

Lessons From Women Servants of God

Rick Railston

Recorded on May 23, 2020

In studying God's word, it's no secret that men are at the forefront of the narrative in the Bible and it's easy to overlook the contribution made by women. The fact is, our Father often used women to further His will and still does so today. It's true that women are not to participate in formal Sabbath services; Paul says so in his first letter to Timothy. It's true that yes, the man is the head of the house in marriage and we know that—Ephesians 5. But does this mean that somehow women are second class members of the body? As we are going to see today, not in the slightest.

So today we are going to look at three women of God—two in the Old Testament and one in the New Testament—to see how they contributed to further God's purpose and God's will on this earth and to see what lessons we can learn. On the way down, we were talking to a woman in church and my wife mentioned—she said, “Rick's going to give the sermon today about three women; he's going to be talking about you, me and another woman”. The woman shrieked that no, that was not going to happen. Maybe someday, you never know.

The title of the sermon today is:

Lessons From Women Servants of God

We're going to look at three women; the first is Deborah. You might be turning to Judges 4 while I introduce Deborah. We will be looking into the life of one of the eleven judges of Israel and the only female judge. Like Moses before her or David after her, she fulfilled the role of a prophet, a national leader and also a song writer. She has two chapters in the Bible devoted to her. Also, coming into play is a second woman that plays an important part which we will see in just a bit.

Judges 4 and 5 are very unusual because they give us a slice of Israel's history. Judges 4 is a narration. Judges 5 though, is repeating the same story but in poetry and song. These two chapters complement one another and they fit together in details and insight. As we go through the account of Deborah, we are going to quote chapter 5 as it applies to the narrative in chapter 4. We will go back and forth between them so you might want to put a marker if you have one, in Judges 4.

Chapter 4 begins by breaking into a familiar cycle of Israel. It repeats itself over and over. They behave righteously and God blesses, then they go into idolatry and God removes His blessing. They then become oppressed by their enemies and call out to God. I will read most of this out of the New King James Version as it just flows a little better.

Judges 4:1 *When Ehud was dead, [he previously delivered Israel in chapter 3] the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord. (NKJV)*

They go back into the same pattern. If you look at chapter 5:8, it gives additional information.

Judges 5:8 *They chose new gods; Then there was war in the gates; Not a shield or spear was seen among forty thousand in Israel. (NKJV)*

They didn't have the metallurgical capability to build metal spears and metal shields and that is going to play a part later on.

Judges 4:2 *So the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan ... (NKJV)*

We know the Canaanites have been mortal enemies of Israel. Jabin reigned in Hazor, which is about 125 miles north of Jerusalem.

2 continued) *... who reigned in Hazor. The commander of his army was Sisera, who dwelt in Harosheth Hagoyim. (NKJV)*

Which is about forty-five miles southwest of Hazor; not all that far away from the king. We have to remember and understand the geographic scale of Israel, especially those of us who live in Australia, Canada and the United States where you have wide open spaces. Israel runs north to south on the east coast of the Mediterranean. The northern and southern border would fit very nicely inside Michigan. So, the distances involved by our standards are not very great. By their standards when you are talking about on foot or on the back of a donkey or horseback, of course would be totally different. It's wise to keep that in mind.

3) *And the children of Israel cried out to the Lord; for Jabin had nine hundred chariots of iron, and for twenty years he had harshly oppressed the children of Israel. (NKJV)*

Chapter 5:6 adds to that, I'll read that out of the NIV.

Judges 5:6 *In the days of Shamgar son of Anath, [Shamgar killed 600 Philistines in chapter 3] in the days of Jael [Jael is a woman's name, and was a contemporary of Deborah. She is going to play an important part later on], the highways were abandoned; travelers took to winding paths.
7) Villagers in Israel would not fight; (NIV)*

Because of the oppression of Jabin, the king of the Canaanites, Israel was denied commercial access to the highways and were suffering economically as a result of the oppression of the Canaanites. That's something to keep in mind.

Now going back to chapter 4:4 of Judges.

