

Heroic Moments

“Priscilla”

Week 5 – July 30, 2023

Scripture: Acts 18:1-28

Grab your Bible and a few people to connect with. Read the Scripture, reflect on the questions below, and share your thoughts. It's that easy!

Share: If you were a superhero would you rather have speed, flexibility, or the ability to transport yourself?

Read the scripture noted above together: Take turns reading if you prefer. Enjoy the different Bible translations we each read.

Discuss the following context:

God has created each one of us with the desire of greatness and a purpose that's bigger than us. We can discover what that means for each of us by looking at the life of a woman named Priscilla whose story is found in the book of Acts. Her and her husband Aquila are tentmakers who go to the Greek city of Corinth as refugees from Rome (**Acts 18:1-3**). They meet Paul who is also a tentmaker. Paul ends up working with them and living with them while he is in Corinth spreading the good news of Jesus. They join Paul on one of his missionary trips to Ephesus (**Acts 18:18**), and after Paul continues to Antioch, Priscilla and Aquila invest in and mentor a young leader named Apollo (**Acts 18:24-26**). Their story in the book of Acts goes quiet after this, but their names pop up in some of Paul's letters. We learn they make their way back to Rome and continue to be a part of the early church movement (**Romans 16:3-4** and **1 Corinthians 16:19**). Scriptures suggests that without Priscilla and her husband, the church might not have turned out the way that it did. She was just an ordinary woman, doing ordinary work, but with open hands and a heart for Jesus and others.

Share your thoughts about the following questions:

1. Priscilla and Aquila are mentioned together throughout scripture indicating a true partnership in their marriage, work, and ministry, however, five of the seven times they are mentioned Priscilla's name comes before her husband's name. Priscilla being named first suggests she played the leading role in their ministry work. Priscilla though, was just an ordinary woman who created an extraordinary impact – she was a change maker. She can inspire us to do something great, no matter how ordinary we feel or view our lives. Who do you know that is a change maker? What are the characteristics of this person's example that you could mimic in your own life?
2. *Change makers have a posture of open hands.* Priscilla shared her business and opened her home. The resources, gifts, and skills that God had given Priscilla created an impact on many individuals and the early church. We too are invited into this posture – to see that everything we have can be a part of the plan and purposes of God.
 - a. What skills, talents, resources, or creativity do you have that God could use?
 - b. How can you have a posture of open hands?
3. *Change makers move in bravery.* Priscilla was bold and brave. She risked her life for Paul in some manner – and whatever that was, it surely required bravery. We see bravery in how she lived, moving to a foreign land, and accompanying Paul on a missionary trip. Bravery doesn't mean not being scared or uncertain, it means facing opportunities with boldness and courage.
 - a. Is there something new, unfamiliar, or challenging in your life where you have an opportunity to be brave? Share.
 - b. Any time we say, “Your will God, not mine” it is an act of bravery. Is there anything Jesus has put on your heart that you could say “yes” to in this season of life?

Pray together: Ask each other to share what is on your heart today. Thank God he created each of us as a change maker! Thank God we have everything we need to bring hope to the world around us and to do something great. Ask God how you can make an impact with where you are and what you have right now.

Heroic Moments

“Peter”

Week 4 – July 23, 2023

Scripture: Matthew 14:22-33; John 21:1-25

Grab your Bible and a few people to connect with. Read the Scripture, reflect on the questions below, and share your thoughts. It's that easy!

Share: There is an old saying “if you fall off a horse, get back up” that emphasizes determination and courage. Have you ever had a “fall off a horse” experience? What were you determined to do?

Read the scripture noted above together: Take turns reading if you prefer. Enjoy the different Bible translations we each read.

Discuss the following context:

The account of Peter walking on water in **Matthew 14:22-32** was a significant moment of Peter trusting Jesus' call to step into the impossible. The experience is a lesson to trust Jesus no matter what He calls us into; it is also a lesson that as we step towards Jesus call, we won't do it all right, but His grace will pick us up where we fall. As we take steps towards what Jesus calls us to there are others watching us, like the disciples in the boat, to determine what they themselves will do.

Peter was a man of action. He puts himself out there and jumps in vigorously. In Matthew 14 we see Peter presented with a challenge, afraid, yet he steps out, struggles and fails, but then Jesus rescues him, and Peter's faith grows. In many ways we see this repeated over and over in Peter's life. Can we see this cycle in our own lives?

