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Encouragement for Today

“Deborah’s Legacy: Walk by Faith, Not by Sight”

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Key Verse: 2 Corinthians 5:7, “Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord - for we walk by faith, not by sight - we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.” (NAS)

Devotion:

Deborah lived during a time when the Israelites were oppressed by the Canaanites. Just a generation earlier, the Israelites had defeated Canaan, but time passed, and the people of God grew complacent. Despite God’s warning to remain pure, the Israelites intermarried with their enemies and started worshipping their gods. And the Canaanites, under the rule of Jabin, had grown powerful and cruel.

It is into this setting that God appointed Deborah, a prophetess, to be a judge. The position of judge was the most powerful position at that time in the nation of Israel. Although she wasn’t the military leader, she was the spiritual leader. This was a powerful position for any person, but for a woman it was extraordinary.

As a prophetess and a judge, Deborah received divine knowledge by the Spirit and was accustomed to interpreting God’s will. In addition to that, God chose Deborah to be the rallying point for an entire nation against their oppressor – the Canaanites. But Israel was like a confused group of kids compared to the might of the Canaanite army.

In the midst of these odds, Deborah heard God’s voice and spoke it. She sent for the leader of the military and told him to gather 10,000 men and go to the Kishon River, where the Lord would give Israel success over their enemies.

I’m sure if Deborah looked at the rag-tag group of Israelites with her own eyes, she might have considered God’s words to be impossible. How could this group of downtrodden and overwhelmed people rally and oppose an army the size and might of Jabin’s army?

Have you ever felt that way? Perhaps it’s with your responsibilities at work or at home. Maybe you’ve been living in a difficult situation for a while and you are losing hope. Perhaps you look at the world around us and you feel the overwhelming oppression of sin.

Many people give up believing God's truth in the face of the overwhelming odds. They start walking by sight and not by faith.

It's easy to see that people are compromising the Word of God at an alarming rate – just like the Israelites did 1000s of years ago. Christians step willingly away from God's directive and feel justified doing so because it's acceptable in the culture, or legal.

But God's truth and character has not changed. He still calls us to obey Him when it doesn't make sense. He calls us to keep our eyes focused on Him, instead of looking to the left and right.

Deborah trusted that God would do what He said. And God proved Himself faithful. When the Israelites obeyed, God routed the enemy and brought victory and freedom to His people.

You and I can trust God too. God is still looking for women to stand up for His truth in spite of overwhelming odds. Look what happened when Deborah did. Her family and her nation were freed from oppression. What might God want to do when you walk by faith and not by sight?

My prayer for today:

Heavenly Father, I praise you for your goodness and faithfulness. It's difficult to keep focused on your truth in the midst of discouragement. Help me walk by faith in You and not faith in my circumstances. I trust that you are able to do more than I can imagine. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Application Steps:

Identify a situation in your life where you have given up hope. Read Scriptures that speak to your situation. Focus your mind on God's truth instead of what looks true to your eyes. Trust God to bring good out of your situation.

Reflection points:

Think of a time when you trusted in your own understanding, instead of trusting God's Word.

Name something that God calls us to do as Christians in spite of overwhelming odds.

What are some reasons we stop living by faith and start living by sight?

To do God's will we need to hear Him clearly. How can you develop that skill in your life?

The Israelites were up against a foe that had oppressed them for 20 years, but God was on their side. What personal “foe” is God calling you to stand against today? This could be a personal sin that has oppressed you for years or a societal sin that oppresses many.

Power Verses:

Matthew 14:28-30 “‘Lord, if it’s you,’ Peter replied, ‘tell me to come to you on the water.’ ‘Come,’ He said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, ‘Lord, save me.’” (NIV)

Deuteronomy 31:6 “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; He will never leave you, nor forsake you.” (NIV)

Proverbs 3:5-6 “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.” (NAS)

Proverbs 14:12 “There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.” (NIV)

Psalm 121:1-2 “I lift up my eyes to the hills – where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.” (NIV)

Additional Resources:

What Happens When Women Walk By Faith by Lysa Terkeurst
http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_whatHappens.htm

The *P31 Woman Magazine*
<http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/subscription.htm>

Tips on Overcoming Worry in the Uncertainties of Life, ETC Corner April 2004
<http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/etcApr04.htm>