

# HASN'T THE LORD GONE BEFORE YOU?

unit 8 | session 2



## CHRIST CONNECTION

The Son of God walked in perfect obedience to the Father. Jesus displayed perfect obedience—even unto death—because He knew the joy set before Him ([Heb. 12:2](#)). Jesus knew the Father's will was to save humanity from sin through His own sacrificial death and resurrection.

# **OF DELIVERANCE**

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to dig in and read all of the content on this timeline.

## **Judges 4—Judges 5**

### **GOD USES UNEXPECTED PEOPLE**

#### **JUDGES 4:1-10**

1 And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD after Ehud died. 2 And the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. The commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-hagoyim. 3 Then the people of Israel cried out to the LORD for help, for he had 900 chariots of iron and he oppressed the people of Israel cruelly for twenty years. 4 Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time. 5 She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the people of Israel came up to her for judgment. 6 She sent and summoned Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh-naphtali and said to him, "Has not the LORD, the God of Israel, commanded you, 'Go, gather your men at Mount Tabor, taking 10,000 from the people of Naphtali and the people of Zebulun. 7 And I will draw out Sisera, the general of Jabin's army, to meet you by the river Kishon with his chariots and his troops, and I will give him into your hand?'" 8 Barak said to her, "If you will go with me, I will go, but if you will not go with me, I will not go." 9 And she said, "I will surely go with you. Nevertheless, the road on which you are going will not lead to your glory, 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 out Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh. And 10,000 men went up at his heels, and Deborah went up with him.

### **GOD GOES WITH US AND DELIVERS US**

#### **JUDGES 4:12-21**

12 When Sisera was told that Barak the son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor, 13 Sisera called out all his chariots, 900 chariots of iron, and all the men who were with him, from Harosheth-hagoyim to the river Kishon. 14 And Deborah said to Barak, "Up! For this is the day in which the LORD has given Sisera into your hand. Does not the LORD go out before you?" So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with 10,000 men following him. 15 And the LORD routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army before Barak by the edge of the sword. And Sisera got down from his chariot and fled away on foot. 16 And Barak pursued the chariots and the army to Harosheth-hagoyim, and all the army of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword; not a man was left. 17 But Sisera fled away on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, for there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite. 18 And Jael came out to meet Sisera and said to him, "Turn aside, my lord; turn aside to me; do not be afraid." So he turned aside to her into the tent, and she covered him with a rug. 19 And he said to her, "Please give me a little water to drink, for I am thirsty." So she opened a skin of milk and gave him a drink and covered him. 20 And he said to her, "Stand at the opening of the tent, and if any man comes and asks you, 'Is anyone here?' say, 'No.'" 21 But Jael the wife of Heber took a tent peg, and took a hammer in her hand. Then she went softly to him and drove the peg into his temple until it went down into the ground while he was lying fast asleep from weariness. So he died.

## MAIN POINT.

Walking in obedience to God ensures our ultimate victory.



## THEOLOGY CONNECTION

### GOD'S PLAN AND HUMAN ACTION

God's sovereignty over all of life encompasses the free actions of human beings. Proverbs 19:21 says, "Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand." In ways we can't comprehend fully, the Lord's plan goes forward through the choices of human beings as moral agents. Even freely chosen sinful actions are factored into God's overarching plan, as is the case with the crucifixion of Jesus—an event both purposed by God through foreknowledge and yet also carried out by the wicked decisions of human beings (Acts 2:23). Knowing God is working all things for the good of those who love Him (Rom. 8:28), we trust in His promise to fulfill His plan, even when we do not understand our present circumstances.

# DISCUSSION

## GOD USES UNEXPECTED PEOPLE

JUDGES 4:1-10

- How do Barak and Deborah show us that God uses unlikely people to accomplish His plans?
- What do we often do when we feel unqualified to do what God asks of us? How does this passage challenge that thinking?
- When have you put limits on obeying God? Is conditional obedience still obedience?

## GOD GOES WITH US AND DELIVERS US

JUDGES 4:12-21

- Why would God allow His people to face an army that seemed impossible to defeat?
- Why is it important for us not to let our fears dictate our obedience?
- How can we trust the Lord even when our victory doesn't look like victory?



