

“When Women Saved the Day” // Judges 4–5 // Mother’s Day 2019

Open your Bibles to Judges 4.

Yes, yes, you heard correctly. I didn’t say Romans, because **I want to interrupt our series on Romans for a week...**

It’s **Mother’s Day**, and I wanted to do something special for mothers, and really all ladies in our church.

- **If you go back and study of the origins of Mother’s Day**, it was less about biological mothers and more about how God uses women in the church, and community, as spiritual mothers in all of our lives.¹

So this is for all ladies, and this is a **passage that highlights the important role women play in the KoG.**

I taught through this passage 4 years ago, and it was pretty groundbreaking for us then, but I’ve had to re-work it recently for some other audiences and realized there’s a lot in here that I think is timely again for us—And it **also** speaks to some things God has been leading me to work on in the Southern Baptist Convention as I serve in the capacity of President). Convention coming

- **Listen, be encouraged: by God’s grace**, in allowing me to serve as President of the SBC at this time, God is allowing what happens here at TSC to be an influence on and encouragement to others--we’ve seen that with WY1, Go2, and, in what I’m going to talk about today.

¹ <https://www.missionalliance.org/celebrating-mothers-day-as-a-non-mom/>

So, all in all, I **just really sensed the leadership of the Holy Spirit** to step out of our Romans series for the week and jump in to a passage that **highlights not only the value of mothers**, but women in general in the Kingdom of God. OK?

So, Judges 4–5.

Scholars have pointed out that one of Judges’ themes is how God not only cares about people the oppressed, overlooked, underappreciated in society, he builds his kingdom through them.

No story probably illustrates that more than the story of Deborah.

Let’s just walk through this **whole story**, because it’s a great one (BTW, in case you are confused--the book of 'Judges,' is called “Judges,” btw, not because it is about a series of court cases--it’s not the OT version of Matlock--but because it is built around a succession of leaders God raises up to guide and deliver Israel from oppression, called Judges. Deborah is one of those.)

¹ Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD, now that Ehud was dead. (the Southpaw judge) ² So the LORD sold them into the hands of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. Sisera (bad guy), the commander of his army... had 900 chariots fitted with iron (These were the Apache helicopters of the ancient world, the most advanced weapons of the time. They could mow down dozens of foot soldiers—and the Israelites didn’t have any... so these people) **and-cruelly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years.**

And Israel cried to the LORD for help. ⁴ Now Deborah, a prophet, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time. ⁵ She held court under the Palm of Deborah... and the Israelites went up to her to have their disputes decided. ⁶ She sent for Barak... “The LORD, the God of Israel, commands you: ‘Go, take with you ten thousand men... ⁷ I will lead Sisera into your hands.’”

Barak said to her, “If you go with me, I will go; but if you don’t go with me, I won’t go.”

So... Deborah, says, ⁹“(deep sigh) Certainly I will go with you,” said Deborah. “But because of the course you are taking, the honor will not be yours, for the LORD will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman.” (we think, ‘Deborah!’ But not so fast).

Because then the author puts in this seemingly random detail:

[11] Now Heber the Kenite had separated from the Kenites... and had pitched his tent up by the oak in Zaanannim, which is near Kedesh.

(But it’s **not random** at all! I’ll show you in a moment that it has tremendous importance.)

But, first, let’s go back to the story of Deborah: **Vs. 12, she directs Barak** and the army down to a region at the base of Mt. Tabor.

The author tells us it is a **river basin** (which seems like another random detail that is going to turn out to be really important). ¹⁴ 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?” And the LORD routed Sisera and all his chariots and army by the sword, and Sisera got down from his chariot and fled on foot.

We’re going to find out in chapter 5 that **the reason Sisera had to flee on foot** was a sudden rainstorm had come, flooded the river bank so that Sisera’s 900 chariots of iron got stuck. (And what is remarkable about that is that this **all took place during the dry season**, when it literally *never* rained.

