

"The Lord Raised Up a Deliverer"

Show Notes & Transcripts

Podcast General Description:

followHIM: A *Come, Follow Me* Podcast with Hank Smith & John Bytheway

Do you ever feel that preparing for your weekly *Come, Follow Me* lesson falls short? Join hosts Hank Smith and John Bytheway as they interview experts to make your study for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' *Come, Follow Me* course not only enjoyable but original and educational. If you are looking for resources to make your study fresh, faithful, and fun--no matter your age--then join us every Wednesday.

Podcast Episode Descriptions

Part 1:

What happens to a covenant people when they repeatedly abandon God, fall into oppression, cry out for deliverance, and then do it all over again? Dr. Lori Denning explores the Book of Judges as a cautionary tale of broken covenants, unexpected heroes, and the Lord's unfailing faithfulness to a stumbling people.

Part 2:

Dr. Lori Denning turns to two of Israel's most complicated judges, Gideon and Samson, and shows how gifted, Spirit-empowered men and women can unravel under the weight of pride and broken covenants, and why their stories are less a museum exhibit than a mirror.

Timecodes:

Part 1 -

- 00:00 - Part 1 - Dr. Lori Denning
- 00:33 Intros to the Book of Judges
- 03:01 Cautionary Tale of covenant drift
- 08:24 Altars, snares, and the thesis
- 18:19 The Judges Cycle explained
- 22:05 Lori's pirate tooth story
- 25:57 The Lord chooses the unlikely
- 31:55 First Judge Othniel–cleanest example of the cycle
- 37:36 Second Judge: Ehud–the irony stack
- 45:01 Third Judge: Deborah: prophetess, Mother of Israel
- 1:00:49 Jael: blessed among women–tent peg lessons
- 1:05:55 Fourth Judge: Gideon–not a vaccine
- 1:08:45 End of Part 1 - Dr. Lori Denning

Part 2 -

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- 02:29 Gideon tears down his father's idol at night
- 03:31 Joash steps into the gap to defend his son and a twin story
- 06:36 The significance of Joash and Jael as additional helpers
- 07:11 Signs that confirm faith vs. create it–The Fleece
- 10:44 Applying the fleece
- 12:09 Gideon's downfall–pride, the ephod, and the parallels
- 15:32 Absolute power corrupts absolutely
- 17:02 Sampson's introduction and the repeating cycle
- 18:42 Minoah's unnamed wife–the elements of birth type scene
- 22:28 The Nazarite vow and Samson as symbol of covenant Israel
- 25:23 Samson's mother lives the Nazarite vow and Minoah's slowness
- 27:38 Parataxis–Minoah's reaction vs his wife's recognition of the angel
- 33:28 Anonymity in scripture as universality
- 35:09 Samson as cautionary tale and failure to repent
- 36:41 Samson's first words, "I saw, I took."
- 40:32 The Philistine wife story: The riddle, the betrayal, and the burning
- 42:57 Transition to Delilah, Samson is already corrupt
- 44:02 "Fell in love" as covenant language and Delilah as anti-mother
- 45:48 The 4 rounds with Delilah and secret of his hair
- 48:10 Samson chained, blinded, only prayer for personal vengeance
- 50:12 "Everyone did what was right in their own eyes"

- 51:00 Closing reflection: Hope, warning signs, Jesus as true king
- 53:42 Women in Judges as covenant markers, and final testimony of Jesus Christ
- 58:14 End of Part 2 - Dr. Lori Denning

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Biographical Information:



Lori L. Denning is a scripture nerd. She is also a devoted scholar and educator. Lori earned her Ph.D. at Claremont Graduate University in Religion, with a focus on ancient scripture, Lori holds a Master's Degree in Theology from Gonzaga University. There, she earned Alpha Sigma Nu, the highest honor awarded at a Jesuit University. Her undergraduate studies in Biblical Studies and Hebrew at Multnomah further reflect her passion for the subject.

Lori is the acclaimed author of three books, including the "Real Heroes Series." Her teaching experience spans various platforms like CES, FSY, and Church Education

Week, and she currently enlightens students at BYU, a role she cherishes. As a frequent podcast guest, Lori shares her wisdom through a video series "The Bible Brief."

She is such a nerd that she has even learned to sing Biblical Hebrew, for fun. If you ask nicely, she may sing a few verses.

Lori, hailing from San Diego, has an adventurous spirit, reflected in her love for dirt bikes, karaoke, and chocolate. She's blessed with an identical twin (though she insists the twin's the cute one) and has served a mission in Barcelona, Spain. Her vivacious personality shines through in her diverse interests and dedication to her faith.

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Hank Smith:	00:00:00	Coming up in this episode on followHIM.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:00:04	I just launch off into singing and it, I start out too high so I'm like ahh and I'm just like oh my. And then I get about three or four verses in and you guys, I just blank. I mean just cold stone no idea. No words in my head, not one word. It's just gone. And I get everyone staring at you in school and they're all grad students who are known to be very forgiving and loving. No. And there is my professor and she's staring at me.
Hank Smith:	00:00:33	Hello my friends. Welcome to another episode of followHIM. My name is Hank Smith. I'm your host. I'm here with my cohost John who walks by the way Judges 5:10. John, have you been known to walk by the way?
John Bytheway:	00:00:46	For years, I thought my name was in the way because my dad would say, John, you're in the way. And then I learned that actually it's Bytheway.
Hank Smith:	00:00:53	It's Bytheway. John, we are privileged today to be joined by our good friend, Dr. Lori Denning. Lori, welcome back to followHIM.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:01:03	Thanks. It's great to be back. I always have a great time hanging out with you guys.
Hank Smith:	00:01:07	This is going to be fun. We are in the book of Judges. This isn't a book I spend a lot of time in. John, have you? What do you think of?
John Bytheway:	00:01:18	The one thing I remember about the book of Judges is that there's kind of a pride cycle. We talk about the pride cycle a lot in the Book of Mormon, and the book of Judges has something just like that. The other thing I thought of was if anybody can make the book of Judges exciting, it's Lori Denning. I'm really glad she's here.

Dr. Lori Denning:	00:01:37	Hey, it is exciting on its own. You don't, it doesn't need any help at all. We'll see. You'll see.
Hank Smith:	00:01:43	Yep.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:01:44	It does need a hat, but other than a helmet, but other than that.
Hank Smith:	00:01:47	She is known to bring a helmet if you go back to our days of, was it Philippians and Colossians and then Alma 29.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:01:55	Yeah yeah. Talking about the Philistines. Nice. So I brought my Philistine hat. I wear it all the time. I mean, usually when I drive, right? I mean, it's kind of a driving, it says it all. But no, we know kind of what they wear that they have these leather or feather helmets. The Philistines are bad guys, right? From some reliefs, some carvings. So I made my own from Amazon. Here it is.
Hank Smith:	00:02:17	That looks fantastic.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:02:19	Isn't it?
Hank Smith:	00:02:20	We... really does. It brings out your eyes.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:02:23	It brings out my eyes. It's ... Well, I don't know that it's very protective if someone hit me with a stick. I don't think it would do very well. Maybe that's why the Philistines didn't last very long. This was their armor plan.
John Bytheway:	00:02:35	Nothing gets through these feathers.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:02:37	And, you know, Goliath was like a famous Philistine, and so now it makes more sense with David and Goliath because if he was throwing that rock, it wouldn't have been very hard. The big head. No helmet. The feathers. But, you know, an arrow. Shoot here, David. Shoot here, right? Here's a little target.
Hank Smith:	00:02:52	Right there for you.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:02:54	It's classy. But, John, that was for you since I do love a good helmet, so I brought my-
John Bytheway:	00:02:59	Thank you.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:02:59	... Philistine hat. There you go.
John Bytheway:	00:03:01	So glad.

Hank Smith:	00:03:02	Lori is an expert in not only ancient helmets, but also ancient text. Lori, what are we hoping to do today in this ancient book?
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:03:12	Well, Judges is an exciting book. It's one we don't talk about very much, probably because it's mostly a cautionary tale. But it is a story about covenant. So I think if I have to give it, it's one liner. It's a cautionary tale about what happens when we drift away from the covenant. So it's going to show a bunch of different people a spoiler alert. You already know the thesis of the story, we'll hit that. But I think it's really applicable as a covenant people to say this is what happens when you drift away. Here's my cautionary word. If you are teaching this for family or young children, there are scenes that are very graphic because it doesn't excuse itself. So it's going to show what really happens to them, but it is not something that maybe is ready for all audiences. The Come, Follow Me Manual does a great job editing out some stories. In your personal study though, just beware that they are not excusing their behavior. They're going to show it. Heads up. It is not for children in a lot of places. It also has a lot of satire. It has a lot of irony. It points out where they fail.
Hank Smith:	00:04:18	One of my favorite phrases is in the book of Judges though, Judges 3:17. Eglon was a very fat man. I have gotten a lot of mileage out of that through the years talking to youth. John, now Lori's been with us twice before, but there may be someone listening who didn't catch those episodes. What do we know about her?
John Bytheway:	00:04:40	We know that Lori got her PhD from the prestigious Claremont Graduate University. She teaches in religious education right now at BYU Idaho. She spends her days helping students dig into scripture history and big questions of faith. Before academia claimed her, she served a mission in Barcelona, which left her with a lasting love of Spanish cathedrals, Catalan bread, and the kind of stories that only come... I like this. The kind of stories that only come from knocking on strangers doors in a second language. That's not what they taught me in the MTC. Again, Lori, Hank already said it, but we're just really excited to have you because it's always fun.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:05:21	I love our community here that we're all sharing the gospel together. From all around the world, I've worked at some of the correctional facilities, so hey guys, I know they listen. I just love that we're talking to all of our saints wherever we find them.
Hank Smith:	00:05:35	Yeah, we love them too. Thank you, Lori, for reminding us we are just one big family studying the book of Judges this week.

Gratefully, we have Lori here because she has done quite a bit of work in this. I remember when I wrote a dissertation, John, it was like eating the same meal every day for years. You got to know that meal well. Lori, just real quick, tell us about your dissertation.

Dr. Lori Denning: 00:06:01 Yeah, so your PhD dissertation right as you go deep, it's narrow. And I worked on how the covenant pattern works in the women of the Samson story. So a lot of times, you know, Delilah in the Samson store, or maybe Samson, but we don't remember that it actually is for women. It starts with one of the heroes of the story, his mother. She holds the covenant and knows the secret about his hair. Then he has a wife and then he has a prostitute. He just goes down. He's terrible. We already told you, cautionary tale. And then Delilah, I track that through literary means and show how that covenant pattern works through the women of the story, that they're kind of the holder of the covenant or where the covenant could pivot, where all the signposts are, what will Samson choose. Every time a woman shows up, it's what will he choose?

00:06:43 And spoiler alert, he does a terrible job. Go through the Hebrew and there are a lot of experts in Judges and I'm one of them. No, there are two of us. Thanks for asking. I am proud of it. I think it's one of those things you spend a lot of time. I know you guys have done it too, but it's a privilege to be able to have the time and the energy and the support to be able to do a work like that. I'm very privileged to stand among giants. I'm just the newly minted, new shiny penny right now.

Hank Smith: 00:07:10 Congratulations. We're excited for you and we're excited to learn from you. Let's start in the Come, Follow Me Manual. We all know what it feels like to sin, feel bad about it and then repent and resolve to change our ways. But too often we forget our earlier resolve and when temptation comes, we find ourselves committing the same sin. This pattern appears frequently in the book of Judges. Influenced by the beliefs and worship practices of the Canaanites whom they were supposed to drive out of the land, the Israelites broke their covenants with the Lord and turned away from worshiping him. As a result, they lost his protection and fell into captivity and yet each time this happened, the Lord gave his covenant people the chance to repent and raised up a deliverer, a military leader called a judge. Not all of the judges in the book of Judges were righteous, but some of them exercised great faith in delivering the children of Israel and restoring them to their covenant relationship with the Lord.

	00:08:04	These stories remind us that no matter what has led us away from Jesus Christ, He is the Redeemer of Israel and is always willing to deliver us and welcome us back as we return to him. So well written, turning us back to the Lord. I love it. All right, Lori, how do you start off a study of the book of Judges?
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:08:24	Ancient scripture mostly works through stories. We know that. Most of them are stories. There's sometimes some poetry and then some odds and ends and law and things that nobody reads and skips. But it mostly, mostly works through stories. That means that it doesn't always tell you what the theme is or the thesis or the point. Here's a trick. Judges does. Judges has a whole chapter that tells you in case you did not get what was happening, it has a whole chapter, chapter two, that actually is very brief and the Lord himself speaks. I think we should start there because it's going to tell us what the theme and the thesis and then the rest of the stories are just the judges themselves, these deliverers. Again, they're not judiciary like with the black robes and a gavel. It's not that kind of judge. They're more like deliverers, war leaders, people the Lord raises up and they're all a little different in their role.
	00:09:14	Let's go to chapter two because the scholarly insight is that chapter two is the thesis. It's going to tell us everything we need to know of how it works and it's not very complicated. Of course, Come, Follow Me, put it in for us to read. Let's go there. What translations you guys reading these days?
Hank Smith:	00:09:31	I use an app that gives me a bunch. What do you use, Lori?
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:09:35	I'm going to use the New Revised Standard Version. It stays a little closer to the Hebrew, but a little simpler English. So if it, it's a little different than the one you're reading at home or online, don't worry about it, just kind of go with the flow, but that's the one that I've got and feel free to jump in there. Let's go to chapter two and spoiler alert. Here it is. Let's do verse one. Hey, John, since you've got that, will you read verse one? And again, don't worry about how to pronounce these names, just make them up because it doesn't matter. There's going to be a lot of names and just go with it. No one cares, and then just plow through because the Lord's going to speak here in a minute.
John Bytheway:	00:10:11	So Judges chapter two, verse one in the NRSV. Now, the angel of the Lord went up from Gilgal to Bochim and said, I brought you up from Egypt and brought you into the land that I promised to your ancestors. I said I will never break my covenant with you.