Judges 4:4 *Now Deborah [she comes back on the scene], a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at that time. (NKJV)*

She is a prophetess who is judging Israel at that time. It is interesting the Hebrew word for *Deborah* means “the Bee”—that’s a head scratcher—and when you look into that word, Strong’s and other sources tell us, it’s the Bee but it is from the insect’s systematic instincts and in the sense of orderly motion, is where that name comes from. So that tells us something about Deborah from her systematic instincts in the sense of orderly motion. We’re going to see that her instincts came from the Almighty. She and He had a close relationship and He told her things—we don’t know exactly how; the Bible doesn’t reveal it—He inspired her to fulfill His will.

In The Jewish Encyclopedia, if you read about Deborah on page 489, it says, “Wife of Lapidoth” (meaning torches). So this could also be translated as, “woman of torches” or “woman of flame.” Rabbinic tradition notes that Deborah was a great light in Israel. So, a woman of torches, a great light of Israel—that ties together.

It is also interesting that there is a rabbinic tradition that she wrote Psalm 68, which is generally credited to David. So, who knows, someday we will find out.

Going on in verse 5.

5) And she would sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the mountains of Ephraim. (NKJV)

The mountains of Ephraim start about ten miles north of Jerusalem and they run north and south and they run for about twenty miles. The northern end of the mountains would be thirty miles north of Jerusalem. She sat under a palm tree somewhere in those mountains.

5 continued) ... And the children of Israel came up to her for judgment. (NKJV)

Likely, Deborah was an Ephraimite and Israelites came to her for judgment as she sat under her palm tree. That would be akin to a prophet or a wiseman sitting at the city gates; only in her case it was under a palm tree. It’s thought that she led Israel for approximately sixty years, twenty of those years during the oppression of the Canaanites. Then after the Canaanite war, which we’re going to see and have it described in chapters four and five—after that war it was thought that she led Israel peaceably for another forty years. The interesting thing is, during all of this, there is no opposition or rebellion attributed to the fact that she was a female judge. There is no record in scripture at all about that. We were in Judges 5:7 earlier, at the beginning of verse 7. I’ll read this out of the New King James Version.

Judges 5:7 *... Until I, Deborah, arose, Arose a mother in Israel. (NKJV)*

The Hebrew word for mother is used in a very broad sense. It can be used figuratively or literally. One of the definitions is, a mother as the bond of the family. Therefore, if she was the mother of Israel or a mother in Israel, we could say she is the physical glue that kept that nation together as long as she was the prophetess and the judge. It is similar to Jacob being called the father to Pharaoh in Genesis 45; it's a figurative term and she was figuratively called the mother in Israel.

Judges 4:6 *Then she sent and called for Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali [Kedesh and Naphtali are about ten miles north of where Jabim the Canaanite king lives, so this is the in the far north of Israel], and said to him, Has not the Lord God of Israel commanded, Go and deploy troops at Mount Tabor [Mount Tabor is about sixty miles north of Jerusalem]; take with you ten thousand men of the sons of Naphtali and of the sons of Zebulun; 7) and against you I [now Yehovah is speaking] will deploy Sisera, the commander of Jabin s army, with his chariots and his multitude at the River Kishon; and I will deliver him into your hand ?” (NKJV)*

Yehovah was promising Deborah that He would personally intervene and bring Jabin and Sisera, into Deborah's hand. The chariots here in verse 7 were probably two-man chariots. There was the driver and the second man could either use a sword or a spear or a bow and arrow. In those days, it would be called a weapon of mass destruction. Israel had none, as we mentioned earlier in the latter part of Judges 5:8—not a sword or a spear was seen among 40,000 in Israel.

Going on in Judges 4:8, notice what Barak said—she said Yehovah is going to deliver them into my hands.

8) And Barak said to her, If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go!” (NKJV)

Why did he say that? What prompted him to say that? Obviously, Barak held her in very, very high esteem. He knew that if she was there, then God Almighty would be there also. This gave him confidence; but he wasn't prepared to go up by himself. If you come with me, then I'll go.

9) So she said, I will surely go with you; [now she issues a warning] nevertheless there will be no glory for you in the journey you are taking, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.” (NKJV)

She is saying just understand man, don't go there thinking that you are going to be the glorious leader and get all the credit; God Almighty gets all the credit.

9 continued) ... Then Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh. (NKJV)

She is making sure here that Yehovah would get any credit that came along. The fact is, only the Almighty could bring an army into the hand of a woman or a man—only God could do what we are seeing play out in Judges 4 and 5. We see that Deborah prophesies that Sisera will die at the hand of a woman. We will see that is what actually happened.

