

*This presentation will help you…*

• Apply the equalizing truths of Law and Gospel by reviewing women who have been forgiven from a variety of backgrounds and called to serve in a variety of settings.

• Be more confident in doing the Lord’s work as you look to Christ’s grace and calling in the Word.

• Survey Scripture to see how God used women’s relationships, vocations (callings) and situations just like he now does in your life.

• Understand the life and influence of Abigail in 1 Samuel 25, with the ability to make relevant applications to your own life.

• Understand the life and influence of Deborah in Judges 4-5, with the ability to make relevant applications to your own life.

• Be blessed with the peace of the Gospel and the assurance that your life has great purpose! You can joyfully rest in grace and freely serve in your callings.

Two very important things about women and Scripture:

Women are and .

Mary, the mother of Jesus Mary Magdalene

Both:

Ruth, “noble” Rahab the prostitute

Surprise:

Hannah, “grace” Woman at the well

Focus:

Scripture tells me: and .

What God demands

What God gives

Three areas of our Christian life

Relationships: siblings, parents, spouse, co-workers, church members, neighbors…

Vocations or callings

Situations

Everyday life: Shunammite woman and Naaman’s servant girl

Hardships: Esther and Jochabed (Mother of Moses)

*Discussion questions*

Discuss how your sinful thoughts, wayward emotions and Satan’s arrows interfere with your relationships. What things are under attack most often when negative thinking comes?

Before you’re under attack, plan your retreat to the fortress of the Gospel for security! Then with renewed confidence and motivation, strategize how to extend yourself to bring genuine love and God’s truth into your relationships.

Evaluate your “enmeshed” life and identify where you are influential or wish you were more influential. Some situations have fewer opportunities, but analyze areas that are hard for you. How can the Gospel free you? Do you try to bear the work of the Holy Spirit on your shoulders?

*Homework*

Gerald Kasten wrote, “A ministry to families focuses not only on individuals and their relationship with God, but also upon the relationship between people in their homes.” Think about his comment and make an extended application of the principle without losing sight of the Gospel. Rank some key priorities in relationships and note why each is important.

Write a response to Prof. Ken Cherney’s comment about the truth of your callings in life. “[It] is grounded thoroughly in the present. It teaches me to open my eyes and look at all the [callings] and relationships that make up the fabric of my life, right here, right now…Attempting to live in either the past or the future can only work to the detriment of faithfulness to the task God has laid upon me today.”

List the many callings you have in life. Be aware of the relationships and vocations in your own life. This is a Gospel activity for you to see the blessings and opportunities you have and be thankful! If the list looks too big or overwhelming, share your heart with God. Remember these are gifts from his hand and he will strengthen you to serve at different times as you are able. Find Bible passages related to your relationships and vocations. Write a devotion, journal entry or song about those passages in your life.

Pray about your vocations or callings to see their value in God’s kingdom.

*Abigail*

As you think about Abigail, draw on what we just discussed.

Remember how she is the same as you but different.

See sin and its consequences; see the hand of God and his loving goodness.

Watch the relationships, vocations and situations.

*The story: 1 Samuel 25*

See the contrasts and ongoing hardship (v. 3)

Note her relationships with her servants (v. 14-17) and King David (v. 23-31, 41-43)

Don’t miss her reference to David’s enemies being hurled from the pocket of a sling (v. 29)

She’s working it here!

See her quick thinking (v. 18), and godly motivation (v. 26-31)

*Abigail discussion questions*

How did our previous discussions shape your thinking? Did you think about how you are the same or different than Abigail? Where did you see God’s laws and demands or his good gifts? Do you see your own life as clearly as you see Abigail’s with regard to the importance of her relationships, vocation (callings) and situations?

Discuss the comfort of the Gospel in difficult relationships/situations, not just in the eternal realm but here on earth as well. Specifically, how does your relationship with Christ help you when you are in a challenging relationship? Where does the wisdom of the Law point, and how does it set parameters around your options? Cite passages or Scripture’s stories if possible.

Evaluate the impact of “everyday” Gospel living as you compare your life and calling to Abigail’s story. Do you see the importance of her daily relationships with those around her? What daily relationships might God be using in your life?

*Abigail homework*

Was this a well-known story to you? If not, read it again in 1 Samuel 25. Find someone to whom you can retell the story. Just say, “I read this great story today about a woman…” Or write it out in your own words. Make note cards or draw boxes around things that are important to you.

Now retell the story to yourself, and make yourself Abigail. Put your own hardship into the situation and create a scenario where God brings you through the situation or gives you the strength to endure it with his power and almighty Word. Weave in your Christian family and God-given strengths. Is Jesus in your story?

*Deborah*

As you think about Deborah, draw on our initial discussion.

Remember how she is the same as you but different.

See sin and its consequences; see the hand of God and his loving goodness.

Watch the relationships, vocations and situations.

*The story: Judges 4 The victory song: Judges 5*

The setting

Deborah the prophetess and judge

Barak and the battle

The hero, Jael

*Deborah discussion questions*

The Israelites were living under the heavy influence and oppression of ungodly neighbors and false religions that drew them away from the Lord. God calls us to be salt and light because we are still Israelites living in a Canaanite world.\* Discuss and evaluate ways to balance living as royal priests and a holy nation yet being “all things to all men” so that we can influence others for Christ.

Deborah encouraged and supported a leader that had self-doubts and weak faith. As a result, Barak led his army to a victorious conquest for the nation of Israel and the glory of God. What is the value of your influence? What if you don’t see the value of your influence? Do you trust God to be faithful in the sowing of his Word and sharing of his love? Ken Cherney wrote, “In the peace of forgiveness, we just do not need to know how he will use each work of ours in the purposes of his kingdoms of power or grace… The Old Man inquires constantly into the worth and importance of his works; faith knows only one righteousness.” How does that encourage you?

*Deborah homework*

One Christian may befriend a woman in the office who is struggling with an open, moral sin in hopes of helping her. Another Christian may choose not to keep company with such a woman, knowing she is drawn to that same sin. Both women’s actions can be misunderstood, and yet each is trying to be faithful to her own conscience. What advice would you offer each woman and how can you apply that advice to yourself? Meditate on “do the right thing for the right reason,” with frequent breaks for the grace of the Gospel!

Memorize three passages or concepts that you can use to encourage others as they live out their Christian callings. Practice the phrases, write them out and repeat them so they flow naturally in your conversations with others. Point others to the strength of God, the effectiveness of his Word, the comfort of his love and the full and free forgiveness of Christ.

*Closing thoughts and prayer*

\*I must give complete credit to my daughter, Hannah, who coined this phrase in high school and brought me delight in its concept and opportunities, especially when I feel I don’t fit in.

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