

## Embracing Your Identity

### Judges 4:1-10

<sup>1</sup> *Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord, now that Ehud was dead.*

The destiny of nations is often linked to the activation of certain individuals. Ehud was the left-handed man who had saved Israel. What would happen to your community if you were longer there? What would happen to this nation if our church was no longer here? What would happen to your church if you were no longer there? Are we making a difference?

<sup>2</sup> *So the Lord sold them into the hands of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. Sisera, the commander of his army, was based in Harosheth Haggoyim. <sup>3</sup> Because he had nine hundred chariots fitted with iron and had cruelly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years, they cried to the Lord for help.*

**God responds to our cries. He had raised up Ehud in response to prayer. He also activated Deborah in response to prayer.**

<sup>4</sup> *Now Deborah, a prophet, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading<sup>[a]</sup> Israel at that time. <sup>5</sup> She held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites went up to her to have their disputes decided.*

Deborah was already functioning as a judge and leader, but she was now being activated into another dimension of her purpose. She probably functioned in a strong spirit of wisdom as a judge but her primary purpose was to rescue a nation. This required the activation of her primary calling as a prophet. God picked someone who was already functioning faithfully in their day job. However, she didn't stay in her comfort zone.

It interesting to note that she was still identified as a woman submitted to her husband. Many cults have been started by women who moved out of the covering of their husbands. You can be a great leader and powerful prophet but still be someone's wife. It doesn't make you less powerful. Deborah was able to integrate different aspects of her identity. The Proverbs 31 woman is another example of this.

<sup>6</sup> *She sent for Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, "The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you: 'Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead them up to Mount Tabor. <sup>7</sup> I will lead Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into your hands.'"*

The activation of your identity does not mean you are not a team-player. Deborah did not do the fighting. She functioned as a prophet. She let someone else execute what she had seen and declared. She stayed in her lane. Deborah was an identity activator. She activated Barak into his purpose. Barak understood that Deborah was his destiny helper, hence his statement:

<sup>8</sup> *Barak said to her, "If you go with me, I will go; but if you don't go with me, I won't go."*

**Your identity can be activated but you still need to surround yourself with the right people.**

<sup>9</sup> *"Certainly I will go with you," said Deborah. "But because of the course you are taking, the honour will not be yours, for the Lord will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman." So Deborah went with Barak to Kedesh.*

Pre-decide that you will not take the glory. What happened to Barak is the story of many of our lives. The difference is that he got a warning about it. We would not react as much if we prepared ourselves not to get the glory. They had been oppressed for 20 years and perhaps Barak new the honour he would get if he killed Sisera.

**There are certain things that need to be declared before they come to pass. What is God telling you to declare? Your declaration might activate someone's identity.**

<sup>10</sup> There Barak summoned Zebulun and Naphtali, and ten thousand men went up under his command. Deborah also went up with him.

### **Judges 4:14-23**

<sup>14</sup> Then Deborah said to Barak, "Go! This is the day the Lord has given Sisera into your hands. Has not the Lord gone ahead of you?" So Barak went down Mount Tabor, with ten thousand men following him. <sup>15</sup> At Barak's advance, the Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots and army by the sword, and Sisera got down from his chariot and fled on foot.

<sup>16</sup> Barak pursued the chariots and army as far as Harosheth Haggoyim, and all Sisera's troops fell by the sword; not a man was left. <sup>17</sup> Sisera, meanwhile, fled on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, because there was an alliance between Jabin king of Hazor and the family of Heber the Kenite.

<sup>18</sup> Jael went out to meet Sisera and said to him, "Come, my lord, come right in. Don't be afraid." So he entered her tent, and she covered him with a blanket. <sup>19</sup> "I'm thirsty," he said. "Please give me some water." She opened a skin of milk, gave him a drink, and covered him up. <sup>20</sup> "Stand in the doorway of the tent," he told her. "If someone comes by and asks you, 'Is anyone in there?' say 'No.'" <sup>21</sup> But Jael, Heber's wife, picked up a tent peg and a hammer and went quietly to him while he lay fast asleep, exhausted. She drove the peg through his temple into the ground, and he died.

