



BIBLE STUDY

God's Purpose Where I Am

Deborah, Jael and the courage to answer God's call right where we stand

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How to walk through this study

This study follows the inspiration of the path we began together in the study **Ezer Kenegdo — The Help of God**. There, we discovered that woman was created as a strong force, a corresponding presence, face to face. Now, the question changes:

How does that strength show itself in real life?

We will see that this strength is not limited to a single place, function or format of life.

You can walk through these pages in two ways. **Alone**, at your own pace, with a pen nearby: the writing spaces are part of the study, and what you record in them will be your true map. Or **in a group**, with other women: at the end, you will find a guide with a suggestion of six meetings.

Throughout the reading, you will find a few types of boxes that repeat. **Understand the context** brings historical and cultural information. **Observe the text** highlights words and details of the biblical narrative. **Careful with the interpretation** marks the points that call for a more attentive reading. **Bringing it to today** draws the text closer to our lives. **Pause to reflect** opens space for personal questions. And **My next step** points to practical action.

ABOUT THE BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

This study was originally written in Portuguese, comparing two Portuguese Bible translations. In this English edition, Scripture quotations follow the wording of the New International Version (NIV). Where marked as "condensed quotation", the text has been shortened for editorial purposes, preserving its content and indicating the reference for full reading.

One last thing before we begin: this is not a study meant to leave you feeling you must become someone else. It is a study meant to help you place your life, exactly as it is today, before God.

We do not need to reproduce another woman's life. We need to discern who God calls us to be in this season and answer Him with courage, responsibility and wholeness.

The path of this reading

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PART ONE

Before looking at Deborah and Jael

*On the questions we carry, the comparisons that weigh on us and
the story each of us is building.*

The question that accompanies so many women

Along my journey, I have had the opportunity to meet extraordinary women. Women who built history wherever they went. Some led teams and companies. Others built homes that were true refuges. Others did both, in different seasons of life.

And I noticed something that marked me: however different their paths were, the questions were almost always the same.

- Am I in the right place?
- Am I fulfilling the role I am supposed to fulfill?
- Is it possible to be a good mother and desire a career?
- If I dedicate myself entirely to my family, will I be wasting talents?
- Can I change my mind along the way?
- Is there only one way to please God?
- Am I confusing calling with desire?
- Am I living other people's will for my life?

PAUSE TO REFLECT

Which question on this list has been beating loudest in your heart lately? Do not answer too quickly. Let the question stay for a while.

If any of these questions has ever lived in you, this study was written for you.

For a long time, it seemed there had to be a single answer. As if there were one exact model of the faithful, fulfilled, God-obeying woman.

That model changes its face depending on the environment. In some circles, the "right" woman is the one who dedicates herself entirely to the home. In others, it is the one who builds a brilliant career without ever showing tiredness.

The result is almost always the same: women who feel insufficient before a standard that no one knows exactly who defined. The good news is that the Bible does not support this single standard — and that is what we are going to discover in Judges 4 and 5, alongside two very different women, used by God in the same story.

EXERCISE 1

The questions that arise along the way

Write honestly. No one will grade these answers. They are the starting point of your walk through this study.

Which question about my life keeps repeating itself?

In which area do I feel the most guilt?

Whose approval do I believe I need?

Which choice am I afraid to make?

Which choice am I afraid to undo?

When another woman's choice becomes a measuring stick

There is a silent form of suffering that almost every woman knows: measuring her own life by the ruler of someone else's.

We compare ourselves with the woman who works and seems to handle everything. With the woman who cares for her home and seems to have a peace we do not have. With the one who seems to balance career, children and ministry without a hair out of place. With the one who had more opportunities. With the one who started earlier. With the one who followed the more traditional path and seems more approved by everyone.

Comparison has a cruel detail: it always compares our backstage with the other woman's stage. We know our own fears, our difficult nights and our inner doubts. Of the other woman, we see only the edited result.

And there is a spiritual aggravation: when comparison mixes with faith, it disguises itself as obedience. We begin to believe that that woman's choice is God's will for all women. That the format of her life is the measure of our faithfulness.

The problem is not learning from another woman's story. The problem begins when we turn her story into a sentence over ours.

Learning from other women is biblical and healthy. We are formed by examples, counsel and stories. The issue is the difference between inspiration and copying. Inspiration moves us to seek God with more courage. Copying moves us to reproduce a result without passing through discernment.

Inspiration opens space for the question: "God, what do You want from me?". Copying arrives with the answer ready: "I want her life".

BRINGING IT TO TODAY

Social media has multiplied the showcases of comparison. In a few minutes, we see dozens of edited lives and return to our real routine. It is no wonder so many women end the day feeling they are behind in a race no one knows where it begins or ends.

EXERCISE 2

Whose life am I trying to copy?

Fill in the table honestly. The third column is the most important: it is where admiration stops being a copy and becomes a prayer.

