

Meet the Judges (The Book of Judges)

Week 3: Deborah - the unlikely leader

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing and sharing together.

Which of the following people do you believe to be the most trustworthy?

Yourself, your best friend, your family, doctors, police officers, church leaders, bank managers, news reporters, etc.

Discuss your answers and the reasons for them.

WORSHIP

Give thanks for times when you have put your trust in God and he has been there for you.

WORD

In this unmistakably patriarchal society, where men held every significant leadership role, Deborah emerged as a judge. All the people in the tribes she served submitted to her leadership. Without the example of Deborah, we might conclude that gender somehow disqualified women from leadership. But Deborah's leadership prevents us from jumping to this kind of conclusion. In a strongly patriarchal society, we expect men to function as leaders. But Deborah's leadership reminds us that what restrained more women from serving as leaders was not inherent in a woman's nature, but rather was inherent in those expectations that were deeply imbedded in society.

In Deborah's time the oppressor of the northern Israelite tribes was the king of Hazor. While Hazor had been destroyed a century earlier by Joshua (Joshua 11:1-11), the Canaanites had rebuilt the city and were once again the dominant local power. Sisera, King Jabin's military commander, commanded 900 chariots of iron. The Israelites' lack of iron technology until David's time is understood to be one of the reasons their enemies, who had mastered ironworking, dominated them.

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6. In what ways is it good to seek the help of others in obeying God's will?

7. What are we told about Jael and why do we think she betrayed Sisera and helped the Israelites? (vv11,17-22)

8. Why did Sisera assume he would be safe? (vv11,17-22)

Judges 5:4, 20-21 reveals that the chariots became stuck in the mud during a well-timed thunderstorm and the flood that followed. God saved the Israelites again!

9. Have you ever put your trust in people or things that have let you down? What were the consequences?

10. Compare the four leading characters in the story: Deborah, Barak, Jael and Sisera. What did they each trust in?



WHAT NEXT?

Our outer life is observable evidence of our inner life. The song that Deborah and Barak composed (Judges 5) gives us insights into Deborah's character. She was seen to be thoughtful and grateful. Her heart went out to the commanders (5:9). She recognised that the Zebulun and Naphtali sacrificed their lives in war (5:18). She was discerning and tender-hearted, having insight into Sisera's mother's thoughts and emotions (5:28-30).

What do your words and actions reveal about you and your character?

Action: Spend a few minutes each day over the next week reflecting on what you have said and done. What would God be pleased about and what would he want you to work on?

Final thought

Barak needed someone to supplement his faith in God. Many believers today need other Christians to inspire them and build them up in their faith. Others like Deborah are able to trust God and his Word. Perhaps most often, each of us has been like both. When we are like Deborah let us build up and strengthen others. But when we are struggling let us humbly accept support that we may have victory over our unbelief, as did Barak.