Jael's identity was activated as prophetic fulfilment. What she did had been declared. She is described later in Chapter 5:24 in Deborah's song as most blessed amongst tent-dwelling women. This shows that Deborah was not insecure. She knew that part of her purpose was to activate others in their true identity in God. When she saw this she rejoiced. Are you willing to declare powerful words that release others into their true identity? Do you rejoice when you see them functioning in this manner? Deborah could have lusted after the praise and recognition but from the beginning she had declared who would be honoured.

<sup>22</sup> Just then Barak came by in pursuit of Sisera, and Jael went out to meet him. "Come," she said, "I will show you the man you're looking for." So he went in with her, and there lay Sisera with the tent peg through his temple—dead.

<sup>23</sup> On that day God subdued Jabin king of Canaan before the Israelites.

### **Judges 5:7**

*Villagers in Israel would not fight; they held back until I, Deborah, arose, until I arose, a mother in Israel.*

**Despite her great exploits she still identified herself as a mother in Israel. She was comfortable with this association.**

**There are people who are holding back today until you arise. Do you know who they are and what they are holding back?**

Hold back = desert, neglect, stop, cease, refrain, refuse, quit

Arise = to stand up, to stand up against

**God has linked up other people's destinies to yours.**

What are you called to activate in others? For Deborah it was a fighting spirit. Perhaps for you, they are not praying until you arise. They are not giving until you arise. They are not excellent in what they do until you arise. They are unhealthy and unfit until you arise. They remain biblically illiterate and ignorant until you arise. There will always be something in you that will activate others to their next level in a particular area.

<sup>8</sup> God chose new leaders when war came to the city gates, but not a shield or spear was seen among forty thousand in Israel. <sup>9</sup> My heart is with Israel's princes, with the willing volunteers among the people. Praise the Lord!

**God will often raise up new leaders for new battles. There are battles that will require the activation of certain people's identities.**

**Deborah had a shepherd's heart. True prophetic ministry is carried out with a shepherd's heart. Her heart was with the volunteers.**

### **Judges 5:12**

*Wake up, wake up, Deborah! Wake up, wake up, break out in song! Arise, Barak! Take captive your captives, son of Abinoam.'*

Deborah breaks out in song whilst Barak takes the enemy captive. God is raising up worshipping warriors.

## **What stops us from embracing our identity?**

Here are some identity killers to avoid.

### **1 The Spirit of Delay**

#### **1.a We delay our calling due to**

- a.i Procrastination
- a.ii Perfectionism
- a.iii Low self esteem
- a.iv Rigid ideas
- a.v Distractions
- a.vi Other voices

Everything in this narrative was done timeously. Being used by God was seen as an honour. Arguments that usually exalt themselves were disarmed and dissolved.

### **2 People Pleasing**

#### **2.a Choosing career based on family preference**

#### **2.b Idolizing certain vocations**

It might have been more comfortable for Deborah to continue just dealing with disputes. It might have looked more dignified.

### **3 Money Matters**

#### **3.a We are led by the money and not the Spirit**

Jael could have compromised in fear of what her family might lose. There were benefits to being in covenant with oppressors. What would her husband's family say?

### **4 Current Environment and Circumstances**

900 chariots oppressing you is potentially very intimidating, but this didn't stop them.

### **5 Lack of Mentorship and Emotional Support**

#### **5.a No mentor to activate or draw out the gifts**

We see this narrative as a classic case of prophetic activation and oversight.

### **6 A Fixed Mindset**

#### **6.a If I failed in the past, then I will fail in the future**

#### **6.b Either I'm Good at Something, or I'm Not**

#### **6.c I Can't Learn Now; It's Too Late**

#### **6.d I Always Struggle With...**

#### **6.e God doesn't use women like this**

Rather, we should have a growth mindset.

## **7 Condemnation**

In the time of Deborah the context was that the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord. Despite this, the Lord heard their cry and moved on their behalf. They had to believe that God would be with them. Guilt and condemnation would have short-circuited what God wanted to do.

## **8 Envy**

### **8.a We spend a lot of time coveting someone else's gifts and calling**

Deborah, Barak, the ten thousand men and Jael had different roles and functioned according to their purpose. The result of this was peace for forty years.