WHAT I ADMIRE IN ANOTHER WOMAN	WHAT I TRY TO REPRODUCE	WHAT I NEED TO DISCERN BEFORE GOD

My journey between motherhood, career and faith

Before we open the book of Judges, I want to open a piece of my own story. Not because it is a model. Quite the opposite: because it is merely one path among many possible ones.

I decided to build a life as a woman, a mother and a professional. I wanted to raise a family, live motherhood, work in the marketplace, build a career, study, develop projects and exercise the talents God gave me.

That choice brought immense joys. And it also brought questions, insecurities and the very real fear of not being able to balance every area. There were seasons when the math did not seem to add up. There were nights of sincere doubt: am I on the right path? Can anyone sustain all of this?

At the same time, life gave me the gift of walking close to friends who made choices different from mine. Some dedicated themselves entirely to motherhood. Others paused their careers for a season. Some returned to professional life after years away. Others changed their minds along the journey and followed paths completely different from what they had planned.

I could have expected their lives to seem incomplete next to mine, or mine next to theirs. That is not what I found. In very different stories, I saw real expressions of abundance, meaning and fulfillment. And I also saw, in all of them, the same questions I carried.

Abundance was not tied to a single format of life. It appeared when a woman made her choice with awareness, the fear of God, commitment and wholeness.

Notice: I am not saying that every decision is automatically right, nor that choosing any path sincerely is enough. I am saying that the abundance I witnessed did not depend on the format, but on the way each woman placed her format before God.

It was that perception that led me to the two women of this study. Because long before us, in a time far harsher than ours, God had already written a story with two women in completely different places — and neither of them had to become the other.

EXERCISE 3

My story so far

Use this space as a free timeline. Record important decisions, interruptions, new beginnings, losses, changes, perceived callings, choices made out of fear and choices made out of conviction. It does not need to be pretty. It needs to be true.

Decisions and moments that marked my journey:

Choices I made out of conviction:

Choices I made out of fear or pressure:

New beginnings and changes of route:



PART TWO

The time of Deborah and Jael

A palm tree, a tent and a God who acts in both places.

A people living under oppression

The period of the judges was one of the most difficult times in Israel's history. Before there were kings, the people lived in cycles that repeated with painful regularity: Israel drifted away from God; oppression came through enemy nations; the people cried out for help; God raised up a judge to deliver them; and, some time later, the drifting began again.

I confess that, when I read these stories, I even feel distressed by such a repetitive cycle. And, at the same time, I recognize in it something very human: how often do we also return to the very places God has already taken us out of?

Judges 4 begins exactly in one of those cycles:

JUDGES 4:1-3 · NIV (CONDENSED QUOTATION)

"Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD, now that Ehud was dead. So the LORD sold them into the hands of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. Sisera, the commander of his army [...]. Because he had nine hundred chariots fitted with iron and had cruelly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years, they cried to the LORD for help."

Three pieces of information in this text deserve our attention: the name of the oppressor, the size of his force and the length of the oppression.

Jabin was the king; Sisera, the commander who carried out the oppression. The nine hundred iron chariots were the symbol of his power. And the twenty years reveal that this was no passing crisis: it was an entire generation learning to live with fear.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

What were the iron chariots? In the ancient world, the war chariot was one of an army's most powerful weapons: a fast platform, drawn by horses, reinforced with iron. For a people who fought essentially on foot, as Israel did at that moment, nine hundred chariots represented overwhelming military and technological superiority. That is enough for us to grasp the essential point: humanly speaking, the math did not add up for Israel. Let's just say things looked very grim for God's people.

The song of Judges 5 shows how that oppression changed ordinary life:

JUDGES 5:6-7 · NIV (CONDENSED QUOTATION)

"In the days of Shamgar [...], in the days of Jael, the highways were abandoned; travelers took to winding paths. Villagers in Israel would not fight; they held back until I, Deborah, arose, until I arose, a mother in Israel."

Notice the portrait: abandoned roads, travelers seeking alternative routes, weakened villages. Fear had reorganized the geography of a nation. People no longer traveled the main roads.

BRINGING IT TO TODAY

This is an analogy, not an equivalence: the war Israel lived through is not the same as our conflicts today. But the image helps us reflect: not every oppression arrives in iron chariots. Some arrive in the form of guilt, fear, comparison, overload, social expectations and the feeling that we do not have enough resources to move forward. And some forms of fear also change our paths: they make us avoid conversations, lower our voices, postpone decisions and live by alternative routes.

EXERCISE 4

What are my iron chariots?

Answer thinking of your life today, not of ten years ago.

What seems too big in front of me?

What fear has been determining my movements?

Which area of my life has been shrunk by fear?

Which path have I started avoiding?



CHAPTER 5

Deborah: the woman under the palm tree

Discernment, courage and a leadership that never gave up caring.

It was in that scenario of twenty years of fear that God raised up a voice. And that voice came from under a tree.

JUDGES 4:4-5 · NIV

"Now Deborah, a prophet, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time. She held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites went up to her to have their disputes decided."