Share your thoughts about the following questions:

1. The first step starts everything. Rosa Parks said, “*To bring about change, you must not be afraid to take the first step. We will fail when we fail to try.*” What barriers can prevent us from taking the first step?
2. Because Peter *stepped out*, he was able to *stand on* the presence of Jesus is a powerful way. He had experienced something supernatural when he walked on water. And when the next challenge presented itself, Peter was able to stand on something he could never have stood on if he had not first trusted Jesus and stepped out. Who do you know that experienced God in real way and was able to “stand on” His promises when a difficult situation arose? Share their story.
3. Peter *stayed with* Jesus. It was exactly at the point when Peter began to sink that he uttered 3 of the most important words we could ever utter: “*Lord, save me!*” (**Matthew 14:30**). Peter would go on to experience that “salvation” throughout his life. He would learn to *stay with* Jesus and to not give up. The most dramatic moment being when he denied Jesus (**Matthew 26:31-35; 69-75**), but Jesus does not give up on Peter, and Peter in turn does not give up on Jesus.
 - a. Peter goes back to fishing for a short while after Jesus' death and resurrection. In a sense he gives up in a state of uncertainty, until Jesus shows up (**John 21:1-25**). Have you ever given up because you felt disqualified by your actions? Share your experience.
 - b. Where in your life do you feel you have nothing to offer because you previously failed?
 - c. In **John 21:15-17** Jesus restores Peter with a powerful lesson about the true love of God. Despite Peter's denial, his place in the Kingdom doesn't change. Jesus' plan and purpose for him remains the same. Where in your life does Jesus offer restoration and invite you to take a fresh step towards what He called you to do?

Pray together: Ask each other to share what is on your heart today. Thank God that we can trust Him just as Peter did. Thank God that His love for us is greater than our failures and shame. We desire to keep *stepping out* in faith, *standing on* His promises, and *staying with* Him, because He won't give up on us.

Heroic Moments

“Samson”

Week 3 – July 16, 2023

Scripture: Judges 13:1-5; 24-25; 15:1-6; 16:4-31

Grab your Bible and a few people to connect with. Read the Scripture, reflect on the questions below, and share your thoughts. It's that easy!

Share: Have you ever “lost” somebody because they wandered away? Perhaps it was a small child testing boundaries or an older child feeling confident. Share your experience.

Read the scripture noted above together: Take turns reading if you prefer. Enjoy the different Bible translations we each read.

Discuss the following context:

The prophet Jeremiah once said that God has plans for all our lives (**Jeremiah 29:11**). We can miss these plans by rejecting them or living a life making small decisions that cause us to wander away from them. Often this subtle wandering is the result of allowing ourselves to become distracted from God and his plans. The longer we live distracted the more we forge a very different life than planned for us. However, no matter how far away our distractions lead us, the grace and power of Jesus can bring us back.

The life of Samson, an “unlikely hero”, is a perfect example of how easily we get distracted, how far we can wander, and what God’s grace does even when we hit bottom. From birth Samson was dedicated to the plans of God but along the way he took a lot of detours. God makes each of us with purpose and with plan. We are not random, nor accidental, and when it comes to our lives it’s not so much about how it starts, but how it ends.

Share your thoughts about the following questions:

1. When we zoom in on the end of Samson's life and we see a man stripped of his strength, his dignity, even his sight (**Judges 16:21-25**). He is not a powerful hero but a man who made a lot of mistakes. Do you have a personal story of feeling like an epic failure? Perhaps you stepped out, hoping to be a hero, and it ended badly. Share your experience.
2. Samson's story begins with hope; he was a special child (**Judges 13:1-5; 24-25**) sent to defeat the Israelites oppressor. He is described as religious, relational, and with great physical strength (sounds like a hero), but he also has a dark side. His choices result in loss and rage (**Judges 15:1-6**). How have you made a decision in the heat of the moment that caused some kind of pain or even devastation?
3. Samson loses his physical strength when he reveals its source (**Judges 16:15-20**). He's so busy trying to find fulfillment everywhere else he does not even realize how far from God he has drifted. His story ends incredibly sad except for the words “*Lord, remember me*” (**Judges 16:26-30**). Where else have you heard these words phrase in Scripture? Why are these words so powerful?
4. Over and over the book of Judges teaches us that without God's intervention, we are lost. The story of Samson shows us not only that we are lost but that even *our deliverers are lost too*. Those heroes that are supposed to help us, simply can't. God invites us to fully trust in Jesus Christ and leave the striving behind, to see Jesus as the one and only hero. How does this challenge the way we live our lives? How does this give us hope?

Pray together: Ask each other to share what is on your heart today. Thank God that wherever we are on our journey, our story is not over, in many ways, it's just beginning because the grace of God is stronger than anything else. Thank God that we are not the hero of our story, but he is. Thank God that no matter our distraction, he will take us back.

Heroic Moments

“Deborah”

Week 2 – July 9, 2023

Scripture: Judges 4:1-16

Grab your Bible and a few people to connect with. Read the Scripture, reflect on the questions below, and share your thoughts. It's that easy!

Share: Have you ever gone ziplining, parasailing, waterskiing, or something similar that required a “step of faith” to start? Share your experience.

Read the scripture noted above together: Take turns reading if you prefer. Enjoy the different Bible translations we each read.

Discuss the following context:

While superheroes have incredible strength, courage, and abilities, someone who exemplifies humility, integrity, gentleness, kindness, sacrifice, and patience is a hero in the Kingdom of God.

This story is a contrast between two characters: Deborah and Barak. One who had courage, vision, and faith in the face of what appeared to be insurmountable odds. The other who had none. Because God told his people to fight an enemy that had a larger army, better weapons, in a place that provided them with the advantage. It made no sense. But when we read the Scriptures, we see God's ways aren't our ways. Even when the odds appeared stacked against them, Deborah's answer was still yes. Do you sense God is asking you to do something that doesn't make a lot of sense?