10) *And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali [like I said, those tribes are located in the far north of Israel] to Kedesh; he went up with ten thousand men under his command, and Deborah went up with him.*

11) *Now Heber the Kenite [now we introduce a new character], of the children of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, [we know the father-in-law of Moses to be Jethro, so we see that Heber the Kenite is a relative of Jethro] had separated himself from the Kenites and pitched his tent near the terebinth tree at Zaanaim, which is beside Kedesh.*

12) *And they reported to Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor. [Which is west of the Sea of Galilee, not far away.]*

13) *So Sisera gathered together all his chariots, nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people who were with him, from Harosheth Hagoyim to the River Kishon.*

14) *Then Deborah said to Barak, Up! For this is the day in which the Lord has delivered Sisera into your hand. Has not the Lord gone out before you?" So Barak went down [he's going from near the top of Mount Tabor to the west] from Mount Tabor with ten thousand men following him. (NKJV)*

It's interesting that Heber the Kenite, told Sisera that this was going to happen, that Israel was nearby.

15) *And the Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army with the edge of the sword before Barak; and Sisera alighted from his chariot and fled away on foot.*

16) *But Barak pursued the chariots and the army [pursuing them further to the west, toward the Mediterranean Sea] as far as Harosheth Hagoyim [that's where Sisera lived] , and all the army of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword; not a man was left. (NKJV)*

That's a miracle from God Almighty.

17) *However, Sisera had fled away on foot to the tent of Jael [we mentioned her in the beginning], the wife of Heber the Kenite; for there was peace between Jabin king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite. (NKJV)*

So now *Jael* comes on the scene and you look up her name and it means "wild goat". This sounds like a woman to be reckoned with, if she has that name. We are going to see what Jael is about to do is all the more remarkable, given the fact that there is peace between her husband and Jabin, king of the Canaanites. Her husband told

Sisera, Jabin's general, that the Israelites were near—her husband acted like a spy. It's all the more remarkable when you consider what she is about to do.

18) *And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said to him, Turn aside, my lord, turn aside to me; do not fear." And when he had turned aside with her into the tent, she covered him with a blanket.*

19) *Then he said to her, Please give me a little water to drink, for I am thirsty." So she opened a jug of milk, gave him a drink, and covered him.*

20) *And he said to her, Stand at the door of the tent, and if any man comes and inquires of you, and says, Is there any man here? you shall say, No.*

21) *Then Jael, Heber's wife, took a tent peg and took a hammer in her hand, and went softly to him and drove the peg into his temple, and it went down into the ground; for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died. (NKJV)*

Chapter 5:24, this is a song now and poetry. It puts this into a meter applicable to poetry or song.

Judges 5:24 *Most blessed among women is Jael, The wife of Heber the Kenite; Blessed is she among women in tents. (NKJV)*

That is similar to what was said of Mary, the mother of Jesus in Luke 2—very similar wording. Notice verse 26.

26) *She stretched her hand to the tent peg, Her right hand to the workmen's hammer; She pounded Sisera, she pierced his head, She split and struck through his temple.*

27) *At her feet he sank, he fell, he lay still; At her feet he sank, he fell; Where he sank, there he fell dead. (NKJV)*

Let's just stop and think about this for a minute. Think about this, especially if you are a woman. The tents in those days were fairly large and heavy; these were nomadic folks. The tent had to survive weather, it had to survive wind. A tent peg in those days was not like you find on a little pup tent if you're going camping for the weekend. These tent pegs had to be very long to drive far enough into the ground for this to be a stable home for a period of time. They also had to be big enough around so they would hold against the forces of the wind and weather. When you think about that, then think about the force that was necessary to drive one of those pegs—he was obviously sleeping on his side—through a temple, through his entire head and down into the ground. Think about that. That is not an easy task. We see that Jael is one strong, determined woman. There's no evidence that she was afraid, no evidence that she was backing out—God send somebody else—there's no evidence that she evidenced any fear. In fact, just the opposite, she quietly and yet unwaveringly, did what Yehovah put in her mind. As the common phrase—she nailed him to the ground; she really did.

Back to chapter 4:22.

