



CHANGEMAKERS SERIES

THE DAUGHTERS OF
ZELOPHEHAD

"One day a petition was presented by the daughters of Zelophehad... These women stood before Moses, Eleazar the priest, the tribal leaders, and the entire community at the entrance of the Tabernacle....Why should the name of our father disappear from his clan just because he had no sons? Give us property along with the rest of our relatives." So Moses brought their case before the Lord. And the Lord replied to Moses, "The claim of the daughters of Zelophehad is legitimate. You must give them a grant of land along with their father's relatives. Assign them the property that would have been given to their father." Numbers 27:1-2, 4-7

Zelophehad had 5 daughters and no son at a time when the prevalent culture in Israel was that only men could claim their father's inheritance. These 5 women had two options: they could either accept the status quo and watch their father's inheritance in the promised land go to someone else, or they could dare to boldly challenge this culture.

It's worth noting that at the time they brought forth this petition, nothing like this had ever been done in Israel before so there was no precedence. More importantly the Lord agreed with them, so by reason of their petition there was a change in the law about inheritance for women in similar situations. What would have happened if they hadn't spoken up? What can we learn from them about responding to challenges or unfavourable situations? We will delve into these and more over the next few days.

Day 1

Dare to Ask

One day a petition was presented by the daughters of Zelophehad... These women stood before Moses, Eleazar the priest, the tribal leaders, and the entire community at the entrance of the Tabernacle Numbers 27:1-2

Zelophehad's daughters challenged the status quo in Israel concerning women inheriting property when they boldly approached Moses, the leaders and the entire community to present their petition. Imagine how many people would have tried to discourage them from going ahead with their petition. Who would dare to ask for what had never been done before in their land? Imagine the murmuring from the community as they made their request. But they dared. They shut out the naysayers and made their petition.

And the Lord replied to Moses, "The claim of the daughters of Zelophehad is legitimate. You must give them a grant of land along with their father's relatives. Assign them the property that would have been given to their father Numbers 27:7

As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind beggar was sitting beside the road... So he began shouting, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" "Be quiet!" the people in front yelled at him. But he only shouted louder... When Jesus heard him, he stopped and ordered that the man be brought to him... Jesus asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" "Lord," he said, "I want to see!" Luke 18:35,38-41

Just like Zelophehad's daughters, the blind beggar dared to ask in spite of the resistance he faced. Had the beggar allowed the crowd to silence him, he would have remained blind. If Zelophehad's daughters had kept quiet they would have lost their father's inheritance.

Only ask, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance, the whole earth as your possession. Psalm 2:8

"Ask, and it will be given to you.... For everyone who asks receives... Matthew 7:7-8

With both the daughters and the beggar, the Lord granted their requests, which tells us that there are many things He's ready to do for us if we'd only ask. There is a caveat to receiving our petition – it must be in line with God's plan because He will never give something us something that is contrary to His will for us. So where we are unsure, we do well to inquire first if our plans align with His will.

Prayer: Thank You generous Lord because You are always ready to answer me. Teach me what and how to ask so I always receive Your very best for me.

Day 2

Come out of Confinement

And the Lord replied to Moses, “The claim of the daughters of Zelophehad is legitimate. You must give them a grant of land along with their father’s relatives. Assign them the property that would have been given to their father Numbers 27:7

Had the daughters of Zelophehad not come together and agreed to bring their petition before Moses, they would have lived a life less than what God had planned for them. As far as God was concerned, the inheritance of land was already theirs to do with as they pleased. We don’t know what they did with the land, but we do know that they rose against a situation that would have confined them and limited their potential.

By virtue of being a landowner they would have to develop a different mindset as they considered at a minimum what to do with the land, how to ensure their allocation was well taken care of, and how to ensure it continued to bear their father’s name. They likely would have to be involved when clan meetings were taking place and engage at a level they ordinarily wouldn’t have. This would definitely have impacted their spheres of influence in many dimensions.