Dr. Lori Denning:	00:10:29	This is important. Here's the lay of the land and jump in here. I know Hank and John, you guys are experts, so jump in too. We're coming from Joshua. Joshua is genuinely very positive, you know, like they're victorious and they're doing things, but there's that note of, but what will you do? Because for me and my house, we're going to serve. Then you turn the page and you go to chapter one of Judges and it's victorious and land and things are given. There's some kerfluffles start immediately, but it goes downhill from here. It's a little bit of a surprise that you go from, Hey, the children of Israel finally get to the promised land. They finally inherited it. And then the next page, It was bad in Israel. And you're like, Well, how did it go so bad so quickly? So the first thing I want to note is this first verse makes sense when you realize that they struggled right off the bat.
	00:11:20	Then the angel of the Lord, it's going to be the angel and then it's going to say that it was the Lord himself. So the angel of the Lord is going to speak and he's going to remind them. It's coming off these victories. They finally settled. We think it's going to be positive, but I've already told you it's not going to be. Then here's the Lord that's going to tell him this is the key. So did you catch what it was, John? The Lord said, I brought you up from Egypt and the land you were promised. And then he quotes something pretty straightforward. Did you catch it?
John Bytheway:	00:11:49	Yeah. I will never break my covenant with you.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:11:53	Wow. That's pretty powerful, isn't it? That the Lord will never break his covenant. It's like, you guys, I am always here for you. So we're going to anchor this whole book with that phrase that the Lord will never break his covenant. But it does leave you to go, But what will you do? What will I do?
Hank Smith:	00:12:13	Yeah. The next verse is pretty sad .
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:12:16	Yeah, go for it. What does it say?
Hank Smith:	00:12:18	This is the NRSV. "You have not obeyed my command. See what you have done."
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:12:25	Yeah. And so you're going to get this instruction right out of the gate. Here's the claim and then the instruction. I've told you to tear down their altars. Tear down their altars. That's a word that we might not catch all the time because we think of the altar, let's say at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, right? It's at the table. We come to the altar there, we come to the altar in the temple. They are going to other kinds of altars. They're going to

these other gods. They're worshiping other things. And it's like, get rid of those altars. What kind of altars do you think we could see? Because I'm not really worshiping other gods during the weekday. So what do you think we could see in that? Any application, you guys?

Hank Smith: 00:13:08 Maybe the word for us wouldn't, like you said, Lori, wouldn't be worship. Maybe it's, where do I spend my time and my resources? I can tell you what you worship if you'll tell me where you spend your time.

Dr. Lori Denning: 00:13:21 Yeah. That's powerful, isn't it? Because sometimes it's doing silly things. We might be spending our time doing useless things, less important things. We should probably be focused on better things.

Hank Smith: 00:13:34 Years ago, President Oaks said, "We entertain ourselves to death, spiritual death."

Dr. Lori Denning: 00:13:42 That's pretty brutal, actually.

Hank Smith: 00:13:43 Yeah.

Dr. Lori Denning: 00:13:43 That's pretty tough, right? As I scroll, Wait a minute, you guys, I need to check my feed while we're doing this. Let me, I'll be back in a few minutes. We have a lot of distraction and I think their altars the things that they're spending their time on, he's saying, You need to get rid of them. Now, we're going to see that in some stories. So remember, the thesis, I will never break my covenant with you, but I need you to get rid of those things that are stumbling blocks to you. You can't leave them there. You will trip up on them. They will become a stumbling block. And we're going to see the story of Gideon and Samson and that's true for both of them where they start out great and they're strong and then they trip over it, whether it's pride or avarice or power or something. Those ideas are going to come up again. Let's keep going. John, do you have verse three?

John Bytheway: 00:14:31 Yeah. "So now I say, I will not drive them out before you, but they shall become adversaries to you and their gods shall be a snare to you."

Dr. Lori Denning: 00:14:42 I won't drive them out.

John Bytheway: 00:14:44 It's going to be your job.

Dr. Lori Denning:	00:14:46	You got it. I think it's like you're going to have to get rid of those things in your life. I won't leave you, I'll help you, but you have to get rid of those things in their lives. And then he uses an interesting word at the end, Their gods shall be a snare. I'm not an outdoorsy gal really, so I don't like hunt or something, but do you guys know what a snare is? I had to look it up.
Hank Smith:	00:15:07	Yeah, it's a trap. Sounds like a trap.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:15:09	It's a trap. A little, you know, hoop or something of wire or string and then you put in a snack or whatever and then the animal, typically a bird, it's like a bird snare is this word in Hebrew. They step into it. So imagine this, this is going to be something in their lives that they say, you need to drive the adversaries, you need to drive the bad guys out of your life. Otherwise, you're going to keep stepping right in it and being trapped. And that's going to be true that they're not this overwhelming army that's going to come marching in and be like, Give up your covenants, Latter-day Saints and whatever, what are they going to do? Well, we step right in it. We just walk right up to it and keep stepping in it and then get snagged and go, Hey, I'm stuck. He's going to warn them and you're going to see that in these stories. What was the snare to each of them? They didn't get rid of the altar, they didn't get rid of it and then it trapped them. We'll talk about that in each of the stories.
Hank Smith:	00:16:07	Lori, that phrase, "I will not do it for you." I think there's a message there of righteousness is only righteousness if it is freely chosen. The Lord will never force Israel to be Israel because I think the moment he says, You're going to act this way, now they're just slaves.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:16:24	Yeah, it always honors our agency. Whatever we decide, he'll honor that. He's not going to force you into doing it, but he is saying, I'm always here. Remember he started with, I will not break this. And then like you said, John, but they probably will. And you're like, yeah yeah, spoiler alert. They do. And so do we. Who are we in the story? Well, we're them. He's saying, But I'm always going to be there. So when you do step in the snare, when you do make those choices, when you do fail or just misunderstand, he's going to say, that's okay. Right? I am still right here waiting. I'm trying to make it hopeful because it's kinda just bringing me down. Yeah, they're going to snare you. So we're going to see the snare and then it says, The angel of the Lord spoke these words to all the Israelites.

	00:17:07	So this is everybody. This isn't just the deliverers or just this group of people and they lifted up their voices and wept. Don't we all see that when we're close to the Lord, we're like, Oh, please don't let that happen to me or my family or my kids. Then they named the place, the weepers, Bochim. And that's where they sacrificed to the Lord. Can you imagine you're like, you drive around your hometown and you're like, Well, that was the place that I cried. And you're just like, this is a sad memory. We don't normally name them that way, but that's what's happening, right?
Hank Smith:	00:17:39	I named that place tears. Right?
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:17:42	Mine would be, I named that place snack food or something, but for them it was the place where they wept, the place where they realized what was going to happen. I don't mean to make light, but they're probably places in our lives when we look back in the course of our lives and we say, that moment. It's that moment that I wish I could remove or I could undo and that was the place I called Bochim. That was the place that I called the tears. Already sad. Thanks for bringing us down Hank.
Hank Smith:	00:18:06	Already sad. Yeah.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:18:07	Already sad. Okay.
Hank Smith:	00:18:09	Good feeling gone. All right.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:18:10	Yeah. Wamp wamp. So that's the thesis. So if you're ever like, Hey, when we come back to this thesis, what's happening in the story? Those are the underlying rules. The Lord won't leave them. They need to tear down the altars. Those other gods and things will become snares to them. And that's what we're going to see over and over again through these deliverers and these judges. It's going to be a message to us. If we want to be successful covenant keepers, what is this telling us that we need to do? There you go. Now, here's another thing that's going to happen. We call this Judges cycle. I think this is in Come, Follow Me. They suffer and then they cry out to the Lord. He raises up a deliverer and then they get delivered and then we're back around. It's actually kind of a funnel. They keep kinda going down and down and down and down through this cycle.
	00:18:57	And the way literature works too, meaning the way that the narrative works or history is not a perfect slide. Like Deborah's pretty rad and there's some others, but it generally is a pretty steep curve down to Samson who's utterly terrible. I know

people like him and VeggieTales makes him out to be a hero. And in Hebrews 11, it talks about him and some of these guys and their faith because the Lord uses them anyway, but they seem to make more mistakes than others. I think we can ask, Am I doing the same thing or am I finally making it stick? Am I really going to make the repentance stick? And they're going to not be that successful, but the Lord says, but you can, you can. And again, they're never armies in the story. It isn't armies that take them down. It's the snares and the altars of the other gods and the things that they don't clear out from their lives that they trip on.

00:19:55 I have a ridiculous story of how I didn't maybe pull down an altar when I should have. It's not a revealing story or anything like that because I don't want to tell those. But just a few years ago, I was traveling for my old job and I was on a flight to Kentucky. And you know the pressure in the cabin and things are up and down and so when I landed out of state, I noticed that my tooth hurt like down in my chin and I was like, wow, my tooth is really bothering me. And I just thought, well, it's this weird flight. And here's the thing, that tooth I had had an accident, so I chipped it really badly and so I'd had a root canal. There was no way I could be feeling that tooth. I was like, that's not it.

00:20:34 And then I'm out of state, I'm at a work site and so I'm visiting this site and I, every day I'm like, Oh man. And it was just pinpoint pain right at that tooth down in my chin and I'm like, that tooth is really bugging me. First I was like, it was the flight. Then the next day I was like, it's impossible because, you know, I've had a root canal so there's no nerve there. I can't be feeling the pain and it just got worse and worse so I didn't go in. Every day I talked myself out of what was happening with this tooth. You can see where this is going. I fly back and now it's pretty bad. It's very painful. It's extended down into my jaw so I go in and they're like, yeah, the root canal has failed, so there's an infection in there and it's gotten into the bone of your jaw. So they had to, you guys, pull the tooth.

00:21:22 So I was like Pirate Lori where I had, and in fact it was on our old videos. I was missing a tooth right in the front. And then you have to leave it for months while they do a bone graft and wait for the bone to heal and then still Pirate Lori. And I'm embarrassed because it's right in the front of my mouth and I've left it. But I was doing the same thing where I left the altar that I should have torn down. I knew there was a problem and I talked to myself, ah, it's the plane. Or, I had a root canal. It's impossible. And then when it really started to hurt, I should

		have gone in on first day and I probably wouldn't have had to have a bone graft and a pirate tooth. Now I have a replacement. You know, a year later, Pirate Lori is gone at much expense and pain, but I talked myself out of things that were happening. That's a little bit what happens in our lives with sin and with issues where we stumble. Well, this isn't so bad. There's no reason I have to stop doing this.
Hank Smith:	00:22:19	I loved when you said, I can't be feeling this pain. It's like, but you are. No, but I can't be.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:22:26	It's really painful. I can have an ice cube and I'm holding an ice cube on one little spot on my chin. No, no, I don't have tooth pain. I can't be having it but you are.
Hank Smith:	00:22:36	Yeah, self-deception almost.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:22:38	Yeah. It's not my wisest moment. And then I lived with a gappy tooth for months and years. It like took forever to heal and get all of it healed up. Luckily, it was something that I could repair, but there are things in our lives and issues that I think we leave that and we talk ourself out of it and we say, oh, I wish we'd done something, right, about it.
Hank Smith:	00:23:01	A long time ago.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:23:03	I won't ask you to share your self-deprecating, dumb moment when you were Pirate Lori and lost a tooth because you were dumb, but I think we all do that a little bit in our lives with even more serious things. I just left it, I'll make up later, it's not that big of a deal, nobody knows, whatever the excuses with our covenant, lack of faithfulness there.
Hank Smith:	00:23:24	Elder Holland would say the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step, so watch your step.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:23:30	Watch your step or your tooth. Watch your tooth.
Hank Smith:	00:23:34	Watch your tooth.
John Bytheway:	00:23:35	I learn a lot from watching those mayday air disaster things. One of the things one of the FAA guys said once was that FAA, our flying regulations are literally written in blood. We've learned so much from the accidents we have changed procedures, we've changed things that happen in the cockpit are differently, checklists have changed, regulations have changed because we have learned those lessons painfully. In a

		way, you got to be grateful that the book of Judges is going to come out and say, don't do what we did. Like you said, Lori had a cautionary tale. The message and the misfortune, somebody called it.
Hank Smith:	00:24:15	I'm a witness of this. He watches these air disasters. I was sitting next to him on the plane.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:24:21	Oh, on the plane? You can't watch them on the plane.
John Bytheway:	00:24:24	If I need to run up to the cockpit and knock and say, guys, guys.
Hank Smith:	00:24:29	Guys, I just saw this.
John Bytheway:	00:24:32	I think because I have friends that are airline pilots, I'm going to hear this, so I better say it. It is still the safest way to travel by far.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:24:41	A lot of the scripture is usually cautionary tales or instances how to work through something, because of course that's where we are. We're working through these things in our life and you're like, Well, here's some instances that you can use to help you work through it. And you're like, Yeah, yeah. Otherwise scripture would be really short. They were great and they were happy and everyone lived in Zion.
John Bytheway:	00:24:59	Like 4 Nephi.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:25:01	That's right. And grilled cheese sandwiches for everyone. Well, that would be my Zion, but you know, you pick yours. Heaven. Grilled cheese sandwich. That might also be my snare, but, yeah, okay. If you laid a grilled cheese sandwich in a little, a trap, I would be the one that put my hand in it. So careful on that. All right. Let's go back to our through line then. So after they lay out the thesis in Judges 2, the narrator really immediately begins to draw out the principle that will recur throughout the book, that God will deliver the people through the unlikely. Mostly, I believe the Lord uses someone unlikely so that they can't claim victory, that we always know it's the Lord. There seems to be a lot of examples of where the Lord picked the least likely. He picked the weak of the world and brought forth something amazing and that seems to be a pattern. I don't know if you guys can see that pattern anywhere. I can think of any other examples in scripture or in church history where the Lord picked the least likely the weakest of people.
John Bytheway:	00:26:07	Somebody with a sling, maybe a ruddy youth.

Dr. Lori Denning:	00:26:11	Ah, so David, right? He's the youngest, he's the youngest of the family, he's a shepherd. Shepherds are not known for their hard work. I mean, we have four year olds do shepherding. Good example.
Hank Smith:	00:26:21	Oh man, there's so many. You think of Abraham, he's not special and Lord's like, You're my guy. Then you got Mary of Nazareth.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:26:31	Yeah. Unmarried teenager, you. In a small back town. You, you're it.
Hank Smith:	00:26:36	Yeah. Hannah, who has Samuel.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:26:40	Samuel and what were you thinking was Sam, was it Enoch, you said?
John Bytheway:	00:26:43	Enoch. Yeah. I was like, why? I'm but a lad and all the people hate me. I'm slow of speech. Why am I thy servant, you know? And the Lord says, What? Walk with me. Yay, our theme this year.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:26:57	Walk with me. I do love...That's a great example. I love that. I'm just a kid and I'm not a great speaker and everyone hates me.
Hank Smith:	00:27:03	Yeah. And you have Jesus' apostles. These are fishermen.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:27:08	And Mary and Joanna, they're just working people, church history.
John Bytheway:	00:27:12	Church history, maybe we could call teenagers to be missionaries all over the world to go out and thresh the nations, right? The weak things of the world.
Hank Smith:	00:27:21	The Lord looks at Joseph and others and says, I chose you so everyone would know it was me.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:27:30	Yeah.
Hank Smith:	00:27:30	When the Lord says it, it's beautiful. To anybody else, it's kind of insulting, but-
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:27:34	Yeah, you're like, Oh, thanks a lot. Yeah, that's true. And then we feel empowered when it's the Lord, thank you, because we're all that to the Lord. It's really true, Joseph, Mary, Hannah, Deborah, Emma Smith, all the people in our lives and we say, You know, we're just regular people doing our best and they do

amazing, amazing things. I have a story. When I was in my master's program, I was part of a program where it was lots of different religious people that came together to learn about the scriptures. So it was at Gonzaga, Go Zags and so most, it's a Catholic school. So most of the students were Catholic. We had two of us that were LDS and some others from different Christian walks of life. When we all got on campus, one of the weekends, we had an extended weekend. We were, we are going to go to all the different churches that we all go to.