Judges 4:22 *And then, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said to him, Come, I will show you the man whom you seek.* [I bet Barak had no idea what he was going to find.] *And when he went into her tent, there lay Sisera, dead with the peg in his temple. (NKJV)*

We see Jael calmly waited for Barak to arrive. Notice she didn't go jumping up and down and proclaiming, look at me, look what I've done, I've saved the day—she just said come in and take a look.

23) *So, on that day God subdued Jabin king of Canaan in the presence of the children of Israel. (NKJV)*

God did it; not a man, not a woman even. God inspired it. They all had parts to play.

24) *And the hand of the children of Israel grew stronger and stronger against Jabin king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin king of Canaan. (NKJV)*

Remember Jabin lived in Hazor and he had a palace in Hazor and there is archaeological evidence of a massive fire that destroyed the ceremonial palace in Hazor at exactly the time that Deborah lived. This is another bit of archaeological evidence that proves the Bible is true.

Summing up the account of Deborah, Jehovah used two women—Deborah and Jael—to perform His will in freeing His people.

Now let's go to the second one, her name is Hannah. Turn to 1 Samuel 1:1 out of the New King James Version. Sometimes if you say Hannah, you say I've heard that before but not really sure where. This is the account of Hannah.

1 Samuel 1:1 *Now there was a certain man of Ramathaim Zophim, of the mountains of Ephraim ... (NKJV)*

These are the same mountains that Deborah lived in; ten to thirty miles, running north and south, north of Jerusalem. It's just coincidence that Hannah lived in the same general area that Deborah did.

1 continued) *... and his name was Elkanah the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite.*

2) *And he had two wives: the name of one was Hannah, [the Hebrew word for Hannah means "favored" and that's an apt word as we'll see] and the name of the other Peninnah [which means, in the Hebrew, either "pearl or ruby"]. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.*

3) *This man went up from his city yearly to worship and sacrifice to the Lord of hosts in Shiloh. (NKJV)*

Shiloh is twenty miles north of Jerusalem and that's where the Tabernacle was located and he would go up annually to sacrifice.

3 continued) ... *Also the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the Lord, were there.*

4) *-And whenever the time came for Elkanah to make an offering, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and daughters.*

5) *But to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, although the Lord had closed her womb. (NKJV)*

The fact that that's mentioned, indicates that that came from the Almighty and there was a purpose behind His closing of Hannah's womb. We'll see why in a minute.

6) *And her rival [the King James says adversary] also provoked her severely, to make her miserable, because the Lord had closed her womb.*

7) *So it was, year by year, when she went up to the house of the Lord, that she provoked her; therefore she wept and did not eat. (NKJV)*

We see this is just one of the pitfalls of having multiple wives.

8) *Then Elkanah her husband said to her, Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? And why is your heart grieved? [He may not be aware of all the persecution that Hannah was enduring, I'm sure that Peninnah would do it out of her husband's sight] Am I not better to you than ten sons? (NKJV)*

Apparently Elkanah was a good man and he wanted to make Hannah happy and he wanted to please her and it grieved him that she was weeping and sad and crying.

9) *So Hannah arose after they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the tabernacle of the Lord.*

10) *And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed to the Lord and wept in anguish.*

11) *Then she made a vow and said, O Lord [the One who always has been, the One who always will be, the One who always is now] of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a male child, then [this is her vow] I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head." (NKJV)*

She made a commitment to put her son under a Nazarite vow and the details of that you can find in Numbers 6.

12) *And it happened, as she continued praying before the Lord, that Eli watched her mouth.*

13) *Now Hannah spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. Therefore, Eli thought she was drunk.*

14) *So, Eli said to her, How long will you be drunk? Put your wine away from you!"*

15) *But Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor intoxicating drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord.*

16) *-Do not consider your maidservant a wicked woman, for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief I have spoken until now."*

17) *Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition which you have asked of Him."*

18) *And she said, Let your maidservant find favor in your sight." So the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad. (NKJV)*

Why is that? There is a lesson to be learned there. She got to the point that she realized, there was nothing she can do about this—of herself—so she turned it over to God Almighty. She said, this problem has to be Your problem, You are the only one who can fix this problem. She gave her problem to the Almighty and then she had peace and could rest.