In some translations the tree appears as a date palm — the same tree, which became known as the Palm of Deborah.

The text introduces Deborah with four identities at once: a prophet, the wife of Lappidoth, a judge of Israel and a woman sought out by the people. In a period of oppression, she became a reference point for direction. People went up to her.

What we see in Deborah

Discernment. Deborah perceived the historical moment and recognized God's direction. While an entire nation was getting used to fear, she kept listening. Discernment rarely is born in the noise; it is born of constant faithfulness, in the place where we are planted.

Recognized authority. The people went to her to present their disputes. Deborah's authority was not imposed by a title: it was built by a trustworthy presence over time.

Courage. She communicated a direction of attack in a context of enormous threat. Speaking in God's name in the face of nine hundred iron chariots is not rhetoric: it is faith with practical consequences.

The ability to mobilize. Deborah did not try to accomplish everything alone. She summoned Barak, delivered the word she had received and mobilized the people. The song itself records this rising: "Wake up, wake up, Deborah! Wake up, wake up, break out in song!" (Judges 5:12).

Presence. When Barak asked her to accompany him, Deborah agreed to go. She did not lead only from a distance.

Humility. When victory came, the song of Judges 5 did not build a narrative centered on her. The victory was attributed to the LORD, and the participation of many was celebrated: "So may all your enemies perish, LORD! But may all who love you be like the sun when it rises in its strength" (Judges 5:31).

A mother in Israel

There is a detail in the song that deserves a pause. Deborah describes herself this way: "I arose, a mother in Israel" (Judges 5:7).

A woman who led a nation chose for herself an image of care, protection and responsibility for the people. She did not say "I arose as a general" nor "as the highest authority". She said "mother".

This breaks a false opposition that still weighs on us today: the idea that strength and care cannot dwell in the same woman, that leading requires abandoning tenderness, that caring requires giving up strength. Deborah led as one who cares. And she cared as one who leads.

CAREFUL WITH THE INTERPRETATION

Deborah was not a modern executive. When we draw Deborah close to the women who lead and work today, we are making an illustrative comparison, not a historical one. She belonged to another time, another culture and another context. The comparison serves a single point: to show that God acts through women in public spaces of decision — not to turn Deborah into a contemporary professional profile.

And about the palm tree, it is worth saying clearly: the Bible attributes no spiritual power to that tree. It was a simple place between Ramah and Bethel, which became a reference point for an entire nation because of who was there, faithfully, day after day.

It was not the palm tree that gave Deborah her significance. It was Deborah's faithfulness that turned that place into a landmark.

EXERCISE 5

The place where my voice is already sought

Deborah did not begin by leading an army. She began by being trustworthy in the place where she was. Look at your life through that lens.

What kind of counsel do people seek me out for?

What responsibility has already been placed in my hands?

In which environment does my presence generate direction or safety?

Is there a capacity God gave me that I have been diminishing?

Barak: courage may also need company

Deborah sent for Barak and delivered to him the LORD's direction: to gather ten thousand men at Mount Tabor, because God would draw Sisera to the Kishon River and give him into his hands (Judges 4:6–7).

Barak's answer became famous:

JUDGES 4:8 · NIV

"Barak said to her, 'If you go with me, I will go; but if you don't go with me, I won't go.'"

It would be easy to turn Barak into a caricature, as if he were merely a coward hiding behind a woman. But the text asks for a more balanced reading.

Barak answered the call. He gathered ten thousand men. He went down from Mount Tabor when Deborah gave the signal. He fought the battle to the end (Judges 4:12–16). He had a real responsibility and he took it up. What his answer reveals is something else: he recognized in Deborah a presence he needed in order to move forward at that moment.

And Deborah agreed to accompany him. But she added a word that changes the course of the narrative: because of the path he had chosen, the honor for Sisera's defeat would not be Barak's; the LORD would deliver the enemy into the hands of a woman (Judges 4:9).

Keep that sentence. It prepares the most unexpected scene of the story.

PAUSE TO REFLECT

Asking someone to walk with us does not always mean lack of faith. It can mean recognizing the resources God has placed around us. Courage does not always present itself as absolute independence. At certain moments, mature people recognize that they need company, counsel and presence.

There are decisions that should not be made in isolation. The mature question is not only "can I do it alone?", but "whom has God already placed at my side for this crossing?".

EXERCISE 6

Who needs to walk with me?

Think of a decision you are facing right now and answer:

Is there a decision I am trying to make completely alone?

Who are my mature references — people of wisdom and faith?

From whom do I need prayer, counsel or company in this season?

Who should not take part in this decision (voices that confuse rather than help)?



CHAPTER 7

Jael: when the tent becomes a place of decision

The unexpected woman and the resources that were already in her hands.

The battle took place, and the LORD gave Israel the victory. Sisera's army was defeated by the Kishon River. And then the narrative makes a surprising move: it leaves the battlefield and enters a tent.