He [Jabez] was the one who prayed to the God of Israel, “Oh, that you would bless me and expand my territory! Please be with me in all that I do, and keep me from all trouble and pain!” And God granted him his request. 1 Chronicles 4:10

Another person who intentionally sought God to break out of confinement was Jabez. Though more honorable than any of his brothers, circumstances of his birth created a limitation for him. Jabez could have accepted this as he was born into it, but instead he insisted on changing what his future would look like.

If we do nothing, nothing will change. There’s an intentionality required on our part to change whatever narrative we’re currently facing that we’re not happy with. Perhaps we’re like the daughters of Zelophehad hemmed in by societal norms. Or like Jabez who was tired of being associated with sorrow and limitations. Perhaps we’re sensing that we are living below our potential, yet we don’t know what to do to move forward. As believers we have access to the Holy Spirit who can give us both the spiritual and physical strategy required to come out of every form of confinement.

Prayer: Lord help me break out of every form of confinement in my life. Show me what to do and how to move forward and fulfil all You’ve written concerning me

Day 3

Think Long Term

“This is what the Lord commands concerning the daughters of Zelophehad: Let them marry anyone they like, as long as it is within their own ancestral tribe. None of the territorial land may pass from tribe to tribe, for all the land given to each tribe must remain within the tribe to which it was first allotted.” Numbers 36:6-7

The clansmen were concerned about the inheritance of Zelophehad daughters going to other clans when they married and brought their own petition to Moses, which he responded to in the verses above. All the daughters diligently complied with every requirement to ensure they kept their inheritance out only for themselves but for their family legacy. These women operated in unity with discipline and foresight.

“How wonderful and pleasant it is when brothers live together in harmony! For harmony is as precious as the anointing oil that was poured over Aaron’s head, that ran down his beard and onto the border of his robe.” Psalms 133:1-2

“Similarly, a family splintered by feuding will fall apart.” Mark 3:25

There’s no record that any of the 5 sisters rebelled against the requirements. They were all united in purpose and worked together to achieve their objective regardless of personal sentiments. There is something about people coming together for a purpose that guarantees success. Had even one person rejected the requirement it would have affected them all. So they demonstrated great wisdom in putting the overarching objective ahead of their personal needs. This wisdom preserved their family, ensured they received the inheritance allotted to them and changed the narrative for women in their circumstances inheriting property.

Understand, therefore, that the LORD your God is indeed God. He is the faithful God who keeps his covenant for a thousand generations and lavishes his unflinching love on those who love him and obey his commands Deuteronomy 7:9

“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.” Colossians 3:23-24

There will be times in our journey as change-makers that we will have to consciously put the needs of God’s kingdom ahead of our personal needs and make choices that will advance God’s agenda without any immediate material benefit to us. We do this knowing that God is a rewarder and nothing we do for His kingdom from a place of a genuine desire to see it expanded ever goes unrewarded, even to the benefit of our descendants.

Prayer: Lord thank You for the privilege of partnering with You in kingdom expansion. Help me make wise choices that will significantly impact my reward from You

Day 4

Recognize Your Authority

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” Romans 8:31-32

Catherine Booth who was the co-founder of the Salvation Army once said, ‘There is no improving the future without disturbing the present’. The daughters of Zelophehad were bold in bringing their petition forward, but had the Lord said no, that would have been the end of it. Because they had God’s backing, they improved the future not just for themselves, but for generations to come. Likewise, we’re also called to be God’s agents for impacting the future according to His agenda.

”Delight yourself also in the Lord, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.”
Psalms 37:4

”If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you...” John 15:7

As we pray and spend time in God’s word, we position our hearts to a heightened level of sensitivity to the Holy Spirit so we can hear what He is saying. As He prompts us to take bold steps of faith, it’s critical that we are intentional about what we permit into our space because what we see and hear are critical to either growing or dowsing our faith. The only way we can succeed in doing exploits is in abiding in fellowship with Him and prioritizing His word.

