

Judges & Ruth

God's *Faithfulness* Remains

women's | BIBLE STUDY

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LESSON *Four*

Deborah and Barak



Around 100 years passed, and Deborah stepped on the scene. God used her to speak to Barak, reminding him of the Lord's call to lead Israel's troops against the Canaanites. Though Barak listened, and Israel fought a good fight, ultimately another woman took the life of the Canaanite king. This section ends with a long song of praise for God's victory over Israel's enemies.

PROPHETESS

Deborah is called a prophetess. To learn more about women with this role in Scripture, read Exodus 15:20-21 (Miriam), 2 Chronicles 34:22-28 (Huldah), Isaiah 8:3 (Isaiah's wife), Luke 2:36-38 (Anna), and Acts 21:8-9 (Philip's daughters).

IRON CHARIOTS

The iron chariots mentioned in Judges 4:3 were used to pursue and overtake enemies. Often, they were used in open plains and were very effective at killing people. It was technology that Israel did not yet have, so it is no wonder they were afraid.²²

Read Judges 4-5 before answering the following questions.

1. Take some time to remind yourself of the good news of Jesus Christ:

Acts 13:38-39

2 Timothy 1:8-9

1 Peter 3:18

How do these verses assure you that God's faithfulness remains?

Read Judges 4.

2. Israel was under the harsh rule of Jabin for 20 years. Imagine life under a cruel enemy for that long. How would you feel if your actions were the cause of this oppression?

How would you feel toward God?

3. From verses 4-10, use the chart below to note what you discover about Deborah and Barak:

DEBORAH	BARAK

Now, pull the information together. In one sentence, who is Deborah?
In one sentence, who is Barak?

4. In verse 8, Barak says to Deborah, “If you will go with me, I will go but if you will not go with me, I will not go.” Consider the following reasons for Barak’s behavior:
- He was a passive male leader, afraid to fight the enemy alone.
 - He saw the hand of God on Deborah, valued her wisdom, and therefore, wanted her to go.

Which interpretation do you think is more likely and why? (Use verse references to support your answer.)

5. Imagine for a moment that you were a news reporter covering this story. How would you describe the highlights of the battle that unfold in verses 12-22?

ROLE

To better understand the role of a prophet/prophetess, read Exodus 4:15-16 and Deuteronomy 18:18-22.

JUDGES 4:14

Judges 4:14 is a rhetorical question indicating that the Lord has absolutely gone before them.²³

GOD'S ENEMIES

Remember: "Jabin, Sisera, and the Canaanite kings were God's enemies, not just the oppressors of his people."²⁴

- Who is Jael and how did she help the Israelites? Is this what you expected from Deborah's prediction in Judges 4:9? Explain.
- What leadership qualities do you see in Deborah? How did she point Barak, and ultimately Israel, toward God's purposes?

Now think: Who are the godly female leaders in your life? What leadership qualities do you see in them?

Read Judges 5.

- Judges 5 is Hebrew poetry. Use the chart below to help you understand the main points of this Song of Praise. Fill in the missing information:

VERSES	WHAT IS THE MAIN POINT?
1-8	Israel's need for help
9-13	
14-18	The tribes who responded... and those who didn't.
19-23	
24-31	

POETRY

To better understand the poetry in Judges 5, read this chapter in the Message Bible. This is a paraphrased version of the Bible accessible any-time for free at biblegateway.com.

9. Israel experienced victory and then immediately praised God. For what things have you forgotten to praise God? Why do you think this is? Spend time reflecting. If you were to write a song of praise to God, what would you include? Write your thoughts below.
10. Though humans are at work in this story, to whom is the credit ultimately given? Write down the verses in Judges 5 that helped you come to your answer. (See Appendix: Victory.)
11. God asked Deborah and Barak to lead the nation of Israel. Though they did not do it perfectly, both listened to God's call. Where might God be calling you to lead? What is holding you back? (Ex: specific fears, insecurities, etc.)

Now, pray about how you can take steps toward responding.