19) *Then they rose early in the morning and worshiped before the Lord, and returned and came to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the Lord remembered her.*

20) *So it came to pass in the process of time that Hannah conceived and bore a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked for him from the Lord."*

21) *Now the man Elkanah and all his house went up to offer to the Lord the yearly sacrifice and his vow.*

22) *But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, Not until the child is weaned; then I will take him, that he may appear before the Lord and remain there forever." (NKJV)*

She knew that in a relatively short period of time, this son that she had longed for and obviously loved to hold in her arms and love to raise, she knew in a relatively short period of time that she was going to give him up forever. I'm sure that made her sad in that one sense.

23) *So Elkanah her husband said to her, Do what seems best to you; wait until you have weaned him. Only let the Lord establish His word." Then the woman stayed and nursed her son until she had weaned him.*

24) *Now when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bulls, one ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the Lord in Shiloh. And the child was young.*

25) *Then they slaughtered a bull, and brought the child to Eli.*

26) *And she said, O my lord! [referring to Eli] As your soul lives, my lord, I am the woman who stood by you here, praying to the Lord.*

27) *For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me my petition which I asked of Him.*

28) *Therefore, I also have lent him to the Lord; as long as he lives, he shall be lent to the Lord.” So, they worshiped the Lord there. (NKJV)*

We see that Hannah kept her promise, even though it was incredibly hard to give up her only son that she had longed for and prayed for and besought God for all of those years. Nevertheless, she turned her son Samuel over to Eli and into his care. Now go to chapter 2:18.

1 Samuel 2:18 *But Samuel ministered before the Lord, even as a child, wearing a linen ephod.*

19) *Moreover, his mother used to make him a little robe, and bring it to him year by year when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. (NKJV)*

From that point forward, she apparently only saw him once a year. As mother's, you can imagine, once you turn your child over, you go a year later and notice the growth of the child and the change in the child and then you go another year and notice more growth and more change. You can't help but think, look at what I've missed; that's just a human reaction. Verse 19 tells us she made him a coat and brought it up each year. Every year when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice, she brought it up year after year and the coat had to get bigger each time to fit Samuel.

20) *And Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, The Lord give you descendants from this woman for the loan that was given to the Lord.” Then they would go to their own home. (NKJV)*

Here's the point—we see this all the time and we've experienced it in our own lives. When things get dark, we can make all kinds of promises to God. God, if you rescue me here, I'll do this or if You'll stop this, I'll do that or if You give me this, then I'll do that. But then, when the crisis goes away, sometimes it's easy to forget those promises isn't it? Did I really promise that? Did I really mean that? Hannah kept her commitment. She got her son, yet she did not waver. She kept her commitment to Yehovah. She could have said, now I have a son, can we change the rules God? Can we do things a little differently? No, she didn't bargain with God. She could have said, I want him with me always, I don't want to give him up now that I have a son. There's no record of her doing that. She made her commitment and she followed through on her commitment. Look at the result of her honoring that commitment, verse 21.

21) *And the Lord visited Hannah, so that she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile the child Samuel grew before the Lord. (NKJV)*

Her child Samuel became one of the greatest examples of that same kind of commitment to the living God. Samuel dedicated his life to God Almighty. It came through her commitment and her dedication to God Almighty.

That brings us to the third example and this is in the New Testament. This woman's name was Anna. It is interesting, there is only three verses in the entirety of the Bible

that talk about Anna. Only Luke records this account. Anna appears at the purification of Mary at the temple, forty days after Christ's birth. This is a scene that is repeated over and over in Israel, that the law required a sacrifice of a lamb or two pigeons or two doves, after a son's birth. You can see that in Leviticus 12. Now Joseph and Mary and Christ who is forty days old, arrive at the temple. We can see this in Luke 2:22 in the New Living Translation.

Luke 2:22 *Then it was time for their purification offering, as required by the law of Moses after the birth of a child; so, his parents took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. (NLT)*

Lord here obviously refers to His Father. He wouldn't be presented to Himself. The baby Jesus, with His mom and dad who came to present Him to God, His Father—Jesus' Father.

23) The law of the Lord says, If a woman's first child is a boy, he must be dedicated to the Lord." (NLT)

Verse 36, in the New King James Version.

36) Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity;

37) and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years ... (NKJV)

If you look at the culture in Israel at that time, about the youngest a young girl could marry was approximately twelve years old. This is counter to what happens in our society today. That was just about the absolute youngest. In many cases, young girls were married at fourteen, fifteen, seventeen. They were married very early in life compared to our culture today. Let's select the number twelve to see at least how old Anna was. If she was twelve years old and married for seven years, that brings her to nineteen when her husband died. She was a widow eighty-four years, that means she was at least 103. Could well have been 105 or 110, we don't know. Going on in verse 37, notice this about her.

37) ... who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

38) And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. (NKJV)

As I said, Luke only provides three verses and this is the only gospel to mention her. They vividly depict a woman, deserving of the honor of being a prophetess. Anna is the only named New Testament female prophetess. As a prophetess, she received insight into things that ordinary people don't perceive—not revealed to ordinary people. She recognized who this child was and she begins to talk and proclaim His significance. In fact, her actions affirm Amos 3:7 (we won't turn there) but it says, surely Yehovah will

do nothing but He reveals His secrets to His servants, the prophets. God revealed to her who this child was and she came up and began to proclaim who this child was. She joins several others in Luke's gospel, recognizing this child's significance. For example, Simeon, spoken of earlier in Luke 2, was an older man who was about ready to die. He was promised that before he died, he would look on the Messiah and that too happened at this time in the Temple, and he proclaimed who Jesus was. Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, proclaimed that in Luke 1. Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist proclaimed it again in Luke 1 and of course the shepherds at Bethlehem in Luke 2 proclaimed it also.

We see here that Anna was the fifth in Luke to proclaim as a witness who Christ was. Luke mentions that Anna is of the tribe of Asher. In Deuteronomy 33:24 and we can see a prophecy by Moses. We know that Deuteronomy was written by Moses shortly before his death as a summary to Israel of all that has happened before they went into the Promised Land. Then he begins to give a prophecy about each tribe and in Deuteronomy 33:24, he is now talking to the tribe of Asher.

Deuteronomy 33:24 *And of Asher he said: Asher is most blessed of sons; Let him be favored by his brothers, And let him dip his foot in oil.*

25) *Your sandals shall be iron and bronze; [notice this last part] As your days, so shall your strength be. (NKJV)*

As you get older, you will get stronger. Surely Anna's life of vigor shows evidence of that because the fact is, she is only one of four people in the New Testament whose tribal lineage is listed. Obviously, we know from Luke 2 and Matthew 1 that Christ came from Judah. We are also told that Saul is from Benjamin in Philippians 3 and in Acts 4 that Barnabas was a Levite. She is the fourth one that had a tribe listed. As your days, so shall your strength be, and we're going to see that Anna's life was filled with vigor despite her advanced age. It is interesting that Luke omits her family—any name of her family—and the likely conclusion is she outlived all of her children. Widow for eighty-four years, she probably outlived all of her children. Luke, by listing her habits of worship and prayer and fasting, indicates a routine of hers. Since she had been a widow of eighty-four years, this is probably a routine that she has kept up for decades. Evidently, she was a fixture at the temple and there is an earlier precedence for that. Anna was a prophetess and as such, she had a routine and as such, she lived in the temple. Notice 1 Chronicles 9:33 in the New Living Translation.

1 Chronicles 9:33 *The musicians, all prominent Levites, lived at the Temple. They were exempt from other responsibilities since they were on duty at all hours. (NKJV)*

So, perhaps her station, living at the temple as a prophetess was not so unusual after all. It's obvious in just these three verses, we can learn a lot about Anna. It's obvious she was a workaholic and was available 24-7. It is likely she never leaves the temple; she probably set her own hours, her own schedule, her own routine and at least at 103, her lifestyle. Having probably done that for decades, invigorated her because she had a

sense of purpose and could do her Father's will. When you just think about these three verses, she's mobile, she's articulate, she's alert, she's certainly unselfish and she worships Yehovah, her God, day and night and she does so by fasting and praying. Anna would learn, over a period of time, that fasting brings results; biblical precedence of that includes Esther when she went into a three day fast before she courageously approached the king, her husband, in Esther 4. Obviously, Anna knew that and we are told she fasted day and night and prayed day and night.