00:28:22 So we decided on three or four to go to. So I'm like, Me, me, pick me. So the first one we went to was an LDS chapel. I'm not from Spokane, so we picked one from the woman that was also LDS that happened to live in that area. I am so excited to take all of my cohort of these scholars to learn about Jesus Christ at the Latter-day Saint Chapel. So we pile in and you guys, it is packed. I mean, imagine a summer, a million people. It's like almost like stake conference where the expansion thing is open. It's just a regular Sunday. There are a thousand million kids. It's super loud. We're all in our best Sunday clothes and I'm a little bit nervous because I'm bringing my scholarly friends to an LDS service for the first time and what week was it going to be?

00:29:10 Trek week where the people reenact the trek coming across the plains. So it is like 8,000 two-minute talks from every youth and some of the ma and pa's and they all go, you've heard them like this. It was really great and I learned a lot and it was really hot. Amen. And then the next one, It was really great, but it was really hot and, um, we ate really great. Amen. 10,000 of those. Where's the Savior? I'm like, where are we returning to the Savior? Where are we going? And even all the hymns were the pioneer hymns. I was like, Oh. And I was just sitting down there cringing and cringing. We get done. We walk out. I'm like, don't really say anything. Again, kids are everywhere, the deacons are passing the sacrament- the guy passing the sacrament, I swear, waving the sacrament dish around in his hand.

00:30:01 It's outrageously loud. And I'm like, Oh, my dear friends are just not going to understand. We get in the car. And I don't say anything. And I turn around and go, well, what do you guys think? And I have that kind of President Uchtdorf moment where I'm like, oh, I'm going to have to make some excuses. And they're like, that was amazing. That was one of the most amazing things I have ever seen. It was like your own Moses story and your youth and there were so many youth and they were all like living it and they were living the Lord's hand in your lives were those little people and they were so strengthened. And I was like, yeah, it was awesome. It was so great. It was,

everything about Trek is my favorite. You're so right. And I was going to excuse the lives of these youth just going, it was great. They reenact certain people from the plains and they would tell about those and they were like, you have the Lord working in your lives right there.

00:30:58 Here's how it all comes back to Judges. I know you're wondering. How does this come back? I discounted those little events. They weren't little events. And those people that they were reenacting or those teenagers lives, those were big pivotal moments. My friends saw that through those eyes. They saw the trek week as an amazing testimony to the Lord's hand in the lives of the saints. I saw it as something odd and weird and embarrassing and they saw it as a testimony to the Lord. That was the same kind of connection that we're having with Judges. It was the weaker person that gets chosen. The moments that you least expect can be those covenant fulfilling moments where the Lord works in our lives. It's hard to bear your testimony on trek. I know. It is, but there it is.

John Bytheway: 00:31:46 Well, it was really hot.

Dr. Lori Denning: 00:31:48 It's really hot. It was really hot. I'm sure that was their voice. I'm not sure if that was their voice, that was the voice that I imagined them all.

John Bytheway: 00:31:54 You nailed it. That was great.

Dr. Lori Denning: 00:31:55 It was really hot, but it was great. And you're like... Let's jump into a few of these stories and see how they work. Let's go to Judges 3. I'm going to start with just a few verses 7 through 11. It's not in Come, Follow Me, so this is for you extra credit kids that want to really jump into the book. And it's the story of Othniel. Othniel is our first judge. He's the cleanest example of this pattern that we pointed out with John of where the people fell away, they cry out for deliverance. The Lord raises up a deliverer, i.e. judge. This one's going to be Othniel and then he helps deliver them. That's the pattern. Now, he's the cleanest. I'm not saying he's the best. I'm not saying it's the most dramatic, so you might fly by it, but Judges wants to give you that perfect little example to start with so you can see the pattern. So that's it. Will one of you read for me Judges 3:7 and the first part of eight, and then it's going to get into a bunch of names that are confusing. So we'll just do the beginning of seven and first half of eight. Verses.

Hank Smith:	00:33:01	Okay. I've got it right here. Again, we're in the NRSV. The Israelites did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, forgetting the Lord their God and worshiping the Baals and the Asherahs.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:33:15	So here's the pattern. You saw it though, that first line is critical and you're going to hear it over and over. In fact, it's going to be some of the last lines of all of Judges. The Israelites did evil in the sight of the Lord. And how did they do it? There's a verb there. They did something.
Hank Smith:	00:33:32	They forgot God.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:33:34	They forgot. And they served other things. Fill in the blank for you, right? They served TikTok and a distraction time and they served money and power and they're going to follow all the bad things, right? They're going to fill in the blank for you of what you think that challenge is and I think that verse would be a little more powerful, but we see that Israel does evil. That's what's going to set it off pattern. Now the anger of the Lord was kindled against them and he sold them into the hand. Now what's funny about this name, it means Chushan of double wickedness is what that word means in Hebrew. It's a little narrative wink. They're going to be really bad here. They cry out. Let's read because there's going to be that pattern that we're looking for. So we've got that they did evil and then the Lord's anger was kindled and then verse nine and we're in chapter three still.
John Bytheway:	00:34:22	But when the Israelites cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliver for the Israelites who delivered them. Othniel, son of Kenaz Caleb's younger brother.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:34:33	Boom. There it is. There's the tool. They have to do something. They have to cry out to the Lord. They forgot, but then those hard times push them back to remembering and they cry out and he raises up a deliverer, our judge. Now, here's something that you might miss on who this judge is. Did you see he's Othniel, son of Kenaz, but he is Caleb's younger brother. Do you guys remember who Caleb is?
Hank Smith:	00:35:02	Yes. Caleb was one of the 12 spies that came back from the promised land and said we can do this, he and Joshua.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:35:10	That's right. He was the one that was like the good one. He was covenant faithful. He was one that came back, gave the good report. Not surprising. Othniel is a judge and he's his brother. This is the family that we're going to remember in the back of

		our mind that's covenant faithful. They're like, Hey, they were still faithful. So it's Caleb's brother, Othniel, and he's going to do it. Then something cool is going to happen in verse 10. John, do you have verse 10? And this is where something big's going to happen.
John Bytheway:	00:35:41	Okay, here we go. Verse 10. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him and he judged Israel. He went out to war and the Lord gave King Chushan-rishathaim of Aram into his hand and his hand prevailed over Chushan-rishathaim.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:36:03	Did you catch the first part? They cry out, he calls the judge, the deliverer, and then something really important happens.
John Bytheway:	00:36:10	The Lord helped them fight their battles.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:36:13	Yeah, the spirit of the Lord comes upon him. He's got this power now that he didn't have. You're going to see that phrase over and over. It's not that they're living so much in the Spirit that like every minute everything they do, but when they cry out, the Lord sends his spirit upon them and it will say that the Lord came upon them. Then it was, they speak for the Lord, they have extra power, they're able to overcome their enemies. There's the pattern. So he overcomes the bad guy, double wickedness, and the land rests. There's your story. So there's the whole thing in Othniel. Now the rest of the stories as you're studying these. You can find that story but they're also going to stretch it out. They're going to tell you more about where the snare happened, where the people were failing, where maybe even the judge struggles a bit. Each story is an example for us to look and then pattern it and say, well, I know how the pattern works, but in my own lives, what's happening with this next guy? What was their struggle? Because that might be my struggle.
Hank Smith:	00:37:13	Lori, let me get this right. The pattern I'm looking for is the children of Israel forget the Lord. His anger is hot against them. Something terrible happens. They go into some sort of like slavery. Then they cry to the Lord. The Lord raises up a deliverer. The spirit of the Lord comes on the deliverer, he delivers them and the land does rest. I bet we're going to do that how many times?
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:37:36	12 more times. 12 more times. There are 12 judges. By the end, they just stop and then the last couple chapters that you're going to skip because they're really terrible. There's no judge. In fact, they fall into civil war so they tear each other apart. Then we end on a really terrible note. Spoiler alert, not for kids. There

		are 12 judges, so that was number one. So we're going to hit it 11 more times. Let's do Ehud. Now, I have heard, little birdy told me that Hank, this is a story that you truly appreciate and you have some deep insight on the story of Ehud and Eglon. They could be twins. Ehud and Eglon.
Hank Smith:	00:38:11	Ehud and Eglon.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:38:14	Do not name them that. Yeah. But let's take ... this is where the irony is going to get deep. It's almost farcical. So if you need something to do for the youth, I would probably tell this one.
John Bytheway:	00:38:23	Here it comes.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:38:24	I mean, it's in the Bible. So it's important. Hank, tell us what you think is important about this one.
Hank Smith:	00:38:29	I did this for a talk called Five Temptation Killers. I'm sure you can find it on YouTube somewhere. It's going to be as worth as much as you pay for it. I loved this story, mostly because I was teaching young men sophomore boys. There's the story. Same thing. The children of Israel fall into some sort of sin and they become slaves to Eglon, the king of Moab. The children of Israel cried unto the Lord, so the Lord raised up a deliverer. This time his name is Ehud and he is left-handed and he's from the tribe of Benjamin. He makes himself a dagger. It's like a cubit long, so we're talking like an 18-inch knife. That's a knife. That's not a knife. That's a knife.
John Bytheway:	00:39:17	This is a knife.
Hank Smith:	00:39:18	And the best part of the whole thing is Eglon was a very fat man and so Ehud wants to free the Israelites so he finds Eglon where he is covering his feet. I'll let you figure out what that means. He says, I have a message from God to you. He takes the dagger with his left hand and thrusts it into his belly. Now that's gross enough, but verse 22, it gets even better. The haft, which is the handle, goes into the man after the blade and the fat closed upon the blade so that he could not draw the dagger out. He's like, Hey, where's my knife? And it says, the dirt came out, which I'm guessing is his guts.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:40:04	His bowels released.
Hank Smith:	00:40:05	Yep. His bowels.

Dr. Lori Denning:	00:40:07	Here's what we call the irony stack. There are very few physical details about people in the Old Testament. It doesn't tell you what they look like. It doesn't tell you very much about them. But when it does, when it does, it is critical to the story. So Bathsheba is beautiful. David and Goliath, Goliath is really big and David's kind of small, right? That's going to be important to the story in a minute. And here it tells us something about Ehud. What did it say about him?
Hank Smith:	00:40:36	He is left-handed.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:40:38	Yeah. And the Hebrew means it's bound in his right hand, is how they say it. So the preferred hand, the hand of power is restricted. Just like Israel, they're bound, they're restricted, they're imprisoned, they're right by the thing. So he is left-handed. Then here's the irony stack. Here's the next irony. He's from the tribe of ...
Hank Smith:	00:41:02	Benjamin.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:41:03	Yeah, that might be important. It is. And here's what it means. Do you remember what Benjamin means the son of the right hand. So it's a left-handed man from the right-handed tribe. So it's stacking the irony that you're like, okay, he's not powerful. He's left-handed from this little tribe. Eglon's name, it keeps going. Eglon means little bull or calf. Think of it like the altars, you're going for a sacrifice. So he's the fatted calf. He's going to be slaughtered. Then Ehud hides the sword on his right thigh. That's where you wouldn't search a man who was right-handed, right, because you've got to, it's so big you got to draw it across, right? Or if you're Conan from your back, so it's kind of like guard isn't going to get there. Then he brings a tribute. So he's coming to bring tribute to King Fatman. That word is a Minchah, which is the word for sacrifice.
	00:42:04	He's bringing a knife of the bound to the fatted calf and he brings a sacrifice and you're like, well, I wonder who's going to be this sacrifice. Maybe the guy called fat calf. Yeah, it is. And he brings this tribute and he delivers, it says, he comes and he leaves with his group and then he comes back. So he comes back and he says, because I have a word from God. And he doesn't lie. What's the word that he has? The sword. We say the sword, and so he stabs him. So the whole story is this ironic like twist and you're like, you can already see what's going to happen before it happens. The Lord's working with them, they're bound just like his left hand. It's trapped. He's the fatted calf. He's bringing a sacrifice to the guy called fatted calf. And

		then he brings a word from God and the word is the dagger. Cool.
John Bytheway:	00:42:55	It is cool. I just think there are so many little artifacts hidden in plain sight. You're showing them to us. They've always been there. Do we lose something when we go from Hebrew to English? I mean, would that have been easier to see those stack of little things in there in Hebrew? Yeah.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:43:14	Yeah, yeah. Of course, because it's right there. Here's how that literary tool works. Here's why that works. It isn't just interesting. But it's the narrator's weapon in Judges that he's going to use this irony, how he brings the small and the weak person, how he's going to make it. The person that looks powerful is weak. The weak person is the powerful person. So this irony is going to keep coming because it's trying to tell you that, that even in your life when you feel like you're the weak one and you feel like the Lord doesn't recognize you or you feel like the little things that you do to keep your covenant, going to church on Sunday, reading your scriptures, being nice to the person that you don't want to when you merge on the freeway, they don't matter. You're like, none of this matters. And the book of Judges is saying it absolutely matters.
John Bytheway:	00:44:01	Everything matters.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:44:03	Everything matters. So all this irony is showing it's topsy-turvy. It's the topsy-turvy kingdom of Christ where blessed are the peacemakers. Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those who mourn. Those are the righteous people, not blessed are the powerful. He's reinforcing those Christian virtues, the Beatitudes right here in Judges. So that's why that's cool I think is not just because it's clever, but because it's teaching us an important truth about the Savior in our lives, that when we bind ourselves in covenant to him, we use his power. We aren't little anymore.
Hank Smith:	00:44:42	And you were right about the pattern. They've got almost the same language. The children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord. The Lord strengthened Eglon. They served Eglon. The children of Israel cried unto the Lord. The Lord raised up a deliverer and at the very end of the chapter, the land did rest.
John Bytheway:	00:45:00	There's the cycle.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:45:01	It's very cycle. Now it's very clear in the first few judges and it's going to be sometimes less clear because they're going to

assume you get it now. So they're not going to repeat it every time. They're going to repeat parts of it. But they're, you're going to assume that you're like, okay, move on. Like we get it, we get it, Lori. Really obvious in the first few and then the next few, they're going to spend more time on parts of the story, elements of the story that it wants you to learn from. The next story is one of the real heroes and that is Deborah.