“God ultimately raises up leaders for one primary reason: His glory. He shows His power in our weakness. He demonstrates His wisdom in our folly. We are all like a turtle on a fence post. If you walk by a fence post and see a turtle on top of it, then you know someone came by and put it there. In the same way, God gives leadership according to His good pleasure.”

– Matt Chandler ²⁶

Jael

In Judges 5:24-27, Jael is praised for taking Jabin's life. While it is likely that she acted outside of a concern for Israel, God still providentially uses her actions in His larger plan.²⁵

12. In what ways were Deborah and Barak successful deliverers of Israel?
Read the following verses and note how Jesus is the ultimate, perfect Judge and Deliverer of His people.

Matthew 25:31-32

John 5:21-24

Read a story on the next page of God's faithfulness as seen in the life of a Watermark member.

BIG IDEA

What is your biggest takeaway from this week's lesson?

Do Not Be Afraid

ANGELA PERRITT—*Founder & Director of Love God Greatly*

It was 1987. My mom had recently married my stepdad, and our new family needed a new beginning. Like those who had headed out west decades before us, we too were wanting a fresh start. So, from the farmlands of Indiana to the hills of Northern California, we drove. I remember that trip with my little brother and me in the backseat of our moving truck like it was yesterday. I too was needing a new start.

A few years ago, I traveled back to that same area of California with my husband and three daughters. My girls wanted to see where I lived when I was their age. After landing in San Francisco and driving to our hotel, the memories filled my mind. And the thought hit me out of nowhere: *look at how I have redeemed you, Angela. You had no idea what I was doing in your life at that time you and your family moved here, but I did. You felt broken and disregarded, but I took that pain and used it for good. Even at that tender age, I was preparing you... I was going before you.*

“Don’t be afraid, for I will protect you. I call you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I am with you; when you pass through the streams, they will not overwhelm you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not harm you. For I am the Lord your God.” - Isaiah 43:1-3 (NET)

What God began in my life almost thirty years ago, I was able to look back and say, “I see it now, Lord. I see your goodness. I see your loving kindness, redemption and preparation.” There on the highway, as we headed to the town where I once lived, I began to share with my girls the beauty of God’s redemption as tears filled my eyes. There is a blessing in growing older and seeing God’s hand in your life when you couldn’t see it in your younger years. **Storms come, and waters rise, but by God’s goodness, I was not swept away.** What Satan meant for harm, God turned and used for good.

Little did I know back then what God would do with my life. How He would use a broken girl and place dreams in her heart that He would one day fulfill. He is good and the work He does in our lives is good, too.

Reading through Judges chapters 4 & 5, we don’t know Deborah’s past but what I’ve learned over the years is that some of the best leaders are those who have weathered tough storms in life with God by their side. Through the years they have seen God’s faithfulness and know without a shadow of a doubt that He goes before them. I love Deborah’s story because it reminds me that God leads powerfully through those who are devoted to Him. He promises to go before us and prepares us for the journey, and, in some cases, battle, even when we don’t realize it.

“Then Deborah said to Barak, ‘Go! This is the day the Lord has given Sisera into your hands. Has not the Lord gone ahead of you?’” Judges 4:14 (NIV)

And the same question Deborah asked Barak, God gently asks me each time I worry or hesitate to follow where He is leading, “Have I not gone ahead of you your whole life, Angela?” And I look back over the years, from where I started to where I am now, leading women around the world, helping them learn to love God greatly with their lives...one woman, one Bible study and one translation at a time and I have to answer, “Yes, Lord. You have led me each step of the way.” It is because of His faithfulness through the years that I too, can head into battles knowing He has gone before me.

I don’t know where God has you right now but let me encourage you with this: **He sees you, and He loves you. And like He says in Isaiah 43:2, when you pass through the waters, He will be with you.** Don’t fear what might lie ahead; God is with you. God is writing His amazing story of redemption and you are included in that story. You might not see it now, just like I didn’t, just like Deborah didn’t. Trust God. He is working on your behalf; He will redeem your past and prepare you for your future...He goes before you and you do not need to be afraid.

Notes