The text also gives us clues about her behavior and about her appearance. If she is fasting day and night, her lifestyle indicates that she is probably thin. It's been my experience, when you look at people in their nineties and in their hundreds, every one I've known is thin. My Dad lived to be eighty-six and he gradually lost weight over time. People in their nineties or hundreds aren't carrying around a lot of extra weight so I don't think it's a stretch thinking that Anna was probably thin. She apparently moved around the area of the temple quite easily. Her ability to walk around indicates she wasn't carried and had a certain level of fitness. Apparently, her eyesight and hearing seemed to be intact and working as she communicated and she praised God and talked about Him. Her designation as a prophetess indicated her level of spirituality; it indicated where her focus was and what her mind was on. As a widow, Anna is a model of righteous widows. In 1 Timothy 5:5 Paul is talking about widows that are widows indeed, meaning widows who don't have family around to take care of them. Paul is describing widows indeed as the King James brings out.

1 Timothy 5:5 *Now she who is really a widow, and left alone [meaning she has no outside help from family], trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day. (NKJV)*

This is because a widow indeed quickly learns that the One who is going to look after her and the One who is going to take care of her is God Almighty. She quickly learns that she needs to take all of her cares and concerns and problems to God Almighty. So she sets a wonderful example for all of us, of putting God first in her life, unselfishly serving her Father, day and night. She also sets a good example of aging well. She's active, she's energetic, she's engaged and she has a sense of purpose. She continues—apparently my guess is—to serve her Father until she just dropped dead in the saddle, as we would say. She sets a wonderful example. All three of these women—four if you count Jael—set a wonderful example for us.

Let's look at some lessons we can learn from these women. We have seen some lessons already and there are many more that you could think of that I haven't mentioned, but for time's sake we'll cover just a few.

The first and the most obvious is that, in our Father's eyes, women are of great value. After all, He created them, didn't He? If you look at it carefully, God Almighty gave some of His characteristics to the male—physical strength is an example—but He gave other of His characteristics to the female; compassion and long-suffering. If you're going to be married to a male, you probably need to be long-suffering. Notice Galatians 3:28;

it tells us that women are of great value to God Almighty. Paul is speaking and he's setting the record straight because the Gentiles had been called into the church at this time and the Jews previously thought that salvation was exclusive to them. How dare these unclean come into the church. We know there was a great kerfuffle about that.

Galatians 3:28 *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (NKJV)*

This tells us that our Father is not a respecter of persons. In His eyes, women have equal value, going forward now and into the Kingdom. Yes, God has given different roles to the male and different roles to the female based on the characteristics of each. Think of this in 1 Corinthians 12:13 in light of the gifts God gives to men versus women; He gives gifts to both, be assured.

1 Corinthians 12:13 *For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks [there it comes again], whether slaves or free [there it comes up again and you might as well add whether you be men or women based on what we read in Galatians 3]—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. (NKJV)*

The very Spirit of our Father.

14) *For in fact the body is not one member but many.*

15) *If the foot should say, Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body?*

16) *And if the ear should say, Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body?*

17) *If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling?*

18) *But now God [referring to God the Father] has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.*

19) *And if they were all one member, where would the body be?*

20) *But now indeed there are many members, yet one body.*

21) *And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you." (NKJV)*

Jumping to verse 25.

25) *that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. (NKJV)*

Remember Philippians 2:3, that we should esteem others better than ourselves. What Paul is confirming is that yes, we all have different roles, we all have different parts to play but we are all one in Jesus Christ. God is not a respecter of persons. If we are going to understand that, we have to esteem others better than we think of ourselves.

Then, everybody will get along because if we are looking out for one another because our minds will be off ourselves.

26) And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

27) Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. (NKJV)

All of us, male and female, have a part to play in the furtherance of God's will. This first lesson is that women are of great value to our Father. It is sad, that in the past women were not made to feel of value. In some cases, depending on the time and the minister and the administration, women were made to feel as though they were second class Christians. That should not have been because the Bible does not say that.

So that's the first lesson.

The second lesson is, all these women put Yehovah first.

There's no question about that. I say Yehovah because all of these women worshipped the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; even Anna in the New Testament. The God that she worshipped was the God of her fathers; the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and that is Yehovah. Deborah, in the position God put her in, was to focus Israel on Yehovah and to look to Him for deliverance. Remember she said, Barak you can't take credit for what's going to happen; our God gets all the credit. She focused the nation on looking to the Almighty for deliverance. Jael, with her strength, performed Yehovah's bidding. He obviously put the thought in her head of what she needed to do, even though her husband was basically a spy for Jabin and for Sisera but through strength she performed Yehovah's bidding. That bidding, that thought, that strength, came from God Almighty.