John Bytheway: 00:45:29 Yay.

Dr. Lori Denning: 00:45:30 Yay. Let's go to Judges 4 and 5. This is some of the oldest texts that we have and it's actually the story is told twice and that doesn't happen very often. So it's going to tell the story as a story, what we call narrative and prose, then it's going to tell it as a poem or a song in chapter five. Poetry is one of my favorite. It's the way that we tell heightened spiritual events, events that we want to enter emotionally. We want to slow down and see the Lord's hand. This one is going to be a victory song of the Lord's deliverance here in Deborah's song. We sometimes skim over them because it's weird and we don't really, it doesn't rhyme like English songs do, but for the Israelites, this was their victory hymn. This was Onward Christian soldiers and Faith of our Fathers. So let's go to four and let's see what happens.

Hank Smith: 00:46:21 Lori, I noticed chapter four, verse one, the children of Israel, again, did evil in the sight of the Lord, I'm noticing a pattern.

Dr. Lori Denning: 00:46:32 Yeah. It's a tough pattern. I think it's a good question though. When I was younger, I always thought the scriptures were about really nearly perfect people. Deborah, you're going to see is so good, but me, myself, I never felt that great. So it was like, these stories aren't about regular people. Then you read this here, oh, they did evil again in the sight of the Lord.

John Bytheway: 00:46:51 What was that first phrase we read? The Lord, "I will never break my covenant with you." Even with these people, he is still there, he's still reaching out. I love that these are shared in here because for me, it elevates the grace and the reach and the relentless pursuit of the Lord even more.

Dr. Lori Denning: 00:47:08 Yeah, I love that.

John Bytheway: 00:47:10 Some of these people, he really had to pursue them relentlessly.

Dr. Lori Denning: 00:47:14 Yeah, you're right. It gives me hope for myself though, because sometimes you look around and you say, these people have a, in my ward are so good. These students at BYU are so great.

		Like, how can I even measure up to them? In the last couple years, I've had some chances to teach at the correctional facility and people are in there for all different levels of really serious crimes. I'd say, well, what do you want us to come talk about if we do family home evening there? And they said, well, one of the challenges that we have when we make big mistakes like that is that we have a hard time feeling the Savior's love. We don't feel worthy and we don't have hope for ourselves, not in the Savior, but in ourselves, that we're just not good enough and we can't ever make it back.
	00:48:01	There are times when we feel like I'm beyond the Savior's reach. I'm too far gone. I've made too many mistakes. I don't even have hope for myself. These stories, I think they show that there's no sin so great that God can't forgive it. His grace covereth all things. These stories of these people that are really struggling in Judges or in our lives are great testaments. And the Lord's like, no, don't take those out of the scriptures, you guys. That's the point, that we have a Savior that's so great that he can do all of these things so he can give us all hope and all grace. So yeah, don't take the stories out. Maybe edit them for the right audience. Don't take them out because that's our lives.
John Bytheway:	00:48:45	If Jesus is going to tell Peter and all of us to forgive seven times 70, like a metaphor for just keep forgiving, don't we think he's the same way then? Don't you think he's living up to his own advice? Sometimes I think that we think if you commit that same sin again, you're done.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:49:07	Yeah. How many times am I going to do it? And you're like, well, we're going to find it 12 more times here. And he's going to forgive them every time.
John Bytheway:	00:49:12	And he's going to forgive them. I will never break my covenant with you. Yeah.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:49:16	I will never break my covenant with you. And do we really believe that? And we say, no, at some point he's going to say, I'm done with you. I'm tired of you. I wish you'd figure it out. And he's going to say, no, no, don't you listen to that. The first thing he told us, "I will never break my covenant with you." And he's going to send us some help as well. I think that is a perfect segue to our next story because we learn about a prophet, someone that the Lord's going to send to help them so you're not alone in this quest.
John Bytheway:	00:49:49	A prophetess.

Dr. Lori Denning:	00:49:51	Oh, well, that's interesting. It is a prophetess.
John Bytheway:	00:49:54	Yeah.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:49:54	The women are the best. The women are the best. Most of the stories are about men being naughty, women being great. Who has Judges 4... Let's actually do four and five.
Hank Smith:	00:50:08	Okay, I can get it. Back in the NRSV. At that time, Deborah, a prophet, wife of Lapidoth was judging Israel. She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Beth-el in the hill country of Ephraim and the Israelites came up to her for judgment.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:50:29	Now, I'm going to say, love that she's an Ephraimite, one of my people, way to go Ephraim tribe. She is cool. It's a woman and it had an interesting couple things that it describes. Now, remember, we learned a scholarly tip and that was, if it describes something about them, it's going to be critical to the story. It doesn't just throw out details. So it says that in the time of Deborah and she is a what?
John Bytheway:	00:50:52	A prophetess.
Hank Smith:	00:50:53	A prophetess.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:50:54	A prophetess. Yeah. Now that's not something we often think of where we're like women who are prophets, but that's what it says. So there it is. What does that mean that she's a prophetess?
John Bytheway:	00:51:05	I would go, wouldn't you Hank to revelation? The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. If you have a testimony of Jesus, then where did you get it? Revelation and you are a small P prophet or prophetess.
Hank Smith:	00:51:22	I would say the same thing. She's as much of a prophet as any other prophet in the Old Testament. A messenger, someone called by God, deliver messages sent forth to teach the people. This is the way the Lord works with Israel. He sends them prophets and prophetesses. Prophetessi.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:51:44	Prophet. Prophetism. There's something else though. She had another little moniker, a little title. Did you catch what it called her? She was the wife of somebody. Lapidoth.
John Bytheway:	00:51:58	Ooh, save that for your baby book. Yeah.

Dr. Lori Denning:	00:52:00	Well, there's a lot of baby book names in here. I know we've done a ton. So here's something we don't actually know what that means. The actual term in Hebrew is the woman of Lapidoth. They don't use a different word for woman and wife. It could be translated as a woman of torches or a fiery one. So you're going to see some themes with fire. We're not sure if that's what it means, but it does seem to call that out and maybe it meant something more to them. But I think if you see her personality, she's pretty bold. I like that we can call her a woman of torches or a woman a fiery one. She was judging. Then she sat there and the Israelites came up. Who knows how the story goes next? We'll go really fast and say what happens. She's going to be our next judge and she's going to have someone that she's going to call on to help her.
Hank Smith:	00:52:46	I love this just because there's an old video where someone says to a little boy, "Are you going to go on a mission?" And he says, "I'll go if my mom goes with me." She calls Barak and says, you're supposed to go to battle against Sisera. And he says, if you go with me, I will go. But if you're not going to go, I'm not going to go. So she says, I will go with you.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:53:12	Yeah, sometimes we'll read it as a rebuke, like that Barak wouldn't even go until he had a woman go with him or whatever, but I maybe read that a little bit more nicely to Barak. I mean, he's not a super battle leader like these guys with chariots and things, so he knows this is pretty risky, but he does say something else, I'll go if the prophet can come with me. And I think that's a cool message to all of us. Hey, will you take this calling? Will you go in your life and change things up? Will you go? And you're like, if the Lord can go with me, if the prophet can go with me, I'll go. So I think that's a, it's a much nicer reading of Barak than he was like, I don't want to go. It's like, well, this is pretty scary.
Hank Smith:	00:53:56	Yeah. I'm scared, but if you'll go with me, I'll overcome my fear.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:54:01	Yeah. That's one of the cool roles of Deborah that I think we can try to apply in our lives too. Are there times when we're called to do something that we need a prophet with us or we need a helper? In chapter five, she's actually called a mother in Israel. Here's something cool, you guys. It doesn't seem to be biological. She doesn't have any children and it's in the song. When she saves Israel, she's then called a mother of Israel. It's deliverance, faithful covenant, support, faith, power. Those are motherly words. Those are covenant words. She's birthing a nation. She is the mother, the supporter, the creator of Israel when she supports and strengthens them and delivers them.

And again, she doesn't have any kids in the story. Her kids are Israel. So I think it's one of her best titles, Mother of Israel. I was thinking about who have I had in my life that's been the person that I say I'll go if they go with me.

00:55:06 I'll go if they'll help me. Maybe it's a mentor and it doesn't have to be a female. It could be anyone I think in the covenant that has helped us. And I was just thinking about, are there any people in my life that have really been that Deborah person that said, like Barak, well I'll go, if you can go. I don't know if you guys have people in your lives. Do you have anybody that popped into your head that you're like, man, that person, if they went with me, I would be great.

John Bytheway: 00:55:33 Hmm. My wife. When I travel and I'm nervous about presenting or whatever, if Kim's there she's like, You forgot this part. And not just that, it's true. I think of the theme that we have seen over and over again in the Old Testament, haven't we? I will be with thee. The Lord just saying, I'll be with you. And the Lord was with Joseph and the Lord was with Moses. He's just, I'll always be with you.

Dr. Lori Denning: 00:56:04 Yeah, it sounds like your wife is a mother in Israel. I had an interesting story. No one was saving me from doom, but I had been practicing for grad school. I learned how to do the Hebrew singing, that cantillation. And again, Hebrew isn't my natural skill. I thought I'd be really good at it, but I ended up being kind of bad at it. So I learned how to chant it. They chant it and they sing it. And so for one of my grad school classes, we had to teach a class, teach a whole three hour seminar. I had been learning it all semester to do that and show how that was called cantillation and show how that works. So I'd been practicing and practicing. And again, I'm not naturally musical anyway, so I don't know why I think that I can do this stuff.

00:56:42 I'm taking these lessons online, I'm practicing singing, my Hebrew art, so you're singing the Hebrew, I'm practicing, and I was doing, Genesis 21, which is part of the Abraham and Hagar story. I get to class. I get all the way to class and I'm doing it and I'm teaching what it means. I'm doing that part of the lecture, fine. No big deal, right? Here's what it means, here's how it works. We get through the part where I have to sing it and I'm like, okay, so now I'm going to sing part of it. I just launch off into singing and it, I start out too high. So I'm like. And I'm just like, oh my ... And then I get about three or four verses in, and you guys, I just blank. I mean, just cold stone, no idea. No, no words in my head, not one word.

	00:57:22	It's just gone. And I get everyone staring at you in school and they're all grad students who are known to be very forgiving and loving. No. And there is my professor and she's staring at me and she's Jewish. And so I'm already doing her Jewish thing and so I'm already feeling intimidated and I just seriously blank and she can tell. Nothing. Here's what she did. She didn't say, you can do it, or she didn't say, go back a few verses. She just started to sing it. And the first couple times, you guys, I couldn't even hear it. I mean, I'm just like a cornered deer with deer in the headlights, like, what? And I can kind of hear the tune and she's like.
	00:58:00	And then I'm like, Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. And then we sang it off tune together and we finished it. At the end, I just kind of had tears in my eyes. I was talking to one of the students afterwards and she goes, That was really beautiful how you cried at the end. I, you're going to think I cry all the time. And I was like, well, I wasn't crying from nerves or wasn't crying. It was so loving. I can't believe how much she just loved me to just go through those things that I had worked on so hard and I just totally botched. She didn't make me feel bad and she just sang along beside me. And I think that's Deborah. She doesn't tell Barak, she says, well, a woman will get the glory. She goes with him. She's like, okay, we can be victorious.
	00:58:43	Now just know someone else is going to get the credit for this, but we'll do it. And Barak's like, deal. I was that person. I'll sing along with you. She didn't make me feel bad. She didn't call it out. And I'm like, that's a covenant mother, someone who just walks along the side of you until you pick up the tune again. Thanks, Tammi, for your being my Deborah.
John Bytheway:	00:59:01	Oh, that's so cool.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:59:02	You know, if it was like saving me from the train tracks, it would be a more spiritual story, but my stories don't involve such deep things. It's learning to sing Hebrew in graduate school, not to discount it, it meant a great deal to me. I spent a whole semester working on it just to have someone so lovingly walk along with me.
John Bytheway:	00:59:20	Well, I've heard that some people have such a great fear of public speaking. I can't even imagine adding to that public singing in Hebrew.
Dr. Lori Denning:	00:59:34	I think there are people in our lives that do that. Deborah is a good example where we can be both Barak, the person who asks for the help and the person who helps. The Lord wants to

show us that, look, when we're on our covenant path, we have people around us that can say, I'll go, if they go with me, if I have a companion, what's an eternal companion, a missionary companion, if my friends can serve with me, if someone will help me, if I don't have to go alone. I think we're all a little better if we don't go alone. And he says, no problem. In fact, I've got a prophet that actually speaks for the Lord and he will always be there with you. Whatever your life is, I'm going to send a prophet so that you can have a prophet with you.

01:00:14 And that's powerful. That's a pretty powerful message. She's not only cool, she's a good representation for us. Okay, here's your nerdy detour. Hold on. Fast forward if you don't want to do this part. There's a lot of mothering going on. So we've already mentioned that she's going to be a mother in Israel. Then Jael in the next chapter, so Deborah and Jael are going to kind of work together. Jael is going to serve as that, but we probably need to go over what happens in the story really quick before we show that mothering section. Hank, I believe you know how this story goes with Jael. Do you mind recapping it for us a little bit?

Hank Smith: 01:00:49 Oh, these are fun stories to tell when you're a seminary teacher.

John Bytheway: 01:00:54 It's a temple story. Sort of.

Hank Smith: 01:00:56 It's a temple story. If you bring a couple of things of lettuce and you can put them under a blanket that might kinda looks like someone's sleeping there and you can take your hammer and tent stake and kind of do a visual.

John Bytheway: 01:01:11 Oh man.

Hank Smith: 01:01:14 Barak is going to go out against Sisera. Sisera is running from the battle and Jael sees him and says, come in here. Come in the tent. Almost like, come in here, you'll be safe. She gives him something to drink, a little bit of milk. Then he says, hey, watch over the tent. If anybody's here, just say no. So he lays down and she takes a hammer and a tent peg, a big, strong tent peg. And, you got to marry a girl like Jael. She'll take you through the temple. She took a nail and pounded it through his head and he is in the tent. Sisera lay dead and the nail was in his temples.

Dr. Lori Denning: 01:02:08 I see what you did there with temple. Now, she is called in the poem blessed among women. Jael blessed among women the highest praise. The narrator is reaching for the highest praise for women that he can give. So he's, Deborah is a mother, highest

praise. And again, not with children. That's also great. But what they're saying is something else is happening here that's important. Jael Is the person that stakes the evil general in the head and defeats the enemy. By the way, she's not even an Israelite. She's a Kenite. She's one of our neighboring cousins. He says, the narrator says of her blessed among women. Now, I bet one of you can think of another woman that has that same title, blessed is she among women. It's a weird connection and you're going to go, that's not what I thought. Who is that other person that's called blessed among women?

