

LOVING JESUS, LOVING PEOPLE, PLOWING A COUNTER-CULTURE

[Spring Season: April 12 – June 14 | Fall Season: September 27 – December 6]

LEADER DETAILS

- **MAIN TEXT:** Judges 4:1-10, 15-22; 5:6-7, 13-17, 24-31
- **MAIN IDEA:** God powerfully works through courageous faith and faithful obedience.
- **GROWTH FOCUS:** Empower someone new this week to lead in some way (prayer time, ice-beaker, etc.)
- **ICEBREAKER:** What's something you most appreciate about your mom or a spiritual mother in your life?

ANNOUNCEMENTS (Full details at: emergence.church/digital-bulletin)

- **Totowa Updates** – The new eKids is open, we are in the temporary auditorium, and we have new service times! **Keep updated on changes here:** <https://emergence.church/totowa-updates>
- **Baptism Weekend – June 4th and 7th – Ringwood and Totowa**
 - **The Why** - Baptism is the way Jesus calls His followers to proclaim their faith in Him. It symbolizes how through faith we die with Christ to our sin, and are raised with Christ to new and eternal life in Him. If you are a follower of Jesus and haven't had the opportunity to declare that through baptism, now is the time to sign up!
- **Discover Faith – Begins May 17th - Ringwood and Totowa**
 - **The Why** – This is an environment for anyone who might be still exploring faith, new to faith, or maybe coming back to church after some time away. If you have some individuals that fit those categories, encourage them to jump in!

GETTING STARTED:

- **Pray:** This helps everyone prepare their heads and hearts as you turn to the discussion.
 - **Watch Community Extras Video** (length 3:44 – questions from video are included below)
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LAST WEEK'S GROWTH STEP FOLLOW-UP:

[Leaders: These follow-ups are meant to offer some accountability while being low-pressure. Keep it casual, "If you were able to try this last week, how did it go?" Sharing is optional; it's always okay to pass.]

- **Outward Action:** Take one step to remove or limit something that is feeding an unhealthy pattern in your life.
 - **Inward Prayer:** Ask God, "What am I feeding that needs to stop, and what do I need to start feeding instead?" And ask for the humility and courage to be obedient in that.
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SERMON DISCUSSION

[Leaders: Don't feel pressure to cover every question. If the group begins opening up meaningfully around fear, courage, repentance, or spiritual influence, it may be better to stay there rather than move on.]

Where Healing Begins

Read Judges 4:1-3

Israel falls back into the familiar cycle we've seen throughout Judges: rebellion, oppression, crying out, and deliverance. After 20 years of suffering under Sisera's oppression, Israel finally cries out to the LORD for help. Pastor Ryan pointed out that healing often begins when we stop blaming everyone else, honestly admit our own fault, and cry out to God for mercy.

- Why do you think it can be so difficult for people to honestly admit, "Some of this is my fault"?
- Read Psalm 51:3-6. What's the difference between making excuses for sin and genuinely bringing our brokenness before God?

Courageous Obedience

Read Judges 4:4-10

Deborah faithfully leads Israel and calls Barak to obey God's command to go into battle. Even after hearing God's promise of victory, Barak hesitates and responds in fear. Pastor Ryan mentioned that fear is often one of the greatest barriers to obedience, freedom, and spiritual growth.

- What stands out to you about the contrast between Deborah's courage and Barak's hesitation?
- Ryan said that "your victory is usually on the other side of doing the thing you are most afraid of." Have you ever experienced that to be true? If you are willing, share a bit about that.

Cowardly or Courageous?

Read Judges 5:13-17

In Deborah's song, some tribes are celebrated for courageously stepping into battle, while others are remembered for staying on the sidelines. Pastor Ryan challenged us with the reality that fear, comfort, and self-protection often

keep people from fully stepping into God's calling.

- When have you seen someone else's courage inspire or strengthen your own faith?
- Where might fear be keeping you stuck instead of moving toward freedom and growth?

Unexpected Plans and Heroes

Read Judges 4:15-22; Psalm 20:7

God overturns everything Israel would have expected. Sisera's mighty iron chariots become useless in the mud, and the feared military commander is ultimately defeated in an unexpected way through Jael.

- What stands out to you most in this account, and what does it reveal about how God works?
- It can be easy to put our confidence in things we can see and control instead of trusting God. What are some modern-day "chariots" people, including ourselves, tend to trust in?

A Mother Worthy of Honor

Read Judges 5:6-7, 28-31

The chapter ends by contrasting two very different mothers. Sisera's mother celebrates wickedness and selfish gain, while Deborah is honored as a "mother in Israel" who courageously rose up to serve, protect, and lead God's people. Pastor Ryan reminded us that true love doesn't just affirm people wherever they are, but lovingly leads them toward the Lord and His truth.

- Why is it not enough to simply love people without also leading them toward obedience to God? Where are we tempted to do this in our own lives with our children, or others in our lives?
- Who has been a "spiritual mother" or spiritual influence in your life? How did they help point you toward Jesus?

GROWTH STEP THIS WEEK

- **Outward Action:** Take time this week to honor someone who has been a spiritual mother to you, whether by telling them what they've meant to you (if possible), sharing their impact with others, or by simply expressing gratitude to God for that gift.
 - **Inward Prayer:** Ask God to show you where fear, comfort, or passivity may be keeping you from fully trusting and obeying Him.
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PRAYER PROMPTS:

- Ask God for courage to obey Him in the areas where fear has been holding you back
 - Pray that God would help you trust Him more than your own strength, comfort, or security
 - Pray for humility to honestly repent and cry out to God instead of hiding, blaming, or staying stuck
 - Pray for God to raise up courageous and faithful spiritual leaders, mothers, fathers, and disciplers who will boldly point others toward Christ
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NEXT WEEK'S TEXT: Judges 6:1–8:32 (Gideon - 2 weeks)