WHAT IS GOD CALLING YOU TO DO THAT YOU DON'T WANT TO DO? HOW CAN YOU OBEY ANYWAY?

## CULTURAL CONNECTION

Is the word obedience one that sort of rubs you the wrong way? Does it feel oppressive? Does it feel like it takes away your rights or your ability to make choices? Well, these questions are certainly how the world often conditions us to think about obedience. We've allowed culture to influence us to think of obedience as a negative thing. We're annoyed when we have to obey our parents, our coaches, and even the law. We want to find loopholes, and at the heart of this thinking is the desire to rebel. Sin, at its core, is rebellion against God. In our flesh, our hearts are bent toward rebellion—against authority. We even see evidence of this truth in the garden of Eden when humans rebel against the authority of God. But obedience is good. Obedience to the Lord leads to life because it leads us to follow Jesus. It leads us to walk in His ways. We can reframe how we think of obedience and know that obedience pleases our Father in heaven.



## DAY ONE

# 1 CORINTHIANS 1:26-31

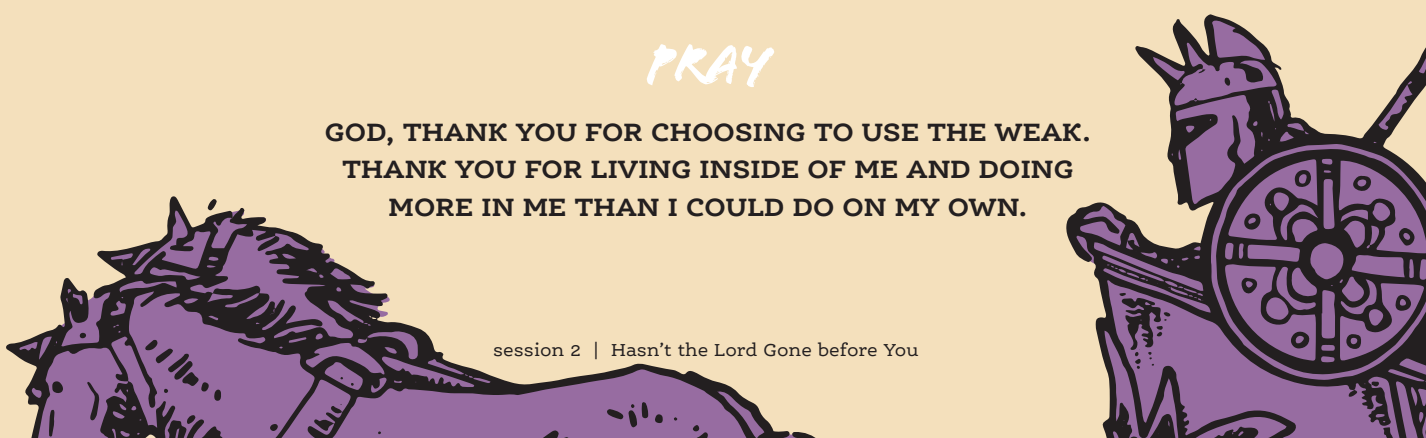
Have you ever felt really unqualified? Many of us feel like we aren't equipped for a task at some point. Usually, this feeling is worsened when we look around at other people. We notice their strengths and talents, and next to them, any of our talents feel small. We look at their families, their financial situation, their material wealth, and we feel like we can never measure up. Comparison often leads us to look down on the gifts God has given us.

Let's think about some of the reasons we feel unqualified to let God use us. One reason is comparison. We may think other people have more to offer God because they're more talented, outgoing, or popular. We believe someone else can simply do it better. Sometimes, though, we feel unqualified not because we compare ourselves to others but because we doubt God can use us. We believe the lie that our sin and mistakes disqualify us. Maybe we struggle to move past shame even after we've repented and God has forgiven us. This passage is such a great reminder of how God uses the foolish, weak, and insignificant things of this world, and honestly, that's all of us. The fact that God wants to use any of us is a gift because at one point, we were all separated from Him because of our sin. God redeems us. He calls us. He does the transforming work in our lives. And then He equips us for every good work that He wants to accomplish through our obedience. We can boast in Him because He does so much more in us than we could do on our own. Next time you're tempted to believe the lie that God can't use you, center your heart on the truth that God's Spirit living within you qualifies you for everything God asks you to do.