If Sisera had thought there was even a chance of rain he’d have never taken his chariots down there! It would be like **a snow here in Durham in July.**)

- In other words, God worked a simple little **miracle that turned Sisera’s great advantage**—his 900 chariots of iron—into a severe disadvantage. His chariots became literal deadweight!

So, Sisera is fleeing through the wilderness on foot when he comes ¹⁷ ...to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite. (This is Jael, Heber’s wife, not the father of Superman.)

Now, **remember Heber and his family?** They were the ones we were told about in **vs. 11**. Their tent just happens to be **right in the middle** of the woods where Sisera is fleeing!)

Now, remember all that stuff about God delivering Sisera into the hands of a woman? **Watch this:** ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ “I’m thirsty,” he said. “Please give me some water.” She opened a skin of milk, gave him a drink, and covered him up. (And she tucked him in and said, “There, there... big **warrior** man is tired” and sang him a lullaby...)

²¹ Then Jael, Heber’s wife, picked up a tent peg and a hammer and went quietly to him while he lay fast asleep. She drove the peg through his temple into the ground. And he died. (Was that last phrase necessary? I believe in the inerrancy of Scripture—but did it need to be clarified that he died?)

And then she walked outside, dropped the hammer and said, “Nailed it!”)

It’s **just a great story**, right?

So, **What “piercing truths” can we learn from Deborah, Barak, and Jael?** (*see what I did there?*)

But seriously,

- How can I hammer this home?
- Because you really need to see what’s at stake.

- *I have a list of 4 things you should know this story, but I'm hesitant to give it because know some of you feel like you need another list like you need a hole in the head.*
- *(I can do this all day...)*

1. God equips both men and women for leadership in ministry

This story reveals that **even in a culture and time when men did literally everything** of significance in public, God used women at pivotal moments in his kingdom.

Deborah was called a prophet, a wise and respected leader in Israel.

- Some have speculated that the only reason Deborah was a prophet is because there were no men around to lead.
 - But there is nothing in this passage that indicates that.
 - She held court under her palm tree because God had given her divine wisdom.
- Others say that because the book of Judges describes a time of moral chaos in Israel, Deborah's leadership is just another manifestation of that.
 - But **on the contrary**--most OT scholars believe Deborah is presented as a bright spot in the midst of the chaos. As with all OT stories, we need to read Deborah's story through the lens of the NT, and what it teaches us about the role and value of women in God's Kingdom.²

Deborah is a woman filled with the Spirit of God being used in the Kingdom of God.

In the New Testament, there is nothing to indicate that women do not have access to the same leadership and teaching gifts that men do. In fact, **many verses directly affirm that they do.**

Now, hear me: they don't use them in all the same ROLES--but they have access to the same basic gifts.

- **You see, there is a myth alive in certain parts of the church** that men do the **real and significant work** of ministry--and as such **should be taught** deep, rich theology and leadership principles--their gifts should be recognized, called out, celebrated, and even paid.
- while **women's ministry** should mainly be about how to match the curtains with the pillows, how to **use the Enneagram to diagnose your relational difficulties**, or how to **identify new clients** for your essential-oils side-hustle
- --and not that there's anything wrong with **some of those things as hobbies**--just that some approaches to women's ministry acts like that is all there is for ladies.

But here's where that breaks down for me: I did not marry a weak, superficial woman (she is what some call "high-spirited." An Enneagram 7, in fact. Our first date involved a **3-hour debate** about Calvinism which she won. She was predestined to, so what could I do?)

- And we are not **raising my daughters** to be weak superficial women; and, I **don't believe our churches** should be raising them, either.

Now, having said that, at our church we believe that both the Old and New Testaments teach there are certain positions in the church and home that he has appointed men to occupy--just like there are certain roles only women can occupy.

- For example, in the OT, **women could not be priests.** Nothing in this story challenges that.
- **Or you see here in this story**, you see hints of it: vs. 8, when Barak won't the army, Deborah doesn't step up and say, "OK, I'll do it."