Then Hannah turned her problem over to Yehovah and she put Him first in devoting her son to the One Who answered her prayers. For this she was blessed beyond measure. She followed through with committing her son—at that time her only son—to the care of Eli and to the care of Yehovah. She put her God first and then look what God did; blessed her with more children—beyond measure.

Then Anna devoted herself entirely to Yehovah; that's all she did. She lived in the temple, she fasted, she prayed, she obviously talked to people about Yehovah and probably talked to them about scripture and maybe as a prophetess. God revealed certain things to her—certain understandings—and her whole life revolved around God Almighty. The fact is, the second lesson is, all these women put Yehovah first. The lesson is obvious for us, we must do the same thing.

The third lesson is, all of these women were faithful to their calling.

God called each one of them for a specific purpose and they fulfilled that purpose and therefore they were faithful to their calling. Deborah, because of her faithfulness, Israel

had peace for forty years after the Canaanite war; after Jabin was killed, Sisera was killed. Because of her faithfulness they had peace for forty years.

Hannah, because she never asked for her son back, she never wavered from her commitment, God blessed her. She was faithful to that calling. She made an appeal to God, that she would devote her son to Him entirely for the rest of his life, she followed through on that, she was faithful to that calling and she had more sons and more daughters. Can you imagine what she felt when watching her son—Samuel— grow up to be a mighty prophet. What that meant to her and how it reinforced her faithfulness to God's calling.

Anna served God—we don't know how many years beyond her 100th birthday—maybe she served God to 110 or 115 or 105 or maybe she dropped dead the next day, we just don't know. The fact is she was faithful to that calling in serving God all the days of her life.

All were faithful to the ends of their lives, as far as the Bible reveals and therein is a lesson to us; we need to be faithful to our calling, we need to endure to the very end, whenever that end might be. Therein is a lesson for us. We cannot waver toward the end of our lives because these women did not do that.

A fourth and final lesson is that women have a vital influence.

I know there are many other lessons and we could go on and on. I am not talking about the women today in our society who loudly, demandingly assert themselves—that is not a Godly woman. I'm not talking about that. What I am talking about is how Peter encourages wives to be and how wives should behave. But this also applies to single women, it applies to widows and to those who are married. In 1 Peter 3:1, Peter is addressing wives whose husbands had apparently not been called up to that time; he's giving them some advice.

1 Peter 3:1 *Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives ... (NIV)*

They will see that example and be won over.

2) *when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. (NIV)*

That is not loudly proclaiming on a street corner, that is just how you live your life in the privacy of your home with your husband. What Peter is saying in verse 2 is, if they see purity and reverence, they might be won over.

3) *Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes.*

4) Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. (NIV)

This is true for married women, it's true for widows and it's true for those who are single. Someone who has, in their behavior, purity and reverence and gentleness and quietness—all fruits of God's Holy Spirit—when these women are present, Yehovah is present; God our Father is present in their lives. That can be a witness to others. If Yehovah is present in somebody's life, it means they are close to the Almighty. The same can be true for every woman in the church; by having an inner self, an inner peace, an inner quietness; gentle, quiet, pure, reverent. What an example. A Godly woman with a meek and quiet spirit, can have great influence in furthering God's will, our Father's will; in the life of her family, in the life of the church.

Let's wrap it up now. As mentioned in the introduction, men are at the forefront of the narrative of God's word and it's easy to overlook the contributions, the involvement, by women. As we've seen, in just three—there are many, many more. I gave a sermon back in December of 2016 on Rahab and you could draw these same lessons and conclusions from the life of Rahab. We've seen that these three women, along with Jael, were used by God to further His will. Deborah, the only female judge, Jael who ended the life of the General of the King of Canaan, Hannah the mother of Samuel and Anna the servant of Yehovah day and night. These women set a powerful, powerful example, dedicating themselves to serving their Father. The lesson for us—the big lesson—is let's follow their example. Women can have a great influence; these women did have a great influence and let's follow their example as we go forward from here.