“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us...” Ephesians 3:20

When God plants audacious desires in our hearts, it may seem fearful to us because our default mode is to start from what we see around us, or have in our possession. Whereas God sees from the perspective that in so far as the desire comes from Him, He has already given us the authority and ability to surmount all obstacles that may present themselves based on the power of the Holy Spirit at work in us. So it’s key we look to Him and not ourselves

Prayer: Lord thank You for the authority You have given me and the access to the infinite power of the Holy Spirit to bring to bear all the desires You’ve placed in my heart.

Day 5

Hold Tenaciously to the Promise

"For the vision is yet for an appointed time..." Habakkuk 2:3

God works with time and seasons and has in His sovereignty allocated specific time periods for certain things to happen. This is why we see many references in the Bible regarding "appointed times". However even though there are periods God has allocated for us to see certain outcomes in our lives, the manifestation isn't automatic.

"... You will experience all these blessings if you obey the Lord your God" Deuteronomy 28:2

Zelophehad's daughters met the given conditions for the inheritance so they could legitimately place a demand for their inheritance. If we carefully study promises in the Bible, we will see that the fulfillment always requires a partnership between divinity and humanity. At times we can get so focused on reminding God to do His part that we may neglect to ask Him what our part of the partnership is, which is a critical part of seeing the promise fulfilled.

"And they came near...saying, "The Lord commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brothers." Therefore, according to the commandment of the Lord, he [Joshua] gave them an inheritance among their father's brothers." Joshua 17:4

When Israel crossed the Jordan and land was being allocated to the various tribes, the daughters of Zelophehad reminded Joshua and the elders about the commandment the Lord gave concerning their inheritance. They did not assume that just because the Lord had commended Moses that Joshua would automatically allocate the land to them.

"Give the Lord no rest until he completes his work, until he makes Jerusalem the pride of the earth." Isaiah 62:7

If we fully obey the Lord's instructions, then we know we've done our part and can confidently insist on the outcome we want until we see it. Zelophehad's daughters got the promise, followed the conditions and insisted on their inheritance until it was given to them. There's a tenacity we must also demonstrate if we want to experience all the Lord has made available to us.

Prayer: Lord help me be intentional in fully obeying You and tenaciously insisting on seeing what You have said concerning me until it comes to pass

Day 6

Becoming Change Makers: Alignment with God's Plan

Known to God from eternity are all His works. Acts 15:18

God is unchanging in His character, but dynamic in His methods. So it's critical that we understand what God is saying in the Now and that we respond to Him appropriately. Because the Lord understands how challenging change can be for people, sometimes He may intentionally permit situations that shake things up so a new dispensation can emerge. Sometimes when there doesn't seem to be a way forward, it may be logical for us to think that things seem to have come to an end. However, that same situation may be the opportunity God wants to use to bring change as only He can do.

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: "The daughters of Zelophehad speak *what is right*; you shall surely give them a possession of inheritance among their father's brothers, and cause the inheritance of their father to pass to them. And you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'If a man dies and has no son, then you shall cause his inheritance to pass to his daughter.'" Numbers 27:6-8

It didn't come as a surprise to God that Zelophehad didn't have any sons. When Zelophehad died, his daughters may initially have thought that was the end of their father's memory among his clan. But God had another agenda He was waiting for them to key into. Not only was it not the end of Zelophehad's memory, but it was also the start of a new dispensation for recognizing inheritance for women. But the daughters had to step up and trigger the change.

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes... Proverbs 3:5-7

Similarly, there are things the Lord may want to change in our lives to align us with His plans. But He requires us to partner with Him and be attentive to the direction He's giving us so we don't miss the point of the experience, whether good or bad. God is always at work, constantly molding us as we become more like Jesus and are able to take on more opportunities to bring light into dark situations in society, government, economy, etc. The more we yield to Him and trust in Him, the more like Christ we become and are able to represent Him here on earth.

Prayer: Lord I recognize You created me to be a change maker, help me to be all You created me to be so I can do all You prepared for me to do as Your representative so Your name is glorified through my life.

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