

Living out Lord

Influencing Your Wayward Husband

Once again they abandoned Him, the God of their ancestors who had brought them out of bondage and into freedom. They had chosen to give themselves over to the desires of their flesh, and in doing so, forsook God's protection, His power, His provision, and His promises to them. *"They refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways"* (Judges 2:19, NLT). It was only when their distress became unbearable, that they cried out to the Lord for deliverance.

Nevertheless, while His people walked in disobedience, the Lord rose up a judge to rescue them. In Judges, Chapter 4, the Lord's chosen vessel is a woman, a wife, and a mother. Deborah is found living as a God-fearing example, spurring the people on to victory and righteousness, while remaining uncorrupted by their practices.

As wives, we are exhorted to be examples to our wayward husbands, not through our words, but through our actions. First Peter 3:1-2 says, *"Your godly lives will speak to them better than any words. They will be won over by watching your pure, godly behavior"* (NLT). Although the story of Deborah may seem an unlikely source to glean truth regarding our marriages, we can learn much from her example in regard to chaste conduct. She was after all, a woman who "won" her generation to the Lord through her pure and godly behavior.

Matthew 5:13-16 says, *"You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it useful again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless. You are the light of the world—like a city on a mountain, glowing in the night for all to see. Don't hide your light under a basket! Instead, put it on a stand and let it shine for all. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father"* (NLT).

Chaste

The New King James Version states 1 Peter 3:1-2 this way: *"Wives...your own husbands...without a word, may be won by [your] conduct...when they **observe your chaste conduct** accompanied by fear"* (NKJV, emphasis mine). The word "chaste" in this passage denotes "freedom from defilements and impurities."¹ If we expect to have an effective influence upon our husbands, we must practice inward purity, virtue, and faithfulness in our own lives. Just like Deborah, we must choose to have "no fellowship with the works of darkness" and to "walk as children of light" (Ephesians 5:8, 11, NKJV).

Let us begin by gaining an understanding of the people Deborah was given an opportunity to influence. Read Judges 2:1-3:6 and answer the following questions:

What did the people fail to do (v.2)? _____

In verse 10 the word "*know*" can also be translated "learn to know, acknowledge, consider, recognize, or become acquainted with."² What did the children of Joshua's generation choose to know of God (v.10)? _____

Whose footsteps did they follow instead (vv.11-13)? _____

According to Psalm 106:34-46, what rituals did God's people adopt from the people around them?

Turn back to Judges 2. What were the consequences of their choices (vv.14-15)? _____

What responsibility was laid upon the judge? (Check one.)

- To teach the people to walk in the way of their fathers.
- To change the hearts of the people.
- To deliver the people from oppression and harassment.
- To rule over the people.

A woman who is married to a wayward man often feels that it is her responsibility to teach her husband God's ways, to be a law-giver, and to change his heart. The danger in this is that she may relay God's standards for righteous living, and even inform her husband of the changes *he* needs to make in *his* attitudes and actions, and yet fail to live up to the chaste standards she has set. As a result, her attempts to "win" her husband to the Lord push him further away, ultimately bringing dishonor to herself and to her God.

Why is it imperative that our words match our actions? Read Titus 1:16. _____

Read Ephesians 5:8-11.

Let's continue in Judges 2. Why did the Lord allow the foreign nations to remain in the land (vv.21-3:4)? _____

Do you believe trying relationships reveal what you truly believe about God? Why or why not?

You must always remember that your actions speak louder than your words! As you are transformed into Christ's image, your husband will witness the power of God at work in your life, and more than that, he will form an opinion of God based on his observations. It is frightening to realize that what we do, or fail to do, can have such an impact on another's faith!

Read 2 Corinthians 6:17-7:1.

First Timothy 4:12 says, "*Be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, and in purity*" (NKJV).

Awake!

We are introduced to wise and discerning Deborah sitting under a palm tree bearing her name. She had clearly gained the ear of the people, and with open arms she advised them. Although Deborah was a wife, a prophetess, a judge, a general, and a great leader, she claimed no title other than “*a mother in Israel*” (Judges 5:7). It would seem that her desire was to nurture, protect, and serve as a helper to her people.

For our purposes in this lesson, we will focus on Deborah’s conduct—her outward profession of godliness to those around her. Read Judges 4:1-24.