Facing defeat, Sisera, the feared commander of the nine hundred iron chariots, fled on foot. And he arrived at the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite (Judges 4:17).

The Kenites were not Israelites: they were a semi-nomadic people who lived in tents. There were peaceful relations between the house of Heber and the house of Jabin, which is probably why Sisera considered that place safe.

Follow the sequence of the text (Judges 4:18–22): Jael went out to meet Sisera and invited him in. She covered him. When he asked for water, she offered milk. Exhausted from his flight, Sisera fell asleep. Then Jael took a tent peg and a hammer, approached in silence and killed the enemy commander. When Barak arrived, pursuing Sisera, it was Jael who went out to meet him and showed him how it had ended.

Deborah's word had been fulfilled: the honor of that victory belonged to a woman. And the song of Judges 5 celebrates Jael with strong words:

JUDGES 5:24 · NIV

"Most blessed of women be Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, most blessed of tent-dwelling women."

CAREFUL WITH THE INTERPRETATION

This episode is part of a war narrative from the ancient world, and the Bible records it with all the harshness that war carries. We will not romanticize the violence of this scene, nor use it to encourage any form of aggression, revenge or "spiritualized warfare" against people. What the text celebrates is not brutality: it is the courage, the strategy and the decision of an unexpected woman at the decisive moment of the liberation of a people oppressed for twenty years.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Life in tents. Semi-nomadic peoples like the Kenites lived in tents of fabric and leather, set up with ropes and pegs driven into the ground with a hammer or mallet. Setting up, maintaining and taking down the tent was part of the domestic routine. This explains an important detail of the narrative: the tent peg and the hammer were not weapons. They were common tools of the environment in which Jael lived, objects her hands probably knew well.

It is here that Jael's story speaks so closely to ours. She had no army. She had no iron chariots. She had no public position, title or platform. The text presents her in her domestic environment, inside the tent where she lived. And it was from that space that she entered the story of Israel's liberation.

Jael did not possess the resources of an army. She used what was within the reach of her hands.

One important caution: this does not mean that ordinary objects hide secret spiritual meanings, nor that simply "using what we have" makes everything work out. It means something deeper and simpler: when the decisive moment came, Jael did not disqualify herself because of the place she occupied. She read the moment, decided and acted with what she had.

After that day, Israel grew stronger and stronger, until Jabin's oppression came to an end (Judges 4:23–24). And the land had peace for forty years (Judges 5:31).

EXERCISE 7

What is already in my hands?

Before asking God for what is missing, recognize what He has already given. Record generously — including what seems too small to count.

Knowledge and skills I possess:

Experiences that formed me (including the hard ones):

Relationships and environments I already have access to:

Resources and opportunities available today:

Responsibilities I already carry:



PART THREE

Two women, two places

The contrast that sets us free: neither had to become the other to take part in the same story.

The palm tree and the tent

Now place the two stories side by side. Look slowly.

DEBORAH	JAEL
Under a palm tree	Inside a tent
Sought out by the people	Appears unexpectedly
Public leadership	Action in the everyday environment
Mobilizes other people	Acts individually
Uses word and direction	Uses strategy and available resources
Takes part in the mobilization	Takes part in the outcome

Two women. Two places. Two completely different styles of presence. And a single story of liberation, written by God with both of them.

God did not need to turn Jael into Deborah in order to use her. And He did not need to diminish Deborah in order to honor Jael.

If the victory had depended on a single model of woman, one of the two would have been left out. If public leadership were the only format of purpose, Jael would be a mere footnote. If the domestic environment were the only approved place, Deborah would be an anomaly to be corrected.

But Scripture honors both. The song of Judges 5 celebrates the mother in Israel who arose and the woman of the tent who did not hesitate.

The victory passed through the battlefield, but it also passed by a palm tree and entered a tent.

The women of today

When I look at these two women, I think of the women I know. Deborah may remind us of those who work, lead, counsel, build businesses, make decisions and exercise influence in public spaces. Jael may remind us of those whose work happens mostly at home, in motherhood, in

caregiving, in managing daily life, in barely visible battles and silent decisions that sustain entire families.

And there is something the two have in common, more important than everything that sets them apart: neither of them held back. When the moment came, each one responded from the place where she was, with what she had in her hands.

Deborah's palm tree and Jael's tent became places of purpose because two women did not stand back from the moment that was set before them.

My palm tree

The palm tree represents the spaces where your voice and your presence reach people. Yours may be large, or it may be a coffee table. Size is not the point.

Where does my voice reach people?

Where do I exercise influence, even informally?

What public responsibility (work, community, church) do I hold?

In what place do I need to stop hiding?

My tent

The tent represents what you build away from watching eyes: the invisible work, the silent decisions, the environments you sustain.

What do I build away from people's eyes?

Which silent decisions sustain my family or community?

What important work of mine has been invisible?

Which everyday resources can I use with more intention?