Hank Smith: 01:02:59 That's Luke chapter one, right?

John Bytheway: 01:03:02 Was it Gabriel that said it?

Dr. Lori Denning: 01:03:04 Yes. It's Mary the mother of Jesus. We often think of motherhood and there's nothing wrong with this. I'm not saying it's not this, but it's calm and quiet and shy. This is not shy. It's the same strength that is needed to be an actual mother and raise a child that it is to defeat an enemy and take him in and say, come my way. And then he goes, I want a drink of water. My favorite is like, well, I've got this milk. You're like, well, that's just going to make him sleepy, right? You're like, who doesn't want a large glass of milk after you've fought a battle already? So exhausting. So she drinks the milk. Now, here's the nerdy part. I said I was going to promise you. There's a lot of this mothering theming. So Jael takes him into the tent, he falls asleep, she covers him with a blanket, she gives him milk.

01:03:58 Do you see? It's between her feet. So it's almost like birth. He's here and it's mothering. So you're like, whoa, mother in Israel, Deborah, and Jael is going to be the one who takes him in this. And they praise her because she's an enemy in war, but it praises her for defeating the Lord's enemies for being that serious, not turning away and not softening it at all. This is something that we need to tear out of our lives, that we need to destroy. The strongest thing that women can do as well and men is to be bold in our covenants and to do the right things. Now, I'm not saying we're a proponent for death or anything like that. I think we're smart enough to see what's happening here, but we are saying, ladies specifically, you do not need to be timid. You do not need to be just waiting quietly in the background.

01:04:55 You can rise up. You can be like Deborah, the prophetess that's judging them and leading them into battle. You can be like Jael that's like, hey, enemy person and wipes him out. And then blessed are you among women. That's true femininity, right? Is

guarding our covenants and doing the things anxiously doing the things the Lord asks us to do, not just waiting in the background. The Lord needs a powerful people and will you do it? Well, Deborah and Jael are like, step it up ladies. Which I find very cool. It's a violent world that they live in, maybe more violent than we live in today, but you see these themes of them defending the covenant, stepping in, pushing back and not just going, okay. Remember, they have to tear down the altars. They have to do something. You can't just let it exist in your life. They're doing it with a pokey stick or whatever they got at hand, so I like that.

Hank Smith: 01:05:51 Wow. These are wild scripture stories.

Dr. Lori Denning: 01:05:55 Well, they are fun and if you're teaching the 15-year-olds, you'll have some good material that you haven't had before. But then we hit Gideon. So Gideon is, they're two long narratives of stories and they follow almost the same beats. Gideon and Samson. We'll finish up this one on Gideon, but they're the longest they know the most about them and they're going to show, spoiler alert, a judge who starts out great or has some struggles but starts out and then fails and Samson's going to go even steeper. Gideon's going to follow that pattern and Samson's going to follow that pattern even worse. Starts out well. If I wrote a thesis for Gideon, before we read the story, it's this. Spiritual experiences aren't a vaccine for spiritual decay, that you have to always maintain your covenant. You have to keep going. It's why we don't go to sacrament once a year.

01:06:49 We renew our covenants weekly. It's stuff you have to do. You have to keep doing things. You can't just be like, I did it. I went once. All right, let's do Gideon. Let's jump over to chapter six, chapter six of Judges and we meet our next guy. Now, our next guy is an interesting one because again, it's going to do this same cycle. So now we've gone through this cycle with a few times and then we are going to land and pause on Gideon for a while. So it's been about seven years. The Midianites, a different group are being mean and they're oppressed and then the people are hiding. They're hiding in caves and in dens. Think of this, a little intro to chapter six. The same story, and the Israelites did evil in the sight of the Lord. I haven't heard that. Also, if you've ever seen Star Wars where it has the crawl where the yellow text flows up and it gives you, like, the background of the story, that's the background of the story.

01:07:47 They did evil and the Midianites and it was seven years and it's like this big story and then you zoom in right on Luke Skywalker. We're zooming in on Gideon. You're like, well, he's our next

hero. And he is, but there's something interesting that's happening that he's doing. Do you guys remember what Gideon's doing when we first meet him? It's about verse 11, chapter six.

Hank Smith: 01:08:11 Thrushing wheat and hiding it.

Dr. Lori Denning: 01:08:14 Yeah. Wine press is a depression, right? It's a pit that you would put the grapes in and step in. I am not very agricultural, but what I hear is wheat is something you grow. When you want to get the little grains of wheat off the chaff, you need to be usually up high because they use wind. So they beat it and then they throw it into the sky, right? In the wind. So David's threshing floor where he builds the temple is up on the hillside. This is the opposite. So we should know that. I don't know that, but my wheat comes as the form of bread at the grocery store already made. He's afraid that as soon as they grow any crops, the bad guys come through and steal them and kill the people. We'll just scoop up your food. Now, an angel shows up and an angel in 6:12 gives him a little name. Let's go there and see if we can find it. An angel of the Lord appears to him and it calls him something. Do one of you have that?

John Bytheway: 01:09:12 So this is Judges 6:12 in the NRSV. "The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, the Lord is with you, you mighty warrior.

Dr. Lori Denning: 01:09:24 Now, wait a minute. He's a guy hiding in a wine press. Does he seem very mighty or valorous to you?

John Bytheway: 01:09:31 Is this a sarcastic angel?

Dr. Lori Denning: 01:09:34 There's this theme of irony. So we had the irony with Ehud story. We had the irony with even the woman being called as prophetess. We have the irony of he's not very valorous. He's not very mighty. He's the least of these. Now let's pause for a minute. Whose story do we think this is? Is this story just for Gideon? No. We're Gideon. And then he even says, it was just, well, the Lord is with thee. He's like, this pretty snarky answer. If the Lord is with us, then why has this all happened to us? And where are all the wondrous and mighty deeds that happened to our ancestors because we're sitting here suffering. That's a pretty bold response to the angel of the Lord, sometimes known as the Lord, that you're like, where are you in my life? Because I hear all these miracles in other people's lives.

01:10:24 I see people cured of cancer and walk again. I read the miracles of the Savior, but not for me. Those things don't happen to me. Sadly, I think a lot of us are a lot more Gideon than sometimes the others. Where's the Lord in my life? Maybe we don't even disbelieve that it happens for other people, but we do wonder, where is he in my life? Where are the mighty miracles when I have to hide out just to make my lunch? And I go, all right, well, this is a guy that I can kind of understand. I wish I didn't, but there are times, I think, when we're having to hide when we don't see the Lord's hand in our life, and here he is standing right in front of him. Hey, mighty man of valor, and you're like, not very valorous. But I think the Lord knows something about him that he doesn't know about himself yet.

01:11:14 He calls him there and then he says, I'm the least. Again, that's that call. I'm the least people. That reluctance, the one is really a covenant signature. We're the least of people. Hey, do you guys remember why Israel is chosen as the Lord's chosen people? The Lord tells why he chooses Israel among all the nations. He says, beause you're the smallest. I chose you because you're the smallest of the nations because then you know who it was that was behind you that God can save the weakest, the smallest people. And here we saw it with Enoch, we saw it with all these stories and here we see it with Gideon. I'm going to choose the weakest guy, the smallest guy. He even says, I'm from the smallest tribe, and among the tribes, I'm in the smallest house, and among the smallest house, I'm the youngest in my family. I'm the weakest, dumbest guy you could pick for this job. And the Lord's like, you're just who I'm looking for. That's perfect. I can hardly wait.



John Bytheway: 00:01 Welcome back to part two with Dr. Lori Denning, the book of Judges.

Hank Smith: 00:06 Touched my heart. Where are all these miracles that we've heard about? And he mentions Egypt. Where's our Red Sea? Where's the plagues that save us? That is pretty snarky, but what you said there, Lori, was important. How come everyone else is getting all these wonderful blessings? And he says, If the Lord be with us, why is it so hard? Why is it so awful? And then he's, you're going to be the guy. He's like, wait, what? Where's all the miracles? Go look in the mirror. You're going to be the miracle.

Dr. Lori Denning: 00:35 And he's like, Well, I didn't want to go that far. I didn't say it should be me. And that is powerful though, isn't it, where we say, I don't know if the Lord remembers me. I don't even doubt that miracles have happened in other people's lives, but where's my miracle? Or when's he going to step in? Or when's it enough? Or does he even remember me? That feels really real.

Hank Smith: 00:55 And not only do I remember you, I'm going to actually answer your prayers with you. I love that where the Lord says, Where are the miracles? Have I not sent you? Here we go. And he's like, whoa, whoa, whoa. How am I supposed to save Israel? I'm a nobody. And like you said, Lori, you're perfect.

Dr. Lori Denning: 01:14 You're perfect.

Hank Smith: 01:14 Exactly what I want.

Dr. Lori Denning: 01:15 The littlest guy of the littlest tribe of the smallest family that's hiding, I can do something with that. I can make that work. So not only I think does he see us, but he can make us mighty men of valor, mighty women of valor. He can say, With me, I can do all things. I can even make you, little Gideon, pretty cool. If you just ended on the story of Gideon, that's even cooler, but it keeps going. There are two stories that I think are really

powerful. There's a bunch of them here and we won't have time to probably go through all of them. One of the first ones is the one where he gives him some first instruction. He tells him to go and he says, Go tear down the Ba'als. Go tear down the statues. Now, remember we heard in chapter two that they were going to have to tear down the altars.

01:59 Here's an actual assignment. Go tear down those other gods. Get them out. In fact, don't just tear them down in town. Go to your dad's. Go tear down your dad's idols, his altars, his bulls and his poles and his scary things. And so do you think Gideon just marches out and just says, whew, good news. Lord's with me. I'm going to go, be full of bravery. No, go to verse 27 and let's see what he did. John, do you have verse 27 that you could read for us?

John Bytheway: 02:29 Judges 6:27. So Gideon took 10 of his servants and did as the Lord had told him, but because he was too afraid of his family and the townspeople to do it by day, he did it by night. Doing that mighty men of valor thing again.

Dr. Lori Denning: 02:45 I love that he took some friends. He's not afraid for no reason. He's saying, If I go and do this, they will kill me. So he doesn't go during day. He goes at night, which is an interesting hero. He's not like boldly, mighty man of valor like, I sneak in and do it at night. No one knows me. And he still does it though. He still does it. But it's real fear because the next day the townspeople woke up early and they noticed that the altar was broken down and the sacred pole and it was cut down and the bull was offered on the altar and they said, Who has done this? And after searching, they said, Gideon son of Joash did it. And the people go to the dad, Joash, and they said, Bring out your son that he may die for he has pulled down our altar and cut down the sacred pole. I'm paraphrasing a little.

03:31 Joash says, and I love this, To all who were arrayed against him, you contend for Ba'al or will you defend his cause? Whoever contends for him shall be put to death by morning for if he's a God, let him contend for himself because the altar has been pulled down. Think of this for a second. It's your son, but it's your worship. The people come and they find out and said, Bring out your son and we're going to kill him. And he steps into the gap. He steps in and says, I'm not going to kill him. The Baal can fight for himself. If he's a god, he can step up. He's really lucky they didn't kill him, but he steps up. Now remember, this is a part member family and a lot of us are part member families. We're blended families or converts almost all of us.

	04:20	I wonder if we don't have people like Joash in our life that step into the gap. When I decided to go back to school, it was a big decision for me because I had a career. I was in business. At one point I even worked at Frito-Lay, right? The chip company. I thought that I had made it as far as corporate America had gone. I was then later a vice president and a director. So I had these big titles. I'd made corporate America. When I felt really directed to go back to school and become a biblical scholar as an adult, I don't know if you can tell, but I'm old. It's hard to know, is this the right thing to do? And my parents were always very supportive and friends were supportive, but there was one person that stepped into the gap for me. And you guys might know her, but it's my twin sister. That's going to make me cry.
Hank Smith:	05:11	We know her and love her.
Dr. Lori Denning:	05:13	We do. She has been such a big support during this challenge. It's been eight years or something since I went back to school and then all the way through the PhD and she would always support me and in so many ways, spiritually, financially, just motivation. She would even have cookies delivered at my house when I passed a big test or when something happened. So she was tracking my progress so much that I never felt like I was doing it on my own. She stepped into that gap when I needed it. Even though she is a scholar of the gospel, as you know, she does it behind the scenes. Some of you know her and some of you don't, but she's a big lesson to me of how we can be that Joash for other people too. We can step up and support them in what the Lord has asked them to do. So thanks, Lisa.
Hank Smith:	06:10	The wonderful Lisa Spice.
John Bytheway:	06:13	Yeah. People who listen often hear the name Lisa Spice. Twin sister of Lori Denning.
Dr. Lori Denning:	06:19	Yeah. She is my twin. She's the cute twin. So there you go. All right.
Hank Smith:	06:24	The cute identical twin.
Dr. Lori Denning:	06:26	Yeah, we're identical. Yeah. So don't, don't read into that at all. Yeah.
Hank Smith:	06:30	I love that. Joash steps up for his son. If you want him, you have to go through me.

Dr. Lori Denning:	06:36	Even Gideon needs help. He's a mighty men of valor because he has help. We have now found two heroes. Jael isn't a member, a covenant member, and Joash isn't a covenant member. We have help with our broader Christian cousins, covenant cousins, and people in the world that will come to our aid. We're never really alone with good people around us. And I love that the scriptures here salute them as well.
Hank Smith:	07:06	That's a great story. That's not one you usually think of with Gideon.
John Bytheway:	07:11	Can we talk about the fleece?
Dr. Lori Denning:	07:13	We can. If we jump down to the end of chapter six about 36, it's just a handful of verses, just four or so verses. And it tells about the fleece. John, do you know the story? Do you want to read it for us or just tell it to us?
John Bytheway:	07:26	He wants some reassurance. This is the NRSV. Then Gideon said to God, In order to see whether you will deliver Israel by my hand, as you have said, I'm going to lay a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If there is dew on the fleece alone and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that you will deliver Israel by my hand as you have said. And it was so. When he arose early next morning and squeezed the fleece, he wrung out enough dew from the fleece to fill a bowl with water. Then Gideon said to God, Do not let your anger burn against me. Let me speak one more time. Let me please make trial with the fleece just once more. Let it be dry only on the fleece and on the ground, let there be dew. God did so that night. It was dry on the fleece only and on the ground there was dew.
Dr. Lori Denning:	08:18	I love how you started it though as like you said that, hey, he says, See if you're going to deliver by my hand. Here, I mean, here's Gideon. The least brave guy we have met so far, even after his dad stepping in, even after talking to an angel, he's like, God, just to be clear, I want to make sure you really think it's me that's supposed to be the deliverer, this mighty man of valor, so will you do a thing for me? He does it one way, the fleece is wet and the ground is dry, and then the second is the other way, the fleece is dry and the ground is wet, so he's asking for the reverse, could naturally settle on wool, but it would be super weird if it was the other way. And I love his quote, Let not thine anger be kindled against me and I will speak but this once. Like he knows when he's asking for it. Like, don't be mad, but I really, really, really, really, really need some assurance here before I go to war. Me. To war. I just need a confirmation. John, what about this jumps out to you or you find intriguing?