² Heath Thomas, Professor of Old Testament, OBU, and Nathan Finn, Prof of Theology, NGU

- God had appointed him to do that, not her, and she doesn't just start usurping roles not given to her just because she doesn't think he's doing a good job.
- Or vs. 4, some scholars point out that Deborah is **identified as part of a house** headed by her husband, Lappidoth, which means she didn't consider herself the spiritual head of her home--her husband was.

In the New Testament, Eph 5, Paul explains that because of the pattern God laid down in creation, men should carry the burden of **spiritual leadership in the home**, and in 1 Tim 2–3 he explains that this pattern also mean they bear responsibility for ultimate leadership and teaching in the church expressed in the office of elder.

- **This is not to imply some kind of inferiority--**
- **Gen 2 tells us God created men and women equally**, but *differently*, in his image.
- God called the woman an ezer kenegdo: *another of the same kind*
- **The two are not exactly the same**: When God saw the male alone he said, "Not good." If he'd made a carbon copy with only slight differences in plumbing, that would have been "not good x 2."
- Each gender, reveals a dimension of the image of God more complete than if one gender did it alone.
- **God did not create the two genders exactly the same, he made them differently-complementary--with special and unique qualities and roles.**
- (That's **where the term "complementarianism"** comes from.)

That said, nothing in the Old or New Testaments not **discourages women from developing and utilizing** ministry and leadership gifts God puts in them.

So, again, I believe there has been a **false dichotomy** put forward in the church: Either you believe there is **no distinction** of roles at all (a position called **egalitarianism**)

- Or, you believe women should only serve behind-the-scenes and in the home because they don't have the capacity or calling to lead in public ways.
- **We need to reject that dichotomy** and adopt instead what the Bible puts forward: **Distinctions of position and function in the body of Christ, but not distinctions of gifting, of dignity, or of value.**

Specifically to you ladies, I want to say 3 THINGS, which I often say to my daughters:

- A. **God has a calling on your life.** Yours is not just to simply sit on the sidelines or to marry a man with a calling. You have a calling. Have you discerned that calling and risen up to fulfill it? **Like Deborah**, God has a role for you in the kingdom.
- B. **You can and should take initiative in following God.** I've seen a lot of women who never take initiative or spiritual responsibility for themselves
 - **I say this not to rebuke** any of you, but (if anything) to affirm and release you: I have seen **certain ladies in our church who are entirely too dependent** on men around them to make decisions for them.
 - In one sense, **wives and daughters can be rightly dependent** upon men.
 - But ladies have the capability to hear and discern direction from the Holy Spirit.
 - Isn't that what we see in Deborah? Here we have a **leader of the highest caliber**. In fact, she is the wisest and most courageous person in all of Israel!
 - In Titus, Paul talks about the **importance of spiritual mothers** in the life of the church (Titus 2:3–6). **How important** was my mother in my life? **How much wisdom** did she speak into me? She wasn't just there supporting my dad as he spoke wisdom to me. You could argue that the majority of preaching I heard in my life came from the mouth of my mom. I wouldn't be half the man I am today if it were not for her wisdom and leadership.

- God calls every **woman in the church** to these kinds of formative relationships in the lives of others--whether they have children in the home or not!

C. **You can do all this while respecting God's order**, as you see Deborah do here, **refusing to take positions** God had assigned to men.

One of the requests I have written down in my prayer journal for my daughters is that they grow up to be Deborahs! (That is *literally how I have it written down*: 'Make them Deborahs'.)

- The **church needs a lot more** Deborahs!
- **We need... Deborahs in the home**: speaking courage into children their husbands.
- Deborahs **in ministry**: guiding us with their wisdom; calling out others as they give and pray and go.
- We need **more Deborahs** in society: who lead and teach with wisdom and courage and faith.