According to verses 6-7, when God spoke how did she respond? _____

Barak was doubtful, timid, and afraid, possibly indicating an underlying disbelief in God’s reliability. What actions did Deborah take to assure him of God’s faithfulness? _____

What evidences point to the fact that Deborah came alongside Barak to support him rather than to lead him? _____

Ultimately, how did she awaken the people and spur them onto victory? _____

First and foremost, Deborah assumed a position of listening; when God spoke, she believed Him, and then she put her beliefs into action. Secondly, when those around her were faithless, Deborah remained unfaltering in her convictions. She obeyed God’s will in spite of the apparent circumstances, in spite of the feelings of others, and in spite of the possible consequences. Next, Deborah stepped out of the way and allowed God to prove Himself to the people. She did her part and confidently expected God to accomplish what He said He would (vv.23-24).

How can you step out of the way and allow God to do His work in your husband’s life? _____

“And...the children of Israel grew stronger and stronger...” (Judges 4:24, NKJV).

Her Song

To conclude today’s study, turn to Judges 5 and read verses 1-31.

Deborah was a willing vessel through which the character of God shined. Think back over the story of her life. What did the people come to know about God based on her example? _____

As a wife, what did you learn about Deborah’s leadership style? _____

How can you apply this to spiritual leadership within your home? _____

Again, consider which method is more effective in influencing your husband to the Lord: leadership by example, or exerting headship. (Circle one.)

According to verses 6-7, what had ceased? How did Deborah bring the people together again? (Consider her characteristics as a “*mother*.”) _____

As a result, what began to happen in verse 11? What did the people begin to realize? (Also see Deuteronomy 14:2.) _____

Who fought her battle? Who will fight yours (v.13)? _____

What enabled Deborah to march on when the battle was raging (v.21)? _____

In verse 9, Deborah sang as a leader who willingly offered herself to the Lord. What can God accomplish in your marriage when you willingly yield your life to Him? Reread 1 Peter 3:1-2.

“*Let those who love Him be like the sun when it comes out in full strength*” (Judges 5:31, NKJV). Are you willing to “shine” in your marriage, and leave the results to Him? _____

In the end, Deborah’s generation was influenced by her faith and confidence in God, her wisdom, her bravery, her inner strength, and her unwillingness to be corrupted by evil. She spurred her people onto righteousness by living her faith out loud! The story of her life attests to God’s ability to accomplish that which seemed impossible...the salvation and restoration of her people.

In closing, read Daniel 12:3.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. During the course of your relationship, have you felt responsible to teach your husband God’s ways? How did you go about it? What resulted?
2. As we just learned, 1 Peter 3:1 emphasized a wife’s conduct over her words. Identify the godly virtues that you have claimed to possess and yet failed to demonstrate.
3. Hypocrisy is defined as “the false assumption of an appearance of virtue or religion.”³ It is also inconsistency in one’s character. How does inconsistency negatively affect a relationship?

4. James 1:27 says, “*Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is...to keep oneself unspotted from the world*” (NKJV). In essence “*unspotted*” means “not marred in one’s character.”⁴ How does the approval and acceptance of any worldly practice “spot” a Christian’s character?

Is there any area of *your* life (speech, actions, etc.) that could cause your husband to label you a hypocrite? If so, what can you do to silence his accusations?

5. What does your conduct as a wife reveal about your relationship with God?
6. If your husband was to form an opinion of God based on your life, what do you believe he would say?
7. Romans 12:2 says, “*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may **prove** what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God*” (NKJV, emphasis mine). In what ways have you conformed to the world in order to please your husband?
8. What does patterning yourself after the world prove?
9. According to James 4:4 and 1 John 2:15, if you pattern yourself after the world what will your spouse see instead of “*the love of the Father*” (NKJV)?
10. “Chaste” means to be pure in thought, word, and act, and to be modest and honorable in all things. What changes do you need to make in your life in order to be pure, modest, and honorable in your:
- Thoughts:
 - Words:
 - Actions:

Consider the following verses: Philippians 4:8, Ephesians 5:3-4, and James 3:17.

11. How will the implementation of the virtues you listed in Question Two allow you to be an effective influence?
12. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:7 and 1 Peter 1:13-16.

¹ Zodhiates, Spiros, ed. *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1992. G53.

² Strong, J. (1996). *The exhaustive concordance of the Bible : Showing every word of the text of the common English version of the canonical books, and every occurrence of each word in regular order*. (electronic ed.) (H3045). Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship.

³ Merriam-Webster, Inc. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. Eleventh ed. Springfield, Mass. : Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003.

⁴ Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Greek (New Testament)* (electronic ed.) (DBLG 834, #2). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.