John Bytheway:	09:24	I remembered that story from Michael Wilcox and it touched me because there's lots of times when you're not, you're not really sign seeking, you just, can you give me one more little encouragement? This is what he wrote. "Some have felt Gideon was sign seeking, which we are warned not to do, but there's a difference between asking for a sign to create faith and then deciding to act and asking for a sign to confirm faith, strengthening a previous decision to act. We often say to the Lord, show me and I will act. The Lord replies, act and I will show you, but fleeces or not, Gideon was going to face the Midianites. The Lord will grant us our own fleeces when we are in need of strength. When we cry out, as did the father of the boy with the dumb spirit, Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief. The Lord is willing to respond." So he needed a fleece, that guy. "When the walls look high and strong but we intend to face them anyway, the soft fleeces of comforting reassurance will come. They may come in the inspired words of a Father's blessing or in a special verse of scripture we are led to in our reading. They may come as we counsel with a leader or in a conversation with a friend. Often they come with a peace of the Holy Ghost. During these times, we must be careful not to let our fears blind us to the fleeces that God has sent."
Dr. Lori Denning:	10:44	I love that the Lord met Gideon where he was. Gideon wasn't confident and to be fair, he was asking a lot. Please go up in a army and remember you were a farmer 10 minutes ago. So you would be frightened, not only for myself but for everyone I'm going to take with me. Is this really what you want me to do? Am I really the right guy or gal? There's so many other good people you could choose to be the bishop or to go on a mission or to help this ministering sister. There's so many other people that could stand up for truth that could say the right thing, that could vote in my country. There's somebody else. There's got to be somebody else. And he's like, no, no, you can do it. You can do it. I love that the Lord meets Gideon where he is. He doesn't rebuke him either. He says, Okay. Yeah, I'll just do it. I'll show you. If that's what you need, I can do that.
John Bytheway:	11:38	We can all relate to a time with a calling with we have to teach a class we're nervous about that I need a fleece. I think a patriarchal blessing, you can go back to, what a fleece the Lord has offered us with those and we can go back and read that and say, Okay, this says this. Have you ever done that, you guys? Have you ever quoted your patriarchal blessing to the Lord?
Hank Smith:	12:00	Yeah.
John Bytheway:	12:00	As I have. Look, it says right here in paragraph-

Hank Smith:	12:03	We had a contract.
John Bytheway:	12:05	Yeah, we had a deal.
Dr. Lori Denning:	12:09	Maybe not. It's bold, but I, I love the boldness. You're like, Oh, I could try that. You could probably quote it back at me, and you said... Yes, yes. I did say those things. I did. That is correct. That's beautiful. We all need a fleece from time to time. We need a Joash and a fleece and a Jael and a Deborah. We all need somebody to go along with us, step into the gap and say, yep, this is where you're supposed to be. There's another story that goes on and so we don't want to miss it, but for time, I do want to skip to an end. And Judges 7, we hear what happens and most people know this story, right, where he whittles down the army and then they win kind of in a miraculous way. We'll let you read that on your own, but there is an interesting part that sometimes we forget and again, we're remembering this covenant and these failures.
	12:56	There's an end section where he has a failure after the victory and it's actually in chapter eight. If you go to Judges 8:22 through 28, this is where Gideon's growing up, time goes on, he's won some battles, people are starting to follow him. They say, hey, will you be our king? Rule over us, is what he says. He even uses his covenant words and he's like, well, the Lord will rule over you. And you're like, good for you, Gideon. He's got it. And then keep reading because you see he's big fat liar at this point. He's starting to fall. So let's go down to ... I know, spoiler ... I told you this is where you're going to see they're all going to have a hard time. He says, I won't rule over you and I love it. And my son will not rule over you.
	13:40	Do you guys know what his son's name is, by the way? His son's name is Abimelech. My father is King. I'm not even making that up. I will not rule over you and nor will my son. Have you met my son? What's your son's name? My dad is the king. Yes, I don't know why he got that name. So weird. So weird. And then he does. So Gideon does get very proud and he rules over them. Again, there's a lot of irony and satire and you're supposed to start seeing it. Go down to verse 24 and it says, again, I'm in 8:24. Gideon said to them, no, no, we won't rule and nor will my son, but instead, let's do this other thing. This is going to be such a good idea. You'll love it. Bring me a gold earring from the spoils from this army. And then again, the enemy had these earrings, you know, has to tell you a little aside and the Ishmaelites used to have these.

	14:31	Now, not even the Midianites, different group. So they're just battling away. Then he says, And we will willingly give them. He holds out his coat and they all throw their gold earrings in. He gets a gazillion of them and then he makes an ephod, a covenantal spiritual device. He puts it and then they worship it. No, no, don't, I will not rule over you, but instead I will make a spiritual counterfeit and you can worship it and you're supposed to go, wait a minute, what? His pride, his power, money now are in the way. Again, I already told you they're going to fail so only pretty much Deborah doesn't. Here's Gideon's downfall. We know the serious stories, but remember, spiritual action is not an inoculation. We have to keep choosing the covenant and covenant is something we do. So you're thinking it's going to be great with this mighty man of valor and he was, and if only we could have ended there.
Hank Smith:	15:32	What is it? Absolute power corrupts absolutely.
Dr. Lori Denning:	15:36	Yeah. And remember, that's the snare that they will lift up their heads. It says lift up and they will make a collar that they're going to be trapped.
Hank Smith:	15:44	I don't want to be king. Come here, king's son.
Dr. Lori Denning:	15:49	My dad, what's your son's name? My father is king, of course. Don't worship me. Worship this thing I made at my house.
John Bytheway:	15:57	Out of earrings.
Dr. Lori Denning:	15:59	Yeah, out of earrings, out of gold under. All right, there's a spiritual experience, a calling, a spiritual moment, a testimony, roles that we have that become the golden calf, or in this case, the golden ephod that we make when we start worshiping the container instead of the Lord. When we aren't working forward in our covenants and doing the things, then we start to fade. Judges are saying, look covenant people. Don't do what we did. Remember the Lord and keep your covenants by doing the things and don't fall into these snares because they're all around you. Again, it's not battles that they fail in. It's things they put their foot or their neck right into. They step into it willingly. Don't let that happen to you.
Hank Smith:	16:46	It's a different kind of enemy. Pride, money, power. And I bet you guys are going to be shocked as soon as Gideon's dead, the children of Israel turned again.
Dr. Lori Denning:	16:57	What?

Hank Smith:	16:58	I know. I know. This is surprising at this point.
John Bytheway:	17:00	It's like a broken record.
Dr. Lori Denning:	17:02	Luckily, the text is going to have us jump to Samson. Gideon's one of the longest and then Samson's the next longest, and it's going to follow the same beats we call it. The same steps of an advantage in the Lord and a heavenly visitor and all these things and then it just goes downhill super fast. Let's go to 13. Let's jump to the story of Samson and it's about four chapters long and it starts with an easily skip chapter, but we're not going to, because it's my favorite one, chapter 13, lucky 13 in Judges.
Hank Smith:	17:30	Chapter 13. I don't know if you guys have ever heard this, but it's breaking news. Guess how chapter 13 starts?
Dr. Lori Denning:	17:40	They were doing a really good job. Were they doing a good job?
Hank Smith:	17:42	The children of Israel
Dr. Lori Denning:	17:43	They're really obedient.
Hank Smith:	17:43	Were doing righteousness in this. Just kidding. The children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord. Shocking, I know.
Dr. Lori Denning:	17:54	Shocking. And again, if you read chapter two, you would know that it's all going to end poorly. Like it's spoiler alert. This isn't one where you're waiting to find out. You're like, ah. So we ended on Gideon and he was naughty and then there are some other people in here, his father and then Jephthah and they all do evil again. And then here we are. We're going to do something interesting with the story of Samson. It's the longest narrative he is definitely the main character, but I want to share some other things that I think will be helpful about this chapter that you might not have seen before, mostly because this is where my dissertation is. But I think some of it's really interesting to covenant people. There's some interesting insights here. But the first chapter is not one to be skipped and it's often skipped because it's about his mom and his dad.
	18:42	Now, his mom doesn't have a name. She's just called the woman of Manoah or wife, just like the woman of Lapidoth. Woman and wife is the same in Hebrew, so you have to take it in context. But I think they're going to keep calling her this for importance. She's anonymous, not because she's diminished, but because she is a type of someone that we can see in ourselves. Verse two of chapter 13 starts with, And there was a

certain man of Zorah, and he was from this tribe, and his name was Manoah. This is going to be Samson's dad, Manoah. Now he is named, but then it's the wife of Manoah because it's going to be the mom. So you think, oh, that's going to be the hero, because usually when the deliverer is announced, it starts that way. There was a person and they were from this tribe and their name was blah.

19:26 And you're like, Oh, it's the next person. That's not the next person. He's not a hero. It flips and it goes to, And the wife was barren and she had born no children. And you're like, Wait, what? We just took a left turn. Then an angel shows up and says to her, You are barren and you've had no children, but you shall conceive and bear a son. Now, Bible scholars, have you ever heard a story about a couple who was barren and could not have a child and an angel shows up and says, Hey, even though you're barren, you could have a child. Can you think of any such story in scripture?

Hank Smith: 20:04 That would be Abraham and Sarah.

Dr. Lori Denning: 20:07 Abraham and Sarah, very good. And then even the story Rebekah, they have a hard time having children and then they have two children. Even Rachel and Leah, Rachel can't have a son and says, You go have a son. And then there's another Hannah in the next book for Samuel is the second wife. She can't have a child and so she goes to the temple and then there's another one called the Shunamite Widow because she doesn't have a name that she comes and Elisha the prophet comes and tells her then John the Baptist and then Mary. This pattern is something that as scholars we call a type scene. It's a whole scene, a whole event that seems to be a pattern. If you've read a lot of the Old Testament, you'll see there are a lot of these where you're like, wait, didn't that story just happen?

20:51 They're a convention we would call them like a trope in movies where you're like, oh, it's a romcom or it's a drama. And the same elements happen. In this type scene, there are three main elements. A woman who is barren and a spiritual messenger comes to tell them and then they will have a special son. Those are the three steps. You look for what's called the tilt or the twist, Robert Alter, my spirit animal, calls it the tilt. So it's where it's interesting in the stories because if you told the same events exactly the same in the patterns, it doesn't really teach you anything. So it seems like the Lord is using these patterns in our lives to teach us something and he does it where it's different. It's a pattern that the Lord uses to teach us something about how he's going to work in their life.

	21:36	He shows up to what we think is going to be the deliverer, then we meet the mom. She's barren. We don't know anything about them being old. Then he comes and he speaks to her and then there's a lot of information about her and this baby and that's going to be the twist. Now, before I tell you what it is, we'll just do a little quiz. When we started this podcast, we talked about a chapter that had a theme about people who were part of the covenant and what were they going to do. We'll see if you can see what the parallel is between chapter two and chapter 13. John, give it to us. What did the Lord tell them that he would never do? I would never do in chapter two.
John Bytheway:	22:28	He would never break the covenant.
Dr. Lori Denning:	22:30	Okay, don't know if that's a clue, could be a clue. But then let's read what happens. Let's go to 13 and let's do three. We'll go three through five and it's going to be the story of this special son and we're looking for how that's similar to what John just said.
John Bytheway:	22:46	Okay. I'm still in NRSV and the angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her, although you are barren, having borne no children, you shall conceive and bear a son. Now be careful not to drink wine or strong drink or to eat anything unclean, for you shall conceive and bear a son. No razor is to come on his head for the boy shall be a Nazarite. To God from birth, it is he who shall begin to deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines.
Dr. Lori Denning:	23:18	Okay. Story's kind of the same as what we know. There's a woman who's barren. We don't know why, but they don't have a child. We know she has a husband so we don't know why they're barren, but then an angel shows up and says, You're going to have a special son. We're not surprised that this boy's going to be the deliverer, but we are surprised about something else. It says, Don't let him drink and don't shave his hair, no razor, because he will be a Nazarite. Now, that's not something we hear a ton about and he's one of the famous of a Nazarite. Do you guys know what it is? Anybody know what that is or where that comes from or anything about it?
John Bytheway:	23:54	It means one that's separated or consecrated. It's not Nazareth.
Dr. Lori Denning:	23:58	It's separated and consecrated for something. Excellent.
Hank Smith:	24:03	So you could take Nazarite vows for a specific period of time. It doesn't have to be your whole life. It can be, I'm going to take this vow for however long.

Dr. Lori Denning:	24:13	Men and women can do it and it's usually a special covenant that men or women take and they covenant to separate themselves for a certain period of time, like 30 days. They would vow to do a number of things. They wouldn't cut their hair. They wouldn't be near any alcohol or grape or even like raisins or anything like that. Then they wouldn't be around a dead thing. So they're going to be like priests that way, that they're not going to be near something dead. And then at the end of the vow, you would cut your hair and you would offer it on the altar. For those of you who are watching online, I don't know, this is super nerdy, but here's a nerdy fact. Do you remember the last time what my hair was like last time I was on the show? Two years ago?
John Bytheway:	24:55	You had a helmet on, I think.
Dr. Lori Denning:	24:57	I had a helmet, that is correct. Was it long or short? Do you remember?
Hank Smith:	25:00	It was short.
Dr. Lori Denning:	25:01	It was short. Yeah. I had short hair. I have been growing out my hair for two years since I've been writing my dissertation on Samson Cycle. Yeah. Except for my bangs because I couldn't pull it off. I didn't take a vow, but I have been growing it out. So that is why my hair is long because I mean, how often can you say that you grew your hair out like Samson?
Hank Smith:	25:18	Yeah. Right? You're really getting into this dissertation.
Dr. Lori Denning:	25:23	I am giving it my all my very hair, but that's what he's doing too. Now here's where I think this is important, not just because it's nerdy and cool, but the mother is also going to obey it while he's in the womb. Before she's even conceived him, she is going to live the Nazarite vow. She's never released from it either that we know of. What group of people in the book of Judges are set apart even before born are born under the covenant?
Hank Smith:	25:51	He's a symbol of the house of Israel.
Dr. Lori Denning:	25:53	That's right. He's Israel. He's us. We're Israel. Before we're even born, for most of us, or we've chosen, we are Israel. So he is a symbol, he's the super-covenant guy. The reason he's a Nazarite is because that idea, again, what John said, I will never break my covenant, but you will. What are we going to see him do? Break it. He's going to break every element. Every one of them, from what we can tell. If you're supposed to do these things, he does

all of them. And we all know the hair one because the show or the movies are like his famous thing. But he also gets around dead things. He's going to go to a lion and he's going to put honey in this lion's carcass and then he's even going to give it to his parents, which just kind of contaminates them for holiness.