And I think those of us who **work in the church have to ask ourselves if we are as committed to raising up Deborahs** as we are to raising up Gideons and Samsons (probably could do with a few less Samsons)

- We know we have to **look for places to develop** and utilize her teaching and **leadership** gifts--**because, after all, the focus of Scripture is NOT on what she can't do, but on what she CAN, AND MUST, do.**
 - **So, at TSC, we've explored...**
 - **What are ways she can lead in the church that do not carry pastoral authority** or violate the spirit of Paul's instructions in 1 Tim 2?
 - **We've evaluated our structure at TSC**: what positions could she hold?
 - **We've got a lot of women leading in key ways here**: Of course, **Lesley Hildreth** and her team leads our women's ministries, but also **Bonnie Shrum** is on our executive team and oversees organizational leadership;

Lindsay Williams is over all of HR; **Lori Frances** now directs all our sending; **Dana Leach** directs all of my external ministries at the church; we have campus ministry directors like **Alex and Kelsey and Reema** who oversee the strategy and execution of ministries at their campuses, numerous women counselors, and spiritual formation leaders, just to name a few.

- **Furthermore, we've asked whether we are as committed to empowering them as empowering men?**
 - Pipelines for guys are easy--not as much for ladies.
- **And, we've done this all while seeking not to minimize, but rather to celebrate, the distinctive role God has given them.**
 - Listen: Complementarianism is not a restrictive box to be checked; it is a beautiful doctrine to be celebrated
 - God reveals his image through these differences
 - God gave her **insight into people**, a **relational** sensitivity and connectivity that makes the world a better place.
 - That's part of what God meant when he called the woman "**the helper.**" That's not a diminutive term meaning that she gets coffee and makes copies while he works--consider, the **only other person** who is called that in Scripture is God himself.
 - God was saying she would **make the home**; establish the community. She **makes the home a home**; a church a church.
 - Of course, one of the clearest places to see that is in the home in her capacity as mother
 - (But let me just say something here--**God does not call all women to be mothers. Some ladies believe they can't live full lives if they are not mothers.** (But that's not true... Ladies, you are first and foremost followers of Christ, and you will be fulfilled by doing whatever God has called you to do)

- But, **I also know that God has called a lot of you to be actual biological mothers**, and you need to realize what a beautiful and lofty calling this is.
- We live in a culture that constantly berates and belittles women who give themselves to the calling of motherhood, telling them that “just mothering” is beneath them and they are wasting their potential. That’s not true either.
- **As I’ll show you at the end, one of the highest and loftiest things you can give yourself to is the beautiful task of mothering.**
- The point I’m trying to make here is that **women have always played a crucial role in God’s kingdom**, and that is proven by God’s use of Deborah in an age when men did literally everything significant... and, today, ***the church will never be healthy and thriving until both our sons and daughters thrive within it.***
 - In fact, the **evangelical church in the West has suffered--one of the greatest sources of our problems--**has been that too often we’ve had only one perspective at the table.
 - **We don’t need diversity in the church just for a good photo opp or good PR**; it’s because we know that those in the body of Christ who grew up in different backgrounds bring different perspectives to situations and those different perspectives can show us how to more fully and faithfully apply Scripture and keep us from many of our blind-spots.
 - **In fact**, I can’t help but wonder if the sexual abuse crisis that now plagues the church might have been avoided (or mitigated, at least) if more of those sitting around the table had experience knowing what it’s like to be vulnerable, or to have your voice silenced. **Only ones there are part of the privileged group.**
 - For me at SBC: **One of my main tasks is appointing committee members who lead and direct the institutions** (this is probably more about Baptist polity than you’ll ever want to know). **In many previous years, 95% of appointments were white males**; $\frac{2}{3}$ are either women or people of color.

- **I do that for two reasons**
 - This really is the future. Already 20% of our membership is non-Anglo; and 63% of all churches planted by NAMB were non-Anglo
 - We need their wisdom. This is not an act of ‘grace.’

