

God, you know us and every detail of our life -- past, present, and future. Help us to march forward. Help us to encounter your spirit. Help us to say 'yes' to your strength. Make us strong from the inside out.

**Challenge**

Read the story of Deborah this week found in Judges Chapter 4 and 5. Spend some time journaling or reflecting on your thoughts and sharing your feelings with God through prayer.