26:38 Then he's going to go to a party. The party is actually called a drinking party. It doesn't show him drinking, but even going there potentially because it says not even wine skins or vinegar, like not even sour grapes or grape juice. He shouldn't even get close to this stuff. And then what does he do? Like, and then he's like, And you shouldn't marry the Philistines and what's the first thing he's going to do? Let's marry a Philistine. I mean, he's just terrible. But again, he's not Samson in the story in a way. He's Israel. He's us. You were supposed to be my special covenant people and you broke everything. And I love this one little aside just because I love the mom. She recognizes the angel right away. She's out by herself. She's out in a field. She's out working. So we met Gideon. He was out in a field and an angel showed up. Now, here's another person out in the field and an angel shows up and you're like, this is going to end like the Gideon story. And it is. John, do you have verse six?

John Bytheway: 27:38 Then the woman came and told her husband, A man of God came to me and his appearance was like that of an angel of God, most awe inspiring. I did not ask of him where he came from and he did not tell me his name.

Dr. Lori Denning: 27:53 That's it. Now something you lose, not in the Hebrew and a lot in the English is it sounds like very calm. Instead, it's going to do a thing that's called parataxis, and parataxis is when it doesn't conclude, it just keeps going, and, and, and. If you've ever met a toddler who's very excited about a story, they use parataxis. And he went here and then Santa came and then the party came and then the whatever. That's parataxis. So it's stumbling on each other and that's how she reads it. Let me read it. She has this angel come. Then she runs to tell Manoah. And she told her husband, A man of God came to me, and his appearance was like that of an angel and it was awe, and it was like awesome and I didn't ask his name and I didn't even ask him where he's from. And then he said to me, Oh, you're going to conceive and to not drink thing and not do this and he's going to be a Nazarite da, da, da. And you're like, Whoa, whoa, whoa. Whoa. Whoa, whoa.

Hank Smith: 28:46 Slow down, slow down.

Dr. Lori Denning:	28:48	It's very exciting. When you read it in King James and whatever, it separates them and then and but ... No, she's stumbling over her words. What it's showing us is a covenant woman who sees and recognizes that angel. She knows that this is who this is and it's only done contrasted by her husband. So let's read about him just so you see the difference. Verse eight. She runs and repeats the whole story. We're going to have a baby and he's going to be special. And I didn't even ask that angel. It was so cool. And then it's, And so, and it's going to slow down and we're going to meet Manoah, the husband. So let's read it. Verse eight.
John Bytheway:	29:29	Then Manoah entreated the Lord and said, Oh Lord, I pray. Let the man of God whom you sent come to us again and teach us what we are to do concerning the boy who will be born.
Dr. Lori Denning:	29:39	You guys, she just saw an angel and he's like, I better pray about that. God, did you tell us about a baby? Okay. And you're like, All right, maybe not bad. I guess that's okay. And then the next verse, God listened to Manoah and the angel comes again to whom?
John Bytheway:	29:57	The woman.
Dr. Lori Denning:	29:58	The woman. And where is she again?
John Bytheway:	30:01	In the field.
Dr. Lori Denning:	30:03	Working. Where's he? No idea. You're going to see this irony that she's the one that sees and recognizes the angel. She's this one that is active and breathless and he's the one like, we better pray about that. And then he says, What should we do? And the angel shows up and says, back to the woman who gets it and says, your husband isn't even there. So she runs and gets her husband. And then she says, The man who came to me the other day, he's appeared and Manoah got up and he follows his wife and they go out. And what does he say? Are you the man? Yes. He says, Yeah, I'm the man. She didn't ask who you are. She knew immediately it was an angel, a man of God, a messenger. He's like, Are you the guy? The guy he'd been praying for.
	30:50	The guy she said was the angel. So she goes, Hey, come with me. Are you the man? I am. Manoah says, When the stuff you promised us come true, what are we supposed to do with him again? You can almost hear the angel sigh. Well, the same thing, listen to what your woman said, and then goes through the list of the Nazarite vow. Then Manoah says, Well, maybe we can

make a meal for you. And the angel's like, Well, I can't eat that food. We're going to do it anyway. And Manoah's just the slowest dude ever. By the way, Samson takes after his dad, he's very slow. So he goes and he makes it and then the angel, I can't eat your food. And then it goes up into flames and the angel goes up and the Manoah says, Oh no, that was an angel.

31:40 We might die. And the wife's like, You silly goose, we would've died, he wouldn't have asked us. Forget it. Forget it. I can't even help you. The end. That's my version of the woman of Manoah. That's right. Yeah. But remember, it's about covenant Israel. She recognizes and they use a lot of sensory terms, right? She sees and she hears. She sees that it's the angel. She hears his message and Manoah doesn't and her voice is active. His name also comes from the word Noah, if you know that term and it means rest or idleness. I call him Mr. Lazybones. So there was a man and his name was Mr. Lazybones and he's never in the field working and he's slow to figure it out and he doesn't recognize the spiritual messenger and he doesn't hear the message and he has to be repeated over and over again.

32:37 He's covenant Israel or us at times. We don't always get it and then here comes the wife. Oh, wow. I've had the spiritual experience. And he's like, That's interesting. She's like excited and stumbling and he's like, No, what do you think we should do with the boy? All the stuff that I just told you, all the stuff you just told me. So like the Nazarite stuff, I wonder, that's a really good idea. It's a beautiful story about the covenant all in one. It's a story about a person who hears doing their daily work and steps up when the Lord is in their life, a person who gets the call and runs to action. She is one of the unsung heroes of scripture. This woman has an angel come to her, she recognizes and she lives as a Nazarite as well. Pretty cool.

33:28 It's a great story. One thing that scripture does is it doesn't always use anonymity being anonymous as diminishing. Instead, what it does is it allows them to be universal or we can see ourselves in them. Anonymity doesn't mean that they're less. Oh, this is a woman we don't name them. It means we can see ourselves in them, right? It's not the guy in my ward that we all know and then we discount it because he's a guy we know. It's like, Wait a minute, that could be me, or she could be a type of a faithful saint, men and women. Just be really cautious when we say, Well, the women aren't named as much because a lot of the men aren't named in this story either. They use it as a tool so we can see ourselves in the story.

Hank Smith:	34:14	You told it so well. Manoah's like, Wait, what? We could have died.
Dr. Lori Denning:	34:22	We could have died. I can just see her saying, I don't even know what I'm supposed to do with him.
Hank Smith:	34:28	If the Lord was pleased to kill us, he would not have had this entire conversation with us.
Dr. Lori Denning:	34:34	Why would he say we're having a baby and do all this if he was going to kill us?
John Bytheway:	34:37	I don't know.
Hank Smith:	34:39	We shall surely die.
Dr. Lori Denning:	34:41	For the Israelites, it's kind of a condemnation. We don't even see the Lord when he's standing or his messenger sometimes when he's standing right in front of us. Even when miraculous things have happened, what other things do you need? I've already done all this stuff. And yeah, maybe that's us sometimes too, right?
Hank Smith:	34:59	Yeah. Lori, I don't want to move you ahead here, but you listed all these stories, these type, what'd you call them?
Dr. Lori Denning:	35:09	Type scene.
Hank Smith:	35:11	I noticed that out of these, there's someone who is not having a baby, the angel says you're going to have a baby, this'll be his name. They almost always turn out to be incredible people except for this one. Is this a what could've been type of story? Could've been a John the Baptist, a Jesus, an Isaac?
Dr. Lori Denning:	35:33	Yeah, he was supposed to be deliverer and he's the last judge. So he was supposed to be the last judge of his people, yet you know he's going to fail. In the cycle, they tend to be oppressed and then they pray or they cry out. There's no crying out. He also doesn't seem to ever pray the only time he prays twice in the story. Once because he's so thirsty, he might die. Thanks. So it's all about me. Then the next, if you know the story, he's going to be blinded and then he's going to be chained to the pillars next to him at the temple of Dagon, the Philistine God. The only time he prays to God is for vengeance on his eyes. Give me back my strength so I can kill all these people because of what they did to me. He's that covenant person who could have had everything, but he doesn't, he seems to be a tale of the

special covenant sons and daughters who could have had the Lord in their life and at any time could have turned and repented, yet didn't.

36:41 And remember, it's a cautionary tale. It does say that the spirit of the Lord came upon him a number of times. He's going to marry a Philistine woman. I want to just call out one thing about her before we go to the Delilah story. Let's go to the next chapter and I just want to call out something that I think our viewers will really hear as covenant people. Let's go to 14:2. Now we're going to be introduced to special son. The next chapter, you turn the page, now it's adult Samson. We're finally introduced to this deliverer. It's Samson. His name means sunny. It means like Shimshon means sunny. Delilah's name sounds like Lila, which means darkness. Now you're meeting sunny. We'll call him Samson. And then verse 14, verse two, and let's hear the first words. Now, let me tell you another literary trick. We don't always learn a lot about the backstory of characters.

37:30 Now we just did with Samson, but for a lot of them, we don't know that much about them. I've said if they describe anything about their physical characteristics important to the story, that is true. And his story is he's going to be very strong. But here's another thing that you can learn about the backstory. There isn't a lot of backstory, but one of them is the first spoken words by a character often reveal their inner nature. The first spoken words by a character in the Old Testament can often be their inner character. They reveal who they really are. So these are going to be Samson's first words. All right. John, do you have it? 14:2.

John Bytheway: 38:05 Yeah. 14:2. Then he came up and told his father and mother, I saw a Philistine woman at Timnath. Now get her for me as my wife.

Dr. Lori Denning: 38:15 Hmm, so delightful. He says, I saw a Philistine woman. Philistines, covenant people, non-covenant people?

Hank Smith: 38:24 Non-covenant.

Dr. Lori Denning: 38:25 Non-covenant people. And you'll remember that with David and Goliath. There's the Philistines. They're the ultimate bad guys. The Philistines bad guys. So if he's going to be the special covenant son and the very first thing he says is, I can't wait to get married, and will you go get that Philistine wife for me? Is he being very true to the covenant?

Hank Smith:	38:48	He does not care about the covenant at all.
Dr. Lori Denning:	38:50	Yeah, he doesn't at all. In fact, he's aligning himself. He's marrying. Now, he uses two verbs here that you might not catch. In the NRSV, it translates one of them. I would translate it differently. I saw ... Now it's called taking a wife. So he says, I saw and I took. Now that's what we call a motif for a pattern that runs throughout scripture. It's used a number of other times. David sees and takes Bathsheba. One of his sons sees and takes the spoils. Instead of waiting for the Lord to give us things, we see it and we take it. Not only is the first thing I want a wife of the Philistines, but I saw it and I want you to take it. Like, how's that going to work out? As you can guess, not very well. They end up burning her to death. So not great.
	39:48	The first thing we're learning about this covenant son is that he's fairly far removed from his covenant obedience. I saw I took, and you're like, Oh, no. And I want to take what? A Philistine wife. I want to marry outside the covenant. And his parents show back up here and they're like, Are you sure? Are you sure you want to do that? I always think of him as kinda oogabooga talker, like, rah, rah, I just want it. Give it to me. He's kind of a big dumb guy. He's like, Yeah, get her for me because she pleases me. Then it has this little aside, but his father and his mother didn't know it was from the Lord for she was seeking a pretext to act against the Philistines. Anytime you get a narrative aside like that, Mormon does it all the time in the Book of Mormon, but you know, it doesn't happen very much in the Old Testament.
	40:32	It happens because it's weird. It's telling you that the covenant son should not be asking for it. This is bad. If you were reading this as an ancient person, you'd be like, What, what? Did he just ask for a Philistine wife? And they're like, Yeah, we know. That's really terrible. It's an aside and it was really terrible, but God's going to work it out so just hold on. And you're like, Okay, because that seems pretty bad. And he's a Nazarite and you're like, I know, I know. It's bad. Just hold on. And then he goes on and then it doesn't end well with the wife. He leaves her, he poses a stupid riddle to his friends, it's not even a riddle. He kills a lion. Then he comes and he poses a riddle to the Philistines. Hey, if you can tell me what the riddle is, I'll get you 13 sets of armor, 13 expensive pairs of clothing.
	41:19	They're like, Okay, I guess. And he goes, If not, I'll kill you. And they're like, I guess we're playing this game. So, fun game, fun wedding party game. Yeah? And so he comes and he says, you've probably seen this. It's a little poem that he says, Out of

the eater came something to eat and out of the strong came something sweet. Now remember, he kills a lion and then when he walks back through town, he sees that bees have made a hive in there and so there's honey. Out of the eater, a lion's an eater, or it may come something to eat, honey, but out of the strong, you know, the lion saying something sweet. It's not really a riddle. Like you would have to know that there was a lion on the road that he killed. They don't, they don't get it.

42:01 So they go to his wife, tell us what it is or we'll burn you with fire. This is serious. So she is panicked. No matter what she answers, she's in trouble. The man who's supposed to protect her, her husband is a threat. If she doesn't tell, her people will kill her. So this poor woman. She's like, You don't love me, tell me the answer. Finally, she, we say it's nagging, but I think it's like survival. She says, Okay, she wept for seven days. He finally tells her. Then, Hey, do you know the poem? And they're like, Yeah, it's because you slept with my wife. So they burn her anyway. The end. Then he goes to a prostitute, good work and there's no speaking. This is just I've crossed over and chooses wrongly and then tears down the gates and runs off with them. So he's violent, it's aggressive, there's no conversation, there's nothing.

42:57 He's just this action guy, but not in a good way. So he goes to a prostitute. He goes from being covenant son on the border to completely gone at this point. Now something's going to happen. When we turn to this second half of this chapter where he goes to Delilah, he's already fairly corrupt. Delilah doesn't corrupt him. She just shows what's already happened. It doesn't ever say Delilah's a Philistine, but the Philistines do pay her a large amount of money to say, find out what his secret is. Why is he so strong? Delilah's story's probably the most famous of all stories in the book of Judges. It's usually told like she's bewitching him or beguiling him or seducing him, but you've already seen he was already there. Let's go to the story. I want to point out just a couple of things. It starts in verse four. It's something interesting the verb is going to change, how it describes what he does with this woman. So John, do you have verse four?