The other side of this...

Lesson **2. When men fail to lead, the people suffer (5:2, 9)**

Deborah says (in chapter 5, in the **spoken word she wrote** celebrating this victory), **“When the princes in Israel take the lead, when the people willingly offer themselves—praise the LORD!” (5:2)** She then, v. 13, **begins to list out the various tribes** who stepped up to fight and those who didn’t.

She says, From **Ephraim** they came. From **Issachar** faithful followed us. Vs. 18, the people from **Zebulun** risked their very lives... **Vs. 17, HOWEVER, she laments, “Gilead remained in Jordan, and Dan lingered with the ships...”**

Since my first point was directed toward women, let me direct this ***one specifically toward the men***, but I’ll make it brief:

- **We have a lot of men hanging back by the ships when they ought to be out in the fight.**
 - You know, Gen 3 seems to indicate that the **original sin happened because of a passivity on the part of the man** to lead:
 - **Gen 3 says that when the serpent came** to tempt Eve, he was **“with” her**. In Hebrew, “with” implies that he was standing right there!
 - **God had given Adam** the responsibility to lead and protect his wife.
 - **Tony Evans says that what should have happened** when the snake tempted Eve is Adam stepped forward and said, “Excuse me, Mr. Snake. Why are you talking

to my wife? We eat from the tree of life, not this forbidden tree.”

- **Instead, Adam hangs back and lets her make the decision**, waiting to see if she dies after eating it before he does! He fails to lead her spiritually and to offer himself in protection of her. In this story, we see Barak doing the same thing. He is hanging back and not going forward in obedience to God when God has clearly said to go.
- **THE GREAT TEMPTATION FOR MEN**, you see, IS NOT TO DO EVIL, it is to sit back and DO NOTHING.
 - We have a **lot of men in the church who are not bad** guys; they are **just hanging back by the ships** when they ought to be leading out in the fight.
 - **Complementarian couch potatoes**, so to speak.
 - For example, the **International Mission Board** says that for volunteers to go to hard places--countries closed to the gospel, **female applicants outnumber male ones** 4 to 1. Thank God for the women, but where are the men?
 - **To bring it closer to home:** of the 250 we have on the field: 60% families, 30% single women, only 10% single men. **Two things to take away from that:**
 - Men: If you want to know where to meet single women at our church: on the mission field.
 - Men, time to step up.³
- **When the *princes* lead**, says Deborah, people praise the Lord. *But when the princes abdicate their duties, the people suffer.*
- We've got to have more men leading in the home, leading in the fight against injustice.
 - **Men who show the same zeal in** raising their children and fighting for their marriages as they do in building their careers.
 - I've told you that if most men showed the same initiative and engagement at their jobs that they do in their homes--as much engagement in the boardroom as they do around the dinner table-- they'd have been fired long ago.

- **Fathers, your greatest ministry is in the home**, also. But many of you aren't acting like that. You are on autopilot.
- I've **told you before: Most guys feel like they are good dads** if they provide food and shelter for their families. *Possoms give their offspring food and shelter. Is this the bar we want to set for manhood?*
- It's like **Kevin DeYoung** says: "Complementarianism is not about telling women to sit down, but men to step up."

Which leads us to our 3rd observation from this story:

3. God curses spectators (5:17-23) As Deborah laments those who sat on the sidelines in the battle, she **comes to a crescendo** in vs. 23, 'Curse Meroz,' said the angel of the LORD. 'Curse its people bitterly, because they did not come to help the LORD, to help the LORD against the mighty.' (5:23)

- **Cursed? It doesn't say this tribe did anything bad.** It doesn't say, "This tribe hung back and smoked weed and raided everyone's tents while they were out." It just says that they did *nothing*.
- **They didn't do anything because it was not their land that was threatened.** (look at the map)
- **Meroz represents those people of God** who fail to act when it doesn't affect them.