When we turn a choice into a rule

If God acted through a public leader and through a woman inside her tent, we need to face head-on two errors that still wound many of us. Both have the same root: turning a personal choice into a universal rule.

Error 1 — Diminishing the woman who works or leads

It is the idea that career is incompatible with faith. That female leadership cancels femininity. That desiring professional growth is necessarily selfishness. That motherhood and work are always adversaries, and a working mother loves her family less.

Deborah's story supports none of this. She exercised public leadership over a nation and described herself as a mother in Israel, in the same song. Scripture does not rebuke her for occupying that place: Scripture honors her in it.

Error 2 — Diminishing the woman who dedicates herself to her family

It is the opposite idea, equally cruel: that the home is not work. That caregiving is not production. That dedication to family is a lack of ambition. That a woman without a formal career is a woman without purpose.

Jael's story supports none of this. It was inside a tent, with everyday tools, that the outcome of a twenty-year oppression was decided. Scripture does not diminish her place: it calls her blessed among women.

Let us be honest: neither of these choices is free of responsibilities, limits and renunciations. Every real choice costs something. The woman who works gives something up; the one who dedicates herself to the home gives something up; the one who tries to balance both gives something up. Maturity is doing that math before God, not pretending it does not exist.

The problem begins when we turn a personal choice into a rule for every other woman.

OBSERVE THE TEXT

Notice that Judges 4 and 5 makes no comment comparing Deborah's "model" with Jael's "model". The narrative does not say one was more right than the other. It simply shows God acting through both, each in her place. The text's silence about that comparison is, in itself, a lesson.

EXERCISE 9

The rules I received

Complete the sentences with the first answer that comes to mind. Then reread them calmly and ask the final question.

A good woman must...

A good mother never...

A Christian woman needs to...

A successful woman must...

If I change my mind, it means that...

If I ask for help, it means that...

If I prioritize my family, people will think that...

If I prioritize my career, people will think that...

Now, the decisive question: which of these "rules" are truly biblical — and which were simply absorbed along the way, from voices that did not always speak for God?

Remaining, changing or beginning again

This chapter is for women in motion. Those who paused their careers. Those who went back to school after years. Those who changed professions. Those who slowed down to care for the ones they love. Those who returned to the marketplace. Those who started a business. Those who closed a chapter. Those who discovered new desires in seasons that seemed settled.

If you are in one of these crossings, I need to tell you two things at the same time.

The first: changing paths is not automatic failure. There is no merit in remaining in a format of life merely because it was the first one we chose, or because others expect us to remain in it.

The second: change is not automatically God's direction either. Not every desire for a fresh start comes from a calling; some come from exhaustion, escape or comparison. That is why the key word for this season is not "courage" nor "caution". It is **discernment**.

*Faithfulness does not mean remaining forever in the same form of life.
In some moments, being faithful will mean staying. In others, it will
mean having the courage to change.*

Criteria for discernment

How to discern? There is no formula, but there are wise criteria that can be placed before God, in prayer:

Motivations. What truly moves me: conviction, calling, escape, fear, comparison, haste?

Responsibilities. Who depends on me? What does this change demand of the people I love? What commitments need to be honored along the way?

Mature counsel. What do the wise people who know my story and love God say?

Limits and reality. Do my health, my time and my financial reality sustain this decision? What needs to be planned first?

Timing. Is this the moment, or is it only urgency speaking? There is a difference between postponing wisely and postponing out of fear.

Biblical coherence. Is this decision consistent with the principles of the Word and with the character of God?

CAREFUL WITH THE INTERPRETATION

A loving warning: beware of the single criterion of "peace in my heart". Feeling peace is precious, but right decisions can also produce fear and discomfort — Deborah marched into a war, and it is unlikely to have felt like a quiet stroll. Peace is one of the signs, not the only one. It needs to walk together with prayer, counsel, responsibility and coherence with the Word.

EXERCISE 10

Am I remaining out of faithfulness or out of fear?

Use the table to separate real responsibility from what may just be fear dressed as prudence.

WHAT I WANT TO DO	WHAT HOLDS ME BACK	WHAT IS REAL RESPONSIBILITY	WHAT MAY BE FEAR
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PART FOUR

When courage comes from where we least expect it

*A ten-year-old girl, a prophet who felt too young and the voice of
God saying: "I am with you."*

Amanda and the lesson that changed direction

I want to tell a story I carry with me to this day.

When I was younger, I taught children at church. At one point, I decided to give one of my students, a girl named Amanda, an invitation: she would prepare a study on a passage of the Bible she liked and bring it to our next meeting. Amanda was about ten years old. And she chose Jeremiah 1.

On the day of her presentation, that girl spoke about Jeremiah's call, about his insecurity over his own youth and about God's answer. She spoke with the seriousness of someone who had understood something many adults spend a lifetime without understanding.

I had prepared that activity believing I would teach a child. That day, it was a child who placed courage inside me.

That day, I had asked a child to learn and teach something. But it was God who used that child to teach and strengthen the teacher.