John Bytheway: 43:55 Yeah. After this, he fell in love with a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.

Dr. Lori Denning: 44:02 He fell in love with a woman. Now, love typically in the Old Testament doesn't mean passionate, romantic love, oh, if it did. But there is a commandment that uses this word. You might have heard it because I believe it's one of the main

commandments. You shall love the Lord your God. What's love typically associated with? Covenant. What's the theme of this book? Covenant. I will never break my covenant. What is he doing? I fell in love. I gave my allegiance my love to someone else. She is from a special place, the Valley of Sorek. Well, that's like right downtown Philistineville. He's now on the border, Timnah. He's crossed over and her name was Darkness. Hmm. I wonder how this story's going to end up. He's going to be blind and in darkness. Because he fell in love. He's completely gone by the time he gets there.

45:02 He gives his love to her. Don't think this is a romantic story. This is a covenant failure story. So they say, Find out what his strength is. And then there are these four instances where he lays in her lap and the Philistines are in the room, by the way. They're right there. Like he knows exactly what's going on. They say, Subdue him and we'll give you a gazillion dollars. She says, You know, tell me your strength. And then he goes through and he says, You know, if they do this thing with bow strings, I'll be weak. And then the Philistines brought her the bow strings and they tied him up. And then I love this. This is where it says they're there. And the men were in wait in the inner chamber. And they're like, Okay, we're here. And then she says, The Philistines are upon you, Samson.

45:48 And he goes... And he tears through them. Now he's going to do it three more times and it's going to get closer and closer to the truth. So the first time it's bow strings. The second time, it's new rope. The third time weave my hair. Okay. We're getting close to the secret. The secret was his hair can't be cut. Now, who had the secret about his hair? Do you remember who was told about his hair?

Hank Smith: 46:17 His mom.

Dr. Lori Denning: 46:17 It was his mom. The only people that know the secret covenant are the mothers. We don't hear when he hears it, but he gives it to another woman. He's giving his love, his allegiance, his covenant. The covenant's secret is never spoken to Manoah. And in fact, it's only spoken to the mom because you're supposed to remember it. Then he finally says, Well, it's my hair, but it's tied. And they're like, Okay, no, version three. And then finally in four, the fourth time, It's my hair. I've never had my hair shaven. That's the Nazarite covenant. Well, she has a man shave him. She doesn't even do it. Remember the mothering theme that we've seen? It's like an anti-mother. His head is on her lap. She shaves him. They're going to blind him.

He becomes weak, and then it says, The spirit of the Lord left him and he did not know.

47:10 He doesn't even know that his strength has left. He becomes like a baby again. He's blind, bald, weak in a woman's lap. It's not the mother of Israel. It's the Delilah, the anti-mother. He becomes trapped. Then I think that line where it says that he didn't know. Verse 20. She says the last time the Philistines are upon you Samson. When he awoke from his sleep, he thought, I will go out as the other times and shake myself free. But he did not know that the Lord had left him. That's the cautionary tale. Don't give up the covenant because then the Lord, and you don't even know, he doesn't even recognize that he's given it up. That's where they seize him, they gouge out his eyes and then they bring him in shackles and he becomes just a millstone. Then of course it grows back and that's where he is going to go to the party.

48:12 His hair's grown back. He's still blind and he asks the boy that's like walking him along because he's blind. Well, chain me to the pillars. So they chain his hands out to the pillars. And then this is where he prays one of the only times. Lord, remember me and strengthen me with this one act of revenge that I may pay back the Philistines for my eyes. He's not praying for his people. He's not praying for repentance. He tears it down and kills them all, which does help his people because the enemies are defeated, but not because he cared about his people. See all the elements of your parents were there, you were a special child, you had the covenant, you had the spirit of the Lord, you had your special strength. You just gave it away first. It was the dead thing. Then you were at the alcoholic party. Then you did all the covenants that you were given you walked away from. Then you didn't even care in the end. You didn't even know that the spirit of the Lord had left you. You're so far removed. It's a terrible cautionary tale to us as covenant people that the Lord is saying, You are my covenant people. But John, do you remember the first thing the Lord taught us in chapter two?

John Bytheway: 49:28 Yeah, I do. But I will never break my covenant with you.

Dr. Lori Denning: 49:34 Yeah. We can always return. We can always come back. He's waiting for us to extend his hand to come back. There's one last line in the whole book of Judges that sums it up. It doesn't say he's ever redeemed. He does put him in Hebrews 11 in the hall of heroes, but I think it's because the Lord keeps using these people, keeps using them even though they're weak rather than they did such a good job. Let's go to the very last verse though,

		and this is where it ends very sadly on a very strong and cautionary tale. It's the last verse Judges 21:25.
John Bytheway:	50:12	Judges 21:25. In those days, there was no king in Israel. All the people did what was right in their own eyes.
Dr. Lori Denning:	50:21	Who's the true king they should be following? They were doing whatever they wanted to do. It ends on that, and then you turn the page, you go, well, that was very sad. That was terrible.
Hank Smith:	50:32	It's a Shakespearian tragedy.
Dr. Lori Denning:	50:35	Yeah, womp, womp. But we're covenant people and it isn't the wars that we fight. It's the snares. It's the altars that we don't tear down in our lives. The Lord's like, I will never break my covenant. You can always come back. I am your king. You can follow me, and none of these things need to happen. That's, I think, the message of Judges. The Lord will deliver his people. The end.
Hank Smith:	51:00	I can tell when I've had a good day is that my hand is tired from writing. I have so many notes. I didn't have a lot of notes in Judges before this.
John Bytheway:	51:12	Yeah, me too. I wrote a lot of new things.
Dr. Lori Denning:	51:14	Ah, you guys are cute.
John Bytheway:	51:16	But it's kind of sad, yeah. What do we do with it?
Dr. Lori Denning:	51:21	We learn from it. And I think you can, I love that each of the Judges, even Samson at times, he has this great strength and this powerful parents. The Spirit is still with him at times, that there's still hope that they can return and there are times when the Lord steps in and saves them. The Lord is telling us, I'm right there all along. Just need to turn back to me. So it doesn't need to end this way. There's a lot of hope even though this book doesn't seem like it. You have to tear down the altars, the stumbling blocks in your life. You cannot just step into these snares. You cannot invite this stuff in your life and then hope it works out. It won't. And then if we're not worried about that, it's trying to tell us you should be. But there's hope. The Lord can be your king and he will never break his covenant. It's just hope laced with a lot of sadness. A lot of caution. And again, the last chapters are very gruesome and definitely not for children. There's an assault and some different things. It's not one that you're going to want to read 17 through 19 with your family

		unless you read it first adults. So please know that it just goes worse from here, but it is not a tale for children.
Hank Smith:	52:37	I like warning signs. I've been in many places where I've seen a warning sign and looked and thought, no, I'm not going to go over there. If you ever see one of those electric fences, the ones that can really like kill you, there's a warning sign like every six feet. That's like the book of Judges. Don't do this. Don't go this way.
Dr. Lori Denning:	52:57	I've seen it at the beach as well where it's like, no swimming. There's a rip tide and then the people will be swimming and you're like, hmm. Or I've seen it on mountain sides where it's like, don't ski down this cliff. There's always someone that they were towed out to sea or they went off the cliff and you're like, why did they go past that sign?
Hank Smith:	53:17	The book of Judges can be a big warning sign, yeah. Your story does not have to end this way. You can choose.
Dr. Lori Denning:	53:24	I will raise up a prophet and you can ask the prophet to go with you and you can have friends and family that will support you and you can always turn back. There is hope. He does have a path in here for us. It's just one that he wants to be sure we're really clear as covenant people that we follow him.
John Bytheway:	53:42	Did you hear how she ended with, we follow him? Did you catch that? That was good. Good job, Lori.
Hank Smith:	53:47	Oh, by the way, Lori, almost every woman in this book is good.
Dr. Lori Denning:	53:52	There are some good ones. I think the women are trying to be a little bit of narrative markers where they can choose to follow the covenant or not. There are about 22 women, 22 named and unnamed women in the book. Caleb's daughter is in it right in the beginning and then woman of Manoah, Deborah, Jael. So a lot of great covenant people and excellent heroines that we sometimes miss. But there's some good guys in there too, but there's some great women in this story.
Hank Smith:	54:23	John Bytheway, if you want to have a fun time in the scriptures, you read them with Lori Denning. You learn and you laugh.
Dr. Lori Denning:	54:30	Wait, I got to put the hat back on.
Hank Smith:	54:32	Yeah.

John Bytheway:	54:32	Yeah. Oh, yeah. Put the helmet of feathers back on. She said something at the beginning that I think she was joking. Who knows more about the book of Judges than this guest we've had today?
Dr. Lori Denning:	54:44	There are two of us now and I'm one of them. Not many people have studied this book.
John Bytheway:	54:49	Yeah.
Dr. Lori Denning:	54:49	I don't know why, but-
John Bytheway:	54:50	You have a PhD in Judges.
Dr. Lori Denning:	54:52	Just the back half of Judges.
Hank Smith:	54:55	One of my favorite things as a young seminary teacher was when someone like Lori would come and teach us and we would spend hours and I would walk away with these kind of notes in my scriptures where there's just no way I could know all this, but to have someone guide you through it and to do it in such a fun way, Lori, we're grateful for your talents. Thank you for being with us today.
Dr. Lori Denning:	55:18	Well, thanks. It is a challenge to make this a spiritual story, but I'm grateful that the Lord cautions us and loves us and welcomes us back with open arms. When you need a fleece, he's there to give it. When you need a mother in Israel, she's there. You need a Joash who will step in the gap. They're there too. And it's got some powerful messages of the Lord's love for us and our covenant strength that we can do if we just tap into it. But I get it. It's kind of a terrible story. So I get it if it's not your favorite book. It's not typically everyone's favorite book, but it could be.
Hank Smith:	55:48	But pay attention to the caution signs. They're very important. They can keep you safe. With that, we want to thank Dr. Lori Denning for being with us today. We want to thank our executive producer, Shannon Sorensen, our sponsors, David and Verla Sorensen and every episode we remember our founder, Steve Sorensen. We hope you'll join us next week. We're into the book of Ruth on followHIM. As a thank you to our wonderful listeners, we'd love to gift you the digital version of our book, Finding Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. It offers short, meaningful insights drawn from our past Old Testament episodes. Visit followhim.co, that's followhim.co to download your free copy today and you'll also find the link to purchase the

print edition. Thank you for being part of our followHIM family. Of course, none of this could happen without our incredible production crew. David Perry, Lisa Spice, Will Stoughton, Krystal Roberts, Ariel Cuadra, Heather Barlow, Amelia Kabwika, Sydney Smith, and Annabelle Sorensen.



Hank Smith:	00:03	Welcome to followHIM Favorites. John and I share a single story to go with each week's Come, Follow Me lesson. John, we are in the book of Judges this week and you know the story of Gideon where Gideon is obviously very scared to go out to battle, plus the Lord is taking away his numbers. Nope, that's too many soldiers. I want less. You want less? You want us to fight with less. Well, he asked the Lord for this fleece like this animal skin that the Lord will get it wet or keep it dry just to give him some reassurance that he's doing the right thing. And the Lord does it for him. Well, I have a story for you that seems kind of like a fleece of reassurance. This was 20 years ago, John, when Elder David A. Bednar stood up for his very first talk in general conference.
	00:56	Now, Elder Bednar was very young when he was called. He was just 52 years old when he was called. And I know there's some people out there going, Oh, that's pretty old. No, that is, that is not old.
John Bytheway:	01:05	No, it isn't.
Hank Smith:	01:07	In fact, I think Elder Bednar had a senior in high school still when he was called to be an apostle.
John Bytheway:	01:11	No kidding.
Hank Smith:	01:12	Can you imagine? You go to seminary and your dad's on the wall. So, he stands up to give his very first full talk and he says six months ago, this is April of 2005, and he's referring to six months ago when he was called to be an apostle. Six months ago, President Hinckley called me into his office and told me I was going to be an apostle. You'll get released when you die. And think about that. Think about how long Elder Bednar, let's say he lives to be the age of President Nelson.
	01:43	That's a, that's almost a 50 year calling. You'll be released when you die and we don't even know if that's the case. Can you

		imagine getting that calling, John? And then, oh, by the way, you're speaking to the entire church on Sunday. He stands up, he says to bear his testimony. He doesn't have a full talk prepared. He's going to bear his testimony. President Uchtdorf, who had been called that exact same time, had just born his testimony and now it was Elder Bednar's turn. But before he would get up, there was going to be a rest hymn. Elder Bednar says, If I had been invited to suggest a hymn for that particular session of conference just before, right, he speaks for the very first time of what is going to be many, many times speaking in that conference center, he said I would have selected my favorite hymn, Redeemer of Israel. Now, John, obviously the music is chosen months before, so you can't really run up to the organist and do you take requests, right?
	02:48	So he said, "Imagine how I felt when President Monson said the choir and congregation will now stand and sing hymn number six, Redeemer of Israel." Now, some people would say that was a coincidence, but he said, "Tears filled my eyes as I stood with you to sing that stirring hymn of the restoration. A loving Savior was sending me," Elder Bednar says, "a most personal and timely message of comfort and reassurance through a hymn selected weeks previously." He says, "I testify that the tender mercies of the Lord are real," or the fleeces, you might say from Gideon of the Lord are real. They do not occur randomly or merely by coincidence. Often the Lord's timing of his tender mercies, his fleeces, helps us both discern and acknowledge them.
John Bytheway:	03:45	Wow.
Hank Smith:	03:46	Some people might say, John, Oh, that was just a nice coincidence. You know, there's 300 something hymns in the hymn book. They have to choose one. They just happen to choose his favorite.
John Bytheway:	03:54	Oh, I love it.
Hank Smith:	03:55	Or perhaps it's the Lord sending him a gentle message of reassurance. It's not going to take away the difficulty. He still has obviously a long career of apostleship ahead of him.
John Bytheway:	04:09	But that thing we've heard in the Old Testament a lot, the Lord was with him. The Lord was with Joseph. The Lord is saying, I'm with you, David. Elder Bednar, I'm with you.

Hank Smith:	04:17	I'm with you. What a great tie there, John. We hope you'll join us on our full podcast. It's called followHIM. You can get it wherever you get your podcast. We are with Dr. Lori Denning this week. And if you want to have fun and learn a lot, you come join us over there. Then come back here next week. We'll do another followHIM Favorites.