When it comes to questions like racial justice, gender justice, responding to abuse charges or what have you, there has often been a malaise in the church; in large part because the injustice **didn't directly affect those of us sitting** in places of privilege.

Like Meroz, it didn't directly affect our tribe.

- The **church in the West in various generations has been slow**, far too slow, to champion the equality and dignity of the vulnerable.
- We haven't been as diligent when it comes to sexual abuse **because we weren't the ones** affected.

³<https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/why-are-women-more-eager-missionaries>

And some of us ask: **How could some of our ancestors have gone along with slavery?** How could a large **majority of conservative, Bible-believing** Christians have sat on sidelines of Civil Rights?

- And for the **most part I think you have to conclude it was because it didn't directly affect them--at least in the short run,** and so they didn't think that much about it
- **Like Dan, they sat back by the ships when they should have been out in the fight**

But in Galatians, Paul tells us that following Jesus means bearing each other's burdens: **Galatians 6:2** "Carry one another's burdens; in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ."

- **What this means is that those following Jesus care just as much about injustices happening to others as they do injustices happening to our people.**

Advocacy for the "other" has characterized every generation of faithful Christians.

- We see it the **1st centuries** of the Christian movement: I think of the words of **Emperor Julian**: "Curse the Galileans! They care not only for their own poor, but ours as well"
- **Is it really that remarkable when we decry injustices that affect us or our communities?** To borrow a phrase from Jesus, even the Gentiles do the same!
- **A distinguishing mark of Jesus' followers** is that they cry out against injustices that **do not directly affect them**, but because they so bear the burdens of their brothers and sisters they can't stay silent!

Where are those in the majority church today speaking up for the unique challenges faced by minorities in our culture?

- Where are megachurch pastors speaking up for the abused? Where have they been?
 - We know sexual abuse disproportionately affects women--where are the men speaking out on it? .

- Where are the Christians lamenting and repudiating violence or any discrimination against Muslims and Jews in our country?
- I'm always moved when I see black Christian leaders speaking up on behalf of the unborn.
- **Where are the white Southern Christians speaking up for the dignity of immigrants?** I'm not saying all Christians have to endorse one specific immigration policy--as with many policies, the issues surrounding this one are complex and there is room for disagreement among Christians--just that we can agree that in any policy immigrants should be treated as men and women made in the image of God, worthy of dignity and compassion.

God curses spectators. When it affects one part of the body, it affects all parts.

Well, there is **one final insight from this passage** that I want to draw out, because **I think it offers a special word of encouragement especially for mothers,** but also anyone engaged in **the Kingdom of God.**

4. God does his greatest work through simple acts of obedience (5:24)

- Throughout the book of Judges, we see **time and time again** that God **brings down the most powerful tyrants** through **weak instruments** simply doing his bidding.
 - Left-handed Ehud; Deborah; Gideon and his 300 men; Samson the 1-man army.
 - In this case, it's a **housewife with a tent peg--btw, in those days a tent peg was a common household item; don't think Thor; think housewife with a frying pan.**
- The point the writer of Judges is making: **God doesn't need our ability (he never has), only our availability!**
 - He overturns unjust world systems through weak people walking in obedience.
- **You see, Judges was written to prepare Israel for Jesus...**

- **Many commentators** have pointed out that each judge gets weaker... Joshua to David
- That's because they are **being prepared for the One who would overturn** all the powers of death and hell through one simple submission to the Father.
- Jesus **didn't overturn death and hell through a mighty show of force—he didn't come with a band of angels--but through humble and faithful** obedience, and he calls us now only to follow him in obedience and trust.
- And **just as God transformed the world through Jesus' obedience**, he'll continue to do the same **through ours.**

It's hard to think of a principle more applicable to motherhood.

Motherhood is a lot of mundane feeling tasks.

- Changing diapers.
- Getting the kids up and ready for school.
- Running the after school taxi service.
- Trying to convince your kids that Cheetos and Pop-Tarts don't make for a balanced diet.

