

Crosswalk Communities Discussion Guides

Dec 4th Study Guide

Icebreaker Questions (Pick at the least one question, but use as many as your group feels comfortable)

1. What is your favorite or least favorite Christmas cookie and why?

Bible Study Questions

1. Read the story of God delivering his people from the Canaanites in Judges 4.
 - What do you notice about God in the story?
 - What do you notice about Deborah? (**Also read Judges 5:6-7**) What can we learn from her example?
2. In the book of Judges, we are told the origin story of the major leaders (Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson), but no origin story for Deborah. Why do you think that is? (We don't know the answer, but it is fun to speculate).
3. What do you notice about Barak in the story? Why is he apprehensive to go into battle? What can we learn from him?
4. Pastor Michael talked about the importance of being available to God and then responding to the opportunities that he provides. How do Deborah, Barak, and Jael all do this in this story?
5. When was a time that God opened an unexpected opportunity, you responded, and got to see God move in an exciting way? Tell the story.
6. What things most often make us "unavailable to God?" Or another way to put it, why do we so often miss the opportunities that he provides?
7. Not all opportunities are from God. What more, there are many opportunities that can distract us from what God wants us to do. How

do we discern whether it is a door that he is opening or something that we should pass on?

December 4th

The Power of One...Who Responds to the Opportunities that God gives. Judges 4-5

The Setting: Israel oppressed by the Canaanites: This takes place soon after the Israelites have settled into the Promised Land. But a following generation has walked away from God and as a result is being oppressed by the Canaanites.

The Characters:

Deborah: Spiritual leader who responds to a God given opportunity to defeat Canaan: Judges 4 begins with Deborah being identified as a prophet who is leading the people of Israel. In chapter 5:7, she identifies herself as a mother in Israel who arose to leadership when everyone else was afraid to fight. In 4:6, she sends for Balak and tells him that God has appointed him to lead the military. Then in 4:14, Deborah realizes that now is the time for action and directs Barak to attack.

Barak: Apprehensive military leader who obeys God command to fight: Barak is told that God will be with him, but he refuses to go into battle unless Deborah goes with him (4:8). With that assurance, he takes the risk of battling iron chariots and is victorious.

Jael: Unlikely heroine who takes the risk of destroying the Canaanite commander: Jael was married to a man who had allied himself with the Canaanites. When the Canaanite general, Sisera, hides in her tent, she takes the risk of putting him to sleep and then killing him.

This story teaches us too...

- a. **Making oneself available to God:** All these characters were living the busyness of life, but made themselves available to God. Because of their availability, God gave them opportunities to serve him.
- b. **Responding to the opportunities that he provides:** Every time that God provided an opportunity, it was full of risk. But each of these men and women responded to the opportunity and was used to deliver Israel.
- c. **Caution: Beware of responding to opportunities without God's lead:** The key here though is to look for "God" given opportunities. Last week we talked about King Josiah whose Godly reign was ended early by a foolish choice. I saw an opportunity to show his strength by challenging the Egyptians. How never sought God though in making this decision. The result was that he was killed in battle. Responding to God's opportunities means that we need to be listening to his voice and seeking his direction.

Conclusion

God is looking for people who are available to respond to the opportunities that he provides. Perhaps that opportunity is a conversation with a neighbor. Perhaps it is to take the time to come alongside of someone who is struggling or lonely. God can often open those opportunities in unlikely places. A starting point is to simply ask God to open our eyes to the doors that he opens, and then commit to following.