I was the teacher. I had prepared the invitation, the format, the meeting. And God, with the freedom that only He has, reversed the direction of the lesson. The voice that strengthened me in that period of my life did not come from a pulpit, a book or a conference. It came from a ten-year-old girl with a Bible in her hands.

I keep that memory as a permanent reminder: God is not limited to the voices we consider qualified. He can use a prophet under a palm tree, a woman inside a tent, an insecure young man and a child in a church classroom.



Sometimes, courage arrives through the voice we least expected to hear.

Artistic representation. This image is the memory of a girl who deeply touched my life — it is not the real Amanda, but it carries the memory of who she was, with that Bible in her hands.

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God's Purpose Where I Am

Jeremiah: when insufficiency seems greater than the call

Let us now go to the text Amanda chose. It is one of the most human calling scenes in the entire Bible.

JEREMIAH 1:4-8 · NIV

"The word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.' 'Alas, Sovereign LORD,' I said, 'I do not know how to speak; I am too young.' But the LORD said to me, 'Do not say, 'I am too young.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,' declares the LORD."

God calls, and Jeremiah's first response is a list of insufficiencies: I do not know how to speak; I am too young.

OBSERVE THE TEXT

The Bible does not tell us Jeremiah's exact age. Translations reflect this in different ways: some say "I am too young"; others, "I am only a child". The Hebrew term used (na'ar) could describe anyone from a boy to a young adult. The central point of the text is not the age itself: it is that Jeremiah considered his youth and his inexperience impediments to the call.

How God answers insufficiency

Notice that God does not deny the facts. Jeremiah really was young. He probably really was inexperienced for the size of the mission. God's answer is not a compliment to lift the prophet's self-esteem. It is a complete redirection of his gaze.

Jeremiah looked at himself: "I do not know how to speak". God points to Himself: "you will go", "I will send you", "I am with you and will rescue you". The question changes from "who am I?" to "who is with me?".

Then the text records a gesture of enormous tenderness: "Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, 'I have put my words in your mouth'" (Jeremiah 1:9). Exactly in the place of his declared inability — the mouth that "did not know how to speak" — was where God placed His word.

The feeling of insufficiency may explain our fear, but it does not have to determine our answer.

BRINGING IT TO TODAY

What Jeremiah did with his insecurity is what many of us do with ours: he turned a real fact (his youth) into a definitive sentence ("I cannot"). God did not ask him to fake maturity. He asked him not to use his own limitation as a final answer. Limitations are managed; sentences paralyze.

EXERCISE 11

What have I been using as an argument not to move forward?

Complete only the sentences that make sense for you:

I am too young to...

I am too old to...

I do not have enough training to...

I do not have the resources to...

I do not have time to...

I am not like...

I have made too many mistakes to...

I have too many responsibilities to...

Now reread your answers and separate:

What is a real limitation, to be managed with wisdom?

And what has become a permanent justification?

PART FIVE

God's purpose where I am

*From concept to decision: what purpose means, why it does not
wait for the ideal scenario and who God calls me to be in this
season.*

What purpose really means

The time has come to face the word that gives this study its title. "Purpose" has become a heavy word. For many women, it sounds like a test to be passed: a single great mission, hidden somewhere, that we must discover — and, until we do, real life feels like a worthless rehearsal.

Let us dismantle that idea calmly. Purpose, in Scripture, does not look like a perfect profession, nor a single secret mission, nor a necessarily visible activity, nor a great platform, nor a life without doubts, nor a destination that eliminates the routine.

Purpose looks like something else: **a life lived in response to God.**

It involves who we are becoming. The responsible use of our gifts. The way we treat people. The responsibilities we take on. The environments we transform. Service. The formation of people. Faithfulness in the everyday. Courage in decisive moments. And the willingness to change when necessary.

*God's purpose does not begin only when we discover a great mission.
Very often, it is already being lived in the small answers of faithfulness
we offer every day.*

Think of Deborah before the war: years judging disputes under a palm tree. Think of Jael before that day: a whole routine of tent, tools and invisible work. Each one's decisive moment lasted hours. The faithfulness that prepared them lasted years.

Before being a destination, purpose is a way of walking with God.

PAUSE TO REFLECT

If purpose were only the "great mission", only those who arrive would have purpose. But if purpose is a life of response to God, then it is within reach of the woman who is in the meeting room today, of the one in the baby's room, of the one at the hospital caring for someone, of the one starting over from scratch. The question stops being "when will my life begin?" and becomes "what has God already placed before me today?".

EXERCISE 12

Where is purpose already happening?

Identify, in your life today:

A person I am forming or influencing:

An environment I am transforming:

A responsibility I am sustaining:

A skill I am developing:

A fear I am facing:

A decision I need to make:

Purpose does not depend on an ideal scenario

Now gather all the stories that have walked with us so far. Look at them at once.

Deborah could have considered her times too hostile. Twenty years of oppression and nine hundred iron chariots.

Jael could have considered her tent too ordinary. Who decides a war from inside her own home?