I'm also guessing that for most of you mothers, stepping into your role has made you feel more ill-equipped than ever. Because **parenting is hard.** And harder today than it was when many of us were kids.

And, like me, you were probably pretty distraught when you left the hospital after having that first kid that they didn't give you an instruction manual. (I've always wondered why there is not a transitional period)

Often, of course, we have the opposite problem—everybody and their brother has opinions on how you can be the perfect mom. I know from experience that can be suffocating.

What Jesus says to you is not, **“OK, here's your perfect parenting manual. Better get it right.”** Yes, of course, the Bible instructs us on

how to raise our kids, but he mainly calls us to **obey and trust him** as he fights the battle through us.

Again: God does his greatest work through simple acts of obedience.

And I want that to be an encouragement to those of you in the toddler trenches. I know what you're doing doesn't feel like it's an honor. But I think about it this way:

- Who was the first person that first taught me that love was unconditional--I talk about it a lot, where did I learn it? From whom I experienced that first?
- Who was it that showed me that I could come to her at whatever hour of the night with whatever problem, large and small, and she'd always stop to help me?
- Who walked me through my first break up?
- Who'd I run home to when I'd had a terrible day at school? Whose voice did I most need to hear when someone had been unkind to me?
- Who always believed the best about me and never gave up on me?
- Who was one of the only 3 people in the world to actually read my Ph.D. dissertation? (the only other 2, btw, were me and the grader.. That one may apply more to me than you but it was still meaningful.)

For me, the **answer to all those questions was my mom**, as it was for many of you. **And those moments shaped me in profound ways**, even though they were hidden, private, and (seemingly) mundane.

Zach Eswine: *“Almost anything in life that truly matters will require you to do small, mostly overlooked things, over a long period of time”*

We have all been the beneficiaries of that humble obedience. **Hear me: sacrifice and compassion—done with hiddenness and humility—is never wasted in God's kingdom.** That's the path of Jesus, who served those closest to him to the point of death.

So, on this Mother's Day, I want to honor the mothers here—the **biological mothers, and the spiritual mothers**. I want to honor you by telling you that your role matters--not above every other calling in creation--but yours is a crucial part of God's kingdom, a beautiful dimension of his creation, and an indispensable component of his mission.

Even more than that, I want to **thank you for being a reflection of Christ**. You were the first picture I had of God's love, and I thank him that the picture is even clearer now than it was then.

I want you mothers to be encouraged, because God uses simple obedience to change the world.

In fact, Paul emphasizes that **through one of the most misunderstood** verses in the Bible, and with this I'll close: **In 1 Tim 2, after Paul explains the different roles** God has for men and women in the church, and how by God's design women are not to occupy the role of pastor, elder, he says:

"But she will be saved through childbearing, if they continue in faith, love, and holiness..." 1 Tim 2:15

- People read this and they say, "What? Is Paul contradicting himself?" Or, see, this just shows that you can't take the Bible literally, because we know a woman is saved by grace through faith, not through having kids."

- **Of course, Paul is not contradicting what he teaches in other places** about how we are saved.
- Some scholars have pointed out that **in Greek there is a definite article before "childbearing,"** which means you could read it, "She will be saved through *'the* childbirth."

A woman literally brought salvation into the world by going through the pain of labor, giving birth to a baby, changing his diapers, teaching him to eat with a spoon, and raising him up in the ways of God.

Paul **uses that to remind ladies (and all of us)** that the greatest accomplishments in the world come not through lofty positions of leadership, but through simple faithfulness to God's callings, including the calling to motherhood.

God hasn't called every woman to be a mother, I know. And a lot of us don't even have the possibility of being so. But he's called us all to obedience. The question for all of us on this Mother's Day, is **where he is calling you?**

God brought salvation through Jesus' simple obedience
Through Mary's...
What will he do through yours?