

Title: God-ordained Leadership in the Old Testament

Introduction to Lesson:

- Testimonies of *both* men and women who experienced God in profound and transformative ways for His glory and for the good of humankind - *all* people play a role in God's redemptive purposes.
- Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David and countless other men who were used by God in great ways. They are often described as courageous, hopeful, wise and discerning leaders.
- **Eve**, Sarah, Hagar, Rachel, Leah, Deborah, Esther, Ruth, Naomi, the daughter of Jephthah, women weavers of Kings 23:7, Miriam, **Rahab**, and the **daughters of Zelophehad** alongside these men also answered the call to leadership.
- All of these people knew that God designed them with the same capabilities required for God-ordained leadership which tells us that there is no partiality in God-ordained leadership – that leadership is not masculine or feminine. Male or female, God ordains whoever is willing to be courageous, hopeful, wise and discerning.

- God's redemptive work is so important that He will use anyone to accomplish it. designed us in such a way that we can sense Him, hear Him, and feel Him and all for the purpose of knowing Him. You see, to know Him is to love Him, to love Him is to know Him – no matter your gender, race, or age.
- A person's willingness to serve Him cannot be prevented by their gender or age or race...or any other circumstance.
- All God wants a willing heart that He can fill with hope, courage, wisdom, and discernment.
- John Maxwell defines leadership as "influence – nothing more, nothing less"
- Forbes magazine defines it as "...a process of social influence, which maximizes the efforts of others, towards the achievement of a goal."
- Effective leadership expresses itself in variety of ways.
- The men and women of Scripture, with all of their different experiences, backgrounds, and circumstances, overall had these four things in common. What is more is that to this day, they continue to influence us.

- What is more than that, and the main point of this talk, is that both the men AND the women were capable of being effective leaders.

Reason 1: Eve (Genesis 1-3, 4:1, 25)

- Genesis chapters 1-2: creation – identify God as the sovereign, authoritative creator of creation. They also explain humankind's God-given identity and purpose.
- Genesis 3 goes on to explain how humankind went on to reject that identity and purpose.
- Identify God/humankind; how things were intended to be; why they are not as they were intended to be; they declare to whom creation, including humankind, need to be redeemed.

- The name Eve means “living, life giver” or “mother of all living”¹ Made in the image of God, Eve was the first woman, the first mother.²
- God created her as Adam’s equal in being and in function³ as is evident through the use of the Hebrew plural pronouns in the “Let them rule” phrase in 1:26.⁴
- The word used to describe her is *‘ezer kenegdo* in 2:18; “helper” (*‘ezer*), never refers to subordination or inferiority in the OT. Most often refers to God Himself as our helper (i.e., God’s ability to save, protect, and deliver).
- The Hebrew modifying propositional phrase *kenegdo* means, “equal and corresponding to” which advances the implication that Eve was to be an equal partner to Adam in ruling and having dominion over the earth.
- The phrase would be better translated as “equal helper” = Adam and Eve’s relationship: mutuality in identity and function.⁵ Thus, Adam and Eve purposefully shared equality, unity, and intimacy even if the way they functioned was different than one another.⁶
- Still, Eve has persistently been perceived as one who is less than Adam because of the great transgression in the Garden
- Not alone in that moment. All of the pronouns: plural⁷
- Adam willingly ate the fruit.
- Eve and Adam stood equally condemned and exiled from the Garden: life = differently⁸
- In Genesis 4:1, Eve is said to state that she created Cain with the LORD. The Hebrew word for “create” is *qanah* and it is used elsewhere in Scripture to describe God’s creative power (Gen 14:19, 22)⁹ = Eve is secure in God’s commitment/knew that He overcame their sin.
- She also gave God credit for the birth of Seth in 4:25.
- Eve was aware that her pregnancies were the fulfillment of God's news to her on the day of the transgression: offspring (3:15-16).

¹ Carol Meyers, “Eve,” *Women in Scripture* 1:79-82.

² Meyers, “Eve,” 1:81.

³ Jerram Barrs, *Through His Eyes* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2009), 16. Barr defines their equality by stating that they were together created to have dominion over other creatures, for love and relationship, to be like God in righteousness and holiness, to be significant, to worship God, and to communicate.

⁴ Deborah M. Gill and Barbara Cavaness, *God’s Women Then and Now* (OK: Grace and Truth, 2004), 37.

⁵ Meyers, “Eve,” 1:80-1.

⁶ Gill and Cavaness, *God’s Women Then and Now*, 39.

⁷ Gill and Cavaness, *God’s Women Then and Now*, 39.

⁸ Meyers, “Eve,” 1:81.

⁹ Meyers, “Eve,” 1:82.