- **WHAT ARE THE MAIN REASONS YOU STRUGGLE WITH FEELING UNQUALIFIED OR NOT GOOD ENOUGH TO DO THINGS FOR GOD?**
- **HOW IS IT COMFORTING TO KNOW GOD CHOOSES TO USE THE FOOLISH, WEAK, AND INSIGNIFICANT THINGS OF THIS WORLD?**

## PRAY

GOD, THANK YOU FOR CHOOSING TO USE THE WEAK.  
THANK YOU FOR LIVING INSIDE OF ME AND DOING  
MORE IN ME THAN I COULD DO ON MY OWN.





## DAY TWO

# 2 CORINTHIANS 4:7-18

If you've ever watched a good illusionist, then you know appearances can be incredibly deceiving. The illusionist typically distracts your focus. Your eyes are drawn to one place while something else is taking place behind the scenes to create the illusion. Your focus actually determines what you see.

Life can be like this too. A situation may seem completely hopeless, but somehow, a good purpose is brewing underneath. In difficult circumstances, it's sometimes hard to see anything but what's painful, disappointing, or sad. It's what is in front of us. If you've made a mistake, it's hard not to drown in shame. If you're left out because you're trying to make godly decisions, it's so hard not to dwell on that pain. You may struggle with loneliness or feel abandoned. In these seasons, we can draw strength from truth in this passage. What we focus on determines what we see. Our momentary troubles are just that—temporary. Paul encouraged believers to focus on what is unseen instead of focusing on the struggle. In fact, we can actually be inwardly renewed even though we are outwardly “wasting away” (v. 16). How? It's all in our focus. We focus on the hope we have in Christ: the hope of heaven. We focus on the truth that God works all things together for our good—even the painful things (Rom. 8:28). We are imperfect, fragile jars of clay; life sometimes hurts, and we face very real pain. But we have living hope inside us—and that changes everything.

- **IN WHAT WAYS ARE YOU FOCUSED MORE ON WHAT IS SEEN THAN THE UNSEEN?**
- **HOW COULD FOCUSING ON WHAT IS ETERNAL AND UNSEEN CHANGE YOUR PERSPECTIVE OF PAIN AND SUFFERING?**

## PRAY

**GOD, HELP ME TO FOCUS ON WHAT IS UNSEEN AND WHAT'S ETERNAL WHEN I'M WALKING THROUGH PAIN. HELP ME TO REMEMBER THE GREAT HOPE I HAVE IN YOU EVEN WHEN LIFE IS PAINFUL.**



## DAY THREE

# 1 TIMOTHY 4:12

This week, we read about Deborah leading as a judge of Israel. God placed Deborah in this position even when it wasn't always the cultural norm for women to lead. In fact, she was the only female judge in the nation's history. We also read about another woman, Jael, who helped secure the victory over Sisera. Again, this wasn't the norm. In this culture, women weren't always respected or viewed as capable of leading, but God used two women as part of His plan to deliver Israel.

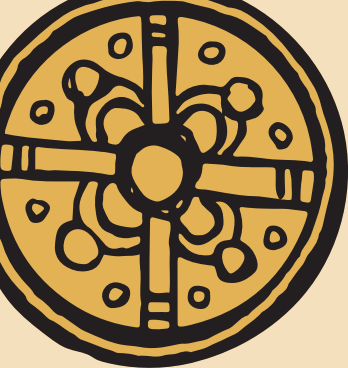
Now, rather than letting these facts launch into an argument about women in leadership, we can look at things through another lens. We often base our idea of who can lead on cultural norms too. We underestimate people based on how much money they make, how popular they are, their material possessions, their family, their physical beauty, and so on. We may even underestimate ourselves for some of these reasons.

In his letter, Paul encouraged Timothy in his leadership. Though Timothy was young, Paul explained that he could make an impact by letting his life be an example to others. Your life can also make an impact on the world, regardless of cultural norms, your age, your gender, or your background. God is not limited by worldly boundaries. He proved this repeatedly throughout Scripture as He used those who wouldn't have been society's first choice. Rather than bending to cultural expectations, live your life as an example for everyone.