Share your thoughts about the following questions:

1. Deborah was one of 14 judges who lead Israel for about 355 years. Unlike judges today, they were primarily military leaders who God raised up to save his people from their enemies. The Israelites needed to be saved repeatedly because they got caught up in a destructive pattern of behavior – they sinned, suffered consequences, repented to God, and then God raised up a new judge to save them. Deborah is the only judge who was also a prophet. Discuss **Judges 4:1-16**.
2. One day Deborah sent for Barak, Israel's General, and essentially said “You already know what you're supposed to do but you haven't done it, you've been dragging your feet. Do what God had told you to do.” (**Judges 4:6-7**). Think about a time in your own life when you knew how God wanted you to move but you delayed your obedience or put a condition on your obedience similar to Barak. What causes us to respond with delay or conditions?
3. Deborah's response to Barak was gracious and kind (**Judges 4:9**). She didn't scold Barak or emasculate him, but told him, “If this is what you want, I'll go with you.” But she also said to him that because of his lack of faith, he wouldn't have the honor of killing Sisera, but that honor would go to a woman. Deborah was a woman of incredible faith and God won the battle for them that day (**Judges 5**). Have you ever had a time in your life where God told you to do something that didn't make a lot of sense? Perhaps it required a huge step of faith. Share your experience.
4. God never tells us that our lives are going to be easy if we choose to follow him, but he does tell us that when we follow him regardless of whether it makes sense to us or not, a life spent following him will be a life of adventure, of beauty, and of freedom. Does this give you hope? Why or why not?

Pray together: Ask each other to share what is on your heart today. Thank God that when we step out in faith, we step into a God-sized adventure. Praise God that if we choose to live in this way, we'll experience the beauty and power of God in a greater way, and more of that beauty and power will also be unleashed into the world. Ask Him to help you respond to nudges from Him with steps of faith.

Heroic Moments

“Elijah”

Week 1 – July 2, 2023

Scripture: 1 Kings 19:1-18

Grab your Bible and a few people to connect with. Read the Scripture, reflect on the questions below, and share your thoughts. It's that easy!

Share: When you were growing up who was your hero? Who is someone today that you deeply respect and perhaps even try to emulate?

Read the scripture noted above together: Take turns reading if you prefer. Enjoy the different Bible translations we each read.

Discuss the following context:

When we think of heroes, we may think of Braveheart, Superman, Black Panther, or Captain Marvel. Larger than life characters who all have incredible strength, courage, and abilities. These are qualities that are usually at the top of every superhero list. But what if a hero is so much more? Perhaps someone who exemplifies humility, integrity, gentleness, kindness, sacrifice, and patience. In this four-week series, we'll look at “heroes” in the Scriptures and moments where they exemplified these heroic qualities that are also characteristic of the kingdom of God. Our first hero is Elijah.

The Old Testament prophet Elijah experienced one of the greatest God moments in history on Mount Carmel. He prayed and God sent what's believed to be a massive lightning strike that consumed his sacrifice, the wood, the altar, the ground around it, and all of the water that was on top of the mountain. There had been a drought in Israel for 3 years, which had devastated the nation. Once again, Elijah prayed, and it started raining. The greatest miracles that day weren't the fire or rain, but almost a million Israelites turned back to God. But afterwards, Queen Jezebel was irate and promised to kill Elijah. Instead of turning to God, Elijah ran, hid, and found himself in a very dark place physically, mentally, and spiritually.

Share your thoughts about the following questions:

1. Often when we're struggling, or feel like we failed God, we choose isolation rather than community. Reread **1 Kings 19:1-5**. Even Elijah succumbs to fear and ran. Think about a time in your life when you found yourself in a valley of life. How did you respond?
2. When we are in a valley, it's important to remember God's faithfulness. “Remembering” is a discipline and it requires effort and intentionality. What barriers prevent us from remembering? Discuss the influence of self-reliance, elevating our own strength above God's strength, and pride.
3. Elijah confesses, “God, I'm angry, I'm bitter, I'm afraid, and I'm alone” (**1 Kings 19:14**). In confessing, he takes what was hidden and brings it to the light and takes the first step towards healing. Read **James 5:16**. Confession forces us to acknowledge reality, be honest, and admit what's in our heart. What hidden lie do you believe about God or yourself? Is there something you could confess?
4. Being with God, Elijah received what he needed: rest, renewal, strength, hope, and healing. Then God told him to re-engage (**1 Kings 19:15-17**). When we spend time in God's presence, remembering, confessing, meeting with him, we can experience the same rest, renewal and hope Elijah experienced that will allow us to go back and do what God has called us to do. Is there a place in your life where you can re-engage with what God is asking you to do?

Pray together: Ask each other to share what is on your heart today. Thank God for his faithfulness, provision, and protection. Ask him to show you the barriers in your life that prevent you from remembering his faithfulness. Ask him to help you remember, reveal, and re-engage.