Jeremiah considered his youth insufficient. And he said so to God.

Amanda could have been considered too young to teach anything capable of marking an adult for decades.

And I could have considered the attempt to be a woman, a mother and a professional too complex.

And you? Perhaps you have been considering yourself too small. Too old. Too young. Too tired. Too late. Too ordinary. Too busy. Too unprepared. Too wounded. Too far from the ideal scenario.

God does not begin with the size of the resources we have. He begins with our willingness to hear Him and respond.

CAREFUL WITH THE INTERPRETATION

Willingness does not eliminate preparation. It makes us teachable, responsible and ready to take the next step. Saying "here I am" does not replace study, planning, counsel and maturity — on the contrary: those who place themselves at God's disposal are usually led to prepare better, not less.

You do not need to become Deborah to live with purpose. You do not need to become Jael. You do not need to reproduce another woman's choice — not your mother's, not your friend's, not that of the woman you admire on social media.

The decisive question is not "who should I look like?". It is another one, and it deserves to be asked in prayer, with your life open before God:

God, who are You calling me to be in this time, in this place, and with what You have placed in my hands?

Who is God calling me to be in this season?

This is the chapter of synthesis. Everything we have walked through so far converges into a guided evaluation, made in prayer. Set aside unhurried time. If possible, return to this chapter more than once.

1. Where am I?

Describe your season of life, your responsibilities, your current limits, your opportunities, your relationships and the environment you are part of today.

2. What do I carry?

Record your gifts, knowledge, experiences, wounds that have already matured, resources and desires. Including the desires you are afraid to admit.

3. What might God be confronting in me?

Fear? Comparison? Pride? Guilt? Need for approval? Haste? Holding back? Be specific.

4. What do I need to do now?

Remain, begin, stop, talk, ask for help, study, organize, rest, repair, move forward... What on this list is for you, in this season?

My next step of courage

This study does not end with inspiration. It ends with a decision. Not a giant decision: **one** decision. Choose only one step — concrete, possible, dated. The rule is simple: no abstract answers like "I will trust God more". Trust shows itself in movement.

MY NEXT STEP

The decision I need to place before God:

The fear that interferes the most:

The responsibility I need to consider:

The mature person I will talk to:

The resource I already have:

The first concrete step:

When I will do it:

How I will know I have moved forward:

Courage is not resolving the whole journey today. It is offering God a faithful answer in the next step.

In the place where I am

Lord, help me to recognize the purpose that can be lived in the place where I am. Free me from comparison, from fear and from the need to reproduce other women's stories. Give me discernment like Deborah, courage like Jael and readiness to answer Your call even when I feel small or unprepared.

Show me what You have placed in my hands. Teach me to remain when it is time to remain and to change when it is time to change. May my decisions not be governed merely by people's expectations, by guilt or by haste, but by Your presence, Your Word and wisdom.

Give me humility to ask for help, responsibility to weigh my choices and courage not to hold back. May my life — at home, at work, in motherhood, in relationships or in any place where I find myself — be an answer of faithfulness to You.

Amen.



A LETTER TO YOU

From one woman to another

Before you close this study.

Dear reader,

Perhaps your story does not look like mine. And that is exactly one of the reasons this study exists. You do not need to live like me, like your friends or like the women you admire. You only need to allow God to meet you, honestly, in the place where you are.

I wrote these pages in the midst of the tasks of my own real life: family, work, projects, faith and the very questions that may have brought you here. I did not write from the height of a ready answer. I wrote from the middle of the road.

If this study has fulfilled its role, you are not closing this material with a new model to copy. You are closing it with an open conversation with God. That is exactly where everything begins.

Deborah did not know her palm tree would enter the Bible. Jael did not know her tent would be remembered for millennia. Amanda did not know a ten-minute presentation would strengthen her teacher for decades. None of them saw the size of what they were doing. They all simply responded.

May your answer begin today, at whatever size is possible today.

*Your palm tree, your tent, your classroom or your place of today can
become territory of purpose when your life answers: "Here I am."*

With love,
Priscila

Six meetings to walk together

This study can be used in small groups, women's groups, church gatherings, mentoring circles and conversation circles. The suggestion below divides the material into six meetings. Adapt it freely to your group's pace.

MEETING 1 · THE QUESTION ABOUT THE RIGHT PLACE

Chapters 1 to 3 · Bible reading: Genesis 2:18

Opening: Which question about your own life repeats itself most in your mind?

To discuss: 1. When did you realize you were trying to live another woman's story? 2. Why does comparison between women generate so much guilt? 3. What does it mean, in practice, to place a choice "before God"?

Application: During the week, take note every time you catch yourself comparing your life with another woman's.

Prayer: Ask together for discernment to distinguish inspiration from copying.

MEETING 2 · THE TIME OF DEBORAH

Chapters 4 to 6 · Bible reading: Judges 4:1–10

Opening: What in your life today looks like "nine hundred iron chariots"?