- **WHEN HAVE YOU STRUGGLED WITH FEELING LIKE YOU'RE TOO YOUNG TO MAKE REAL DIFFERENCE?**
- **HOW CAN YOU TAKE STEPS TO LIVE IN A WAY WHICH SETS AN EXAMPLE TO OTHERS WHO ARE BOTH YOUNGER AND OLDER THAN YOU?**

## PRAY

**GOD, I WANT TO LIVE MY LIFE BOLDLY FOR YOU.  
I WANT TO ALLOW YOU TO USE ME TO MAKE AN  
IMPACT ON THOSE AROUND ME. HELP ME TO  
STEP UP REGARDLESS OF THE CULTURAL NORMS  
AROUND ME.**



## DAY FOUR

# MATTHEW 16:24-26

Can you think of a time when it was difficult for you to do the right thing? Maybe you didn't study for an important test, and you could easily copy from a friend. Doing what's right might would've resulted in a failing grade. Obedience isn't always easy, that's for sure. It sometimes costs us.

Jesus actually said following Him would, in a sense, be losing your life. Following Him would, in a sense, be taking up your cross. But what did He mean by this? Following Jesus, or obeying Him, means we have to lay down our own desires. It means we obey His Word and His teachings even when it's incredibly hard—even when it may look like we're losing a lot. It means choosing the Lord even when doing so results in losing popularity. When we face situations in which we must choose to either obey the Lord or walk with the world, we'll face consequences either way.

Jesus says obeying Him means we'll actually save our life, but not following Him means we'll lose it. Now, this doesn't mean believers can somehow lose their salvation if they're disobedient. But it does mean we miss out on the abundant life Jesus teaches about; we lose out on truly living the way God designed us to live—in right relationship with Him. Obeying God will sometimes mean we lose worldly things. For almost all of the apostles, following Jesus lead to losing their lives. But anything worldly we lose can't compare to what we find by following Jesus. We find more of Him, and we live in real freedom.

- **WHEN HAS IT BEEN DIFFICULT TO OBEY GOD? WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN AFRAID TO LOSE?**
- **WHAT IS GOD CALLING YOU TO DO TO FOLLOW HIM?**

## PRAY

**GOD, I CONFESS THAT IT'S SOMETIMES HARD FOR ME TO OBEY YOU. I'M SOMETIMES AFRAID OF WHAT I'LL LOSE. HELP ME TO OBEY YOU ANYWAY, KNOWING I'LL FIND EVERYTHING THAT MATTERS.**





## DAY FIVE

# JUDGES 5

Think about why we take pictures and even share them on social media. A big reason most of us do this is to remember. We want to document events so that one day we can look back and relive those moments. We want to relive the fun and joy. We want to celebrate them all over again and remember the people who were there with us.

Looking back and remembering is powerful. After Sisera was defeated, Deborah and Barak spent time singing worshiping the Lord. Many examples of worship in Scripture share something in common: they reflect on the works of God. They recount God's faithfulness and the ways He delivered His people. In your own worship, it's important to reflect on how God has been faithful. It's important to make space for remembering the times when God has been with you, when He has delivered you, when He has worked for your good and for your deliverance. Worship is a way we can center our minds and hearts on God's character and give Him glory. Why is this important? When we reflect on God's goodness and His faithfulness, it helps us to walk in obedience to Him when we face an opportunity to do so. It helps us to faithfully walk with Him because we know we can trust Him. Spend some time this week reflecting on how God has worked in your life. Spend some time worshiping Him for the ways He has been faithful to you. Then consider how you can share all of this with someone else.

- **WHAT ARE SOME WAYS YOU CAN PUT INTO PRACTICE LOOKING BACK IN YOUR WORSHIP?**
- **WHAT REASONS DO YOU HAVE TO WORSHIP THE LORD?**

## PRAY

**GOD, I WORSHIP YOU BECAUSE YOU ARE WORTHY OF  
WORSHIP. THANK YOU FOR BEING FAITHFUL TO ME.  
I WANT TO BE FAITHFUL TO YOU AND REMEMBER  
YOUR GOODNESS IN MY LIFE.**