- She was hopeful in knowing that God would make sure that the Messiah would come from her and Adam's offspring (Matt 3:23-38).
- The astonishing thing about Eve, then, is her hope and courage.
- It could be argued that she was leading the way in proclaiming the Gospel in the very same breath by which she named her sons in accordance with God's promise to redeem humankind through the first parents' offspring.
- Abraham would emulate Eve's unwavering hope in holding firmly to God's promise

Reason 2: Daughters of Zelophehad (Numbers 27:1-11)

- During this time, Israel is in the Plains of Moab – located at the northern end of the Dead Sea/Numbers 22-36 where the details of Israel's lengthy encampment/prepared to cross the Jordan and enter Canaan.
- Lawgiving (chs. 28–36), apostasy (ch. 25), census (ch. 26), battle (ch. 31)/the prophecies of Balaam are also a part of this account. They reaffirm Israel's destiny in a surprising and emphatic way (chs. 23–24) = inheritances.
- Such a prophecy affirmed the promise made to Abraham that the land of Canaan would be Israel's everlasting possession (Gen. 17:8) is reaffirmed.
- Numbers chapters 27:1-30:16 inheritance rules and the celebrations of the festivals and that is where the account of Zelophehad's daughters is found.
- Two important things: First, Numbers 26, a census of all males over the age of 20 (26:2)/Zelophehad did not have any sons. He only had daughters (26:33).
- Second, God instructed Moses to distribute portions of the land as inheritance to the males that are listed in the census (26:53).
- no men = no land/"go out" for a secure future
- Numbers 27:1-2 states: **"27 Then drew near the daughters of Zelophehad the son of Hopher, son of Gilead, son of Machir, son of Manasseh, from the clans of Manasseh the son of Joseph. The names of his daughters were: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. 2 And they stood before Moses and before Eleazar the priest and before the chiefs and all the congregation, at the entrance of the tent of meeting,..."** (27:1-2)
- Layout of the Israelites: 12 tribes/Tabernacle/center of the Tabernacle: main authority figures, Moses, the priest Eleazar, and the chiefs – five women approach
- Numbers 27:3-4 that they said: **"Our father died in the wilderness. He was not one of the faction, Korah's faction, which banded together against God but died for his own sin; and he has left no sons. Let not our father's name be lost to his clan just because he had no son! Give us a holding among our father's kinsmen!"**
- Note: know their law and history, know that the continuity of family name depends on the land that is inherited, realize that the current law must take into account the unusual circumstances of a man without sons = They are courageous enough to support their claim with compelling arguments.
- **"Moses brought their case before God"** (27:5)
- God indisputably supports the sisters' demand and even by decreeing a new and permanent law to secure inheritance for any other daughters in the same situation (27:6-8). Thus, the sisters' claim leads to the laws of inheritance being changed forever.

- Their success is their full awareness of God's laws/people's history and story, their courage to speak up, and their hope in a just God. The result was effective change in Israelite traditions for God's glory and for their good.
- Years later, King Josiah

Reason 3: Rahab (Joshua 2:1-24, 6:17-25)

- Rahab's story is found in the book of Joshua. The Lord's first initiative is to pass the mantle of leadership from Moses to Joshua, who had been groomed for this very task (see Deut. 31:1-8).
- Most often as the prostitute of Jericho who helped Israel's spies/King demands Rahab bring them out
- Rahab responded by saying that she didn't know where there are but she hid the spies
- The grateful spies responded by guaranteeing protection (ch. 2). And it was so in chapter 6.
- Self-interest? Concern? Allying?
- The walls of Jericho come tumbling down after Joshua's troops have marched around the city with the Ark of the Covenant.
- Reminds us that God is the true leader of the conquest = encourages us to have faith and proclaim the victory
- Also, the account that along with many others in the Pentateuch, teaches us that God makes covenants with his chosen people to bring his redemptive plan to pass.
- A stipulation of the Mosaic covenant: set apart from all sin. As they took possession of the land God promised in the Abrahamic covenant, they were to remain set apart from sin – relationally, culturally, physically, spiritually, and politically.
- Within this view, the spies' association with Rahab is interesting since she is not an Israelite but instead... a Canaanite.
- But she's not just any Canaanite – grasps God's merciful, redemptive work and claims it for herself and her family.
- Knows of God's saving action at the Red Sea, and thereafter against other nations (2:10).
- She pleads; *hesed*; heart of the covenants God makes with his people.
- Rahab, then, is presented as a woman of trust, courage, and hope/had a true sense of God and His power – who didn't hesitate to make God her God when the opportunity presented itself.
- Rahab went from being a prostitute to being a faithful believer to being in the lineage of the most trustworthy, courageous, discerning, strategic leader of all: Jesus, our Lord.
- David
- Through Eve, Zelophehad's daughters, and Rahab, and the other many wonderful men and women in Scripture, God was continuing to redeem all of creation – including the identity and value of women.

- These women, like the men we know so well in Scripture, rose up into their leadership potential and capabilities as God called them forth.
- There is no partiality in God-ordained leadership.
- God judges according to works because he is impartial. **“⁹ There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, ¹⁰ but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. ¹¹ For God shows no partiality.”** (Romans 2:9-10)
- The Gospel is for all people – that is, not just the Jews. It says: **³⁴ So Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵ but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.** (Acts 10:34-35). He declares that God’s favor is made available to both Jews and Gentiles also. It is for those whose life is pleasing to God.
- So, my question is this: If the Gospel is for all people, why wouldn’t God call all people to spread it?
- See, you may be here as someone who is confused about how or who God has used to spread His good news – to draw others to redemption.
- To you I say, there is no partiality in God-ordained leadership/we all matter
- Designed each of us to do so, and because he has equipped us and empowered us to be a part of his redemptive work.
- Close with my testimony...
- **“Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her”** (Luke 10:42)
- If you’re willing to serve Him and partner with Him in bringing His redemptive purposes to pass, He will use you no matter what...