To discuss: 1. What strikes you most in Deborah's actions? 2. What does the expression "a mother in Israel" teach about strength and care? 3. Is asking for company, like Barak, weakness or maturity? When?

Application: Identify a place where your voice is already sought and serve there with intention this week.

Prayer: Ask for courage to speak and act faithfully in the places where you already are.

MEETING 3 · THE COURAGE OF Jael

Chapters 7 and 8 · Bible reading: Judges 4:17–24; 5:24–27

Opening: What is the most invisible work you do?

To discuss: 1. What does Jael's story teach about ordinary resources? 2. What is your palm tree and what is your tent today? 3. Why do we tend to value one of the two spaces more?

Application: Choose an everyday resource you already have and use it with more intention this week.

Prayer: Give thanks for what is already in each one's hands.

MEETING 4 · CHOICES THAT MUST NOT BECOME RULES

Chapters 9 and 10 · Bible reading: Judges 5:6–9

Opening: What "rule" about being a woman did you receive and never question?

To discuss: 1. Why can women with different choices feel guilt? 2. When does a personal decision turn into judgment over others? 3. What is the difference between changing out of courage and changing on impulse?

Application: Review one absorbed "rule" that needs to be placed before the Word.

Prayer: Ask for freedom from comparison and wisdom for those in transition.

MEETING 5 · AMANDA, JEREMIAH AND INSUFFICIENCY

Chapters 11 and 12 · Bible reading: Jeremiah 1:4–10

Opening: What unexpected voice has ever brought courage into your life?

To discuss: 1. What does Jeremiah 1 teach about insufficiency? 2. What argument have you been using not to move forward? 3. What changes when the question stops being "who am I?" and becomes "who is with me?"

Application: Separate a real limitation (to be managed) from a permanent justification (to be surrendered to God).

Prayer: Pray for one another, naming your fears before God.

MEETING 6 · MY NEXT STEP OF COURAGE

Chapters 13 to 15 and Final challenge · Bible reading: Judges 5:31

Opening: If purpose is "a way of walking with God", how is your walk?

To discuss: 1. What changed in your definition of purpose with this study? 2. What concrete next step do you need to take? 3. How can the group walk with you in that step?

Application: Each participant shares (if she wishes) her "next step of courage" and a date.

Prayer: Close with the study's final prayer, spoken aloud, together.

What God said to me in this study

Requests, answers and next steps

Sources and notes of this study

Bible references used

Genesis 2:18 · Judges 4:1–3 · Judges 4:4–10 · Judges 4:12–16 · Judges 4:17–24 · Judges 5:6–9 · Judges 5:12 · Judges 5:24–27 · Judges 5:31 · Jeremiah 1:4–10.

Translations

In this English edition, Scripture quotations follow the New International Version (NIV). Where marked as "condensed quotation", the text has been shortened for editorial purposes, preserving its content and indicating the reference for full reading. The original Portuguese edition follows the Nova Versão Internacional (NVI) and the Almeida Revista e Atualizada (ARA).

Essential historical notes

The period of the judges corresponds to the interval between the conquest of Canaan and the beginning of the monarchy in Israel. The cycles of drifting, oppression, crying out and deliverance structure the book of Judges (see Judges 2:11–19).

War chariots reinforced with iron represented significant military superiority over infantry troops in that period. The description in Judges 4–5 highlights that disproportion of forces.

The Kenites were a semi-nomadic people, linked by kinship to the family of Moses (Judges 1:16; 4:11). They lived in tents, whose assembly and maintenance were part of the domestic routine.

On Jeremiah's age at his calling: the text does not state it. The Hebrew term *na'ar* admits a wide age range; translations reflect that openness ("too young"; "only a child").

About the images

The images in this study are artistic representations created to support the narrative. They are not historical records nor portraits of the biblical characters or of the real people mentioned.

To go deeper

For further study of the book of Judges, reading in more than one translation is recommended, along with recognized Bible commentaries and dictionaries, with attention to the historical context of the period of the judges.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Priscila Abondanza

Priscila Abondanza is a senior executive, founder of Mentisup and a writer. She spent 30 years in the corporate world, leading teams, digital transformation and customer experience — many of them in challenging, predominantly male environments.

With postgraduate studies in Neuroscience and Applied Psychology, she dedicates this new season of her life to bringing together what she learned in those three worlds: the science that explains the mind, the faith that sustains the soul and the practice that transforms the day. She is the author of **The Garden of Abundance** (O Jardim de Abundância), on positive emotions, a full life and well-being grounded in neuroscience and Christian spirituality.

Married for more than 25 years, mother of three, she writes from real life — including its valleys.

Science, faith and real life — in practice.



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G O D ' S P U R P O S E W H E R E I A M

Deborah, Jael and the courage to answer God's call

Two women, two completely different places — and the same God at work in both. You do not need to reproduce another woman's life. You need to answer God from the place where you are.

P R I S C I L A A B O N D A N Z A