

Lesson 3: Deborah, Barak and Jael

Theme: God uses a variety of leader, with various skill sets, to bring about his purpose?

Scripture: Judges 4 & 5

ICEBREAKER: Have everyone in the group answer these questions

- Who is your favorite woman in the Bible and why? What makes her special to you?

REVIEW: Last week we saw how God uses the unexpected to deliver people in unexpected ways.

- How have you seen God use unexpected people, things, or burdens, in unexpected ways, to bring people back to him?
- With God working in all these unexpected ways, why are we so shocked each time it happens? Shouldn't we expect the unexpected with God?

THE CYCLE ENDS AND BEGINS AGAIN.

Read Judges 4:1

- How did the cycle end?
- How did it begin again?

Adapted from *Judges For You* pages 45-46.

The episode does not end with peace. It concludes with death. While the peace is real, it cannot last. For permanent restoration and unending peace, God's people need a leader who does not die. The problem with every human leader, however Spirit empowered, is that their leadership comes to an end. Judges remind us to look to the One who says, "I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive forever and ever." (Revelation 1:8.)

- How does knowing that all human leaders will eventually die, shape your perspective on human leadership? (in the church, in politics, in business, etc.)
- How does knowing Jesus is "alive forever" shape your perspective on God's work in our world?

THE VILLAINS:

Read Judge 4:2-3

- Who does God "sell" the Israelites to?
- What do we know about the two leaders?
- How do they treat the Israelites?
- How is it worse than the previous two cycles?

SERMON DISCUSSION:

This week's sermon was on the story of Deborah, Barak, and Jael nailed their role as judge and deliverer.

- What are some things you learned during this week's sermon?
- What are some questions you have or items you were confused about?
- What is your impression of Deborah, Barak, and Jael, based on the sermon?
- How did this week's sermon help you understand the cycle of sin and redemption in the people of Israel?
- What did you learn about the cycle of sin and redemption in your life?

DEBORAH:

Read Judges 4: 4-9

- How would you describe Deborah? What gifts and skills did she possess?
- How was she different than other Old Testament leaders and judges?
- How was Deborah fulfilling her role as a judge?
- Barak is the military leader, but unlike Othniel and Ehud, he is not a judge. What is your impression of Barak, and how does he compare to Deborah.

Read “**A Godly Ruler**” in *Judge For You*, Pages 53-54

- How does this section help you understand Deborah and her ruling of Israel?
- Keller writes, “Gods chosen leader does not simply rescue, but also rules.” How does Deborah live out this statement? Why is this an important distinction when we think of Godly leaders?
- “Deborah was in this sense the greatest pointer to Christ.” How does Deborah’s leadership help us better understand Jesus’s leadership in our lives and in this Kingdom.

SIDE NOTE: Woman in Leadership.

Keller is a PCA [Presbyterian Church of America] pastor, which limits woman’s roles in the church based on their interpretation of scripture. He does an excellent job explaining various understanding of woman leadership roles, I [Dave Reiss], personally disagree with his conclusions [Neither does our denomination, American Baptists). Yet, he also reminds us that we can disagree with grace and respect. He writes, “The church will never likely come to consensus about it. We must treat it as important, but not a cause for abrasive condemnation. WE want people with different views on this to be able to live together.” (Page 60)

I recommend reading the sections, “Deborah and Women’s Ministry” and “The New Testament and Women’s Ministry” (Pages 56-60) on your own.

BARAK:

Read Judges 4: 8-10, 12-16

- What is your impression of Barak?
- Why do you think he wanted Deborah to go with him? Do you think it was the right or wrong choice, why?
- How does Barak fulfill the role of the stereotypical Judge/military leader?
- Barak has a high level of respect for Deborah, her leadership, wisdom, and character. What does that say about Barak as a leader?

In *Judges for You*, read “**A Godly Rescuer**” starting with this final paragraph on page 55 (“On this reading) through the end of that section

- How does this reading help you better understand Barak?
- What three insights into Barak’s faith does this section address?
- How have you seen faith like Barak’s expressed in your life or those around you? [A faith that (1) listens to God. (2) shows courage, and (3) is humble.]
- How does Barak’s faith and leadership help us better understand Jesus?

JAEL

Read Judges 4: 11, 17-22 – *Note: This part of the story contains graphic violence.*

- Jael is not an Israelite. Who are her people, and what do we know about them?
- Why does Sisera feel confident hiding in her tent?
- How does she manipulate Sisera into letting down his guard?
- Why do you think she betrays Sisera?

In *Judges for You*, Read the first three paragraphs of “**Death by Tent Peg**” on page 61.

- What assumptions does Sisera make regarding his safety?
- What additional insight does this provide for you about Sisera and Jael?

WHO IS THE HERO?

- Which person do you relate to the most in this story, Deborah, Barak, or Jael? Why?
- What leadership characteristics do each of them bring to the story?
- How did God use them to bring freedom to this people?
- In this story God uses an unlikely team of people to bring about his plan. Is that different than the other judges stories? Why do you think that is?

Read Judges 4:23-24 and read the next two paragraphs in “**Death by Pent Peg**” on pages 61-62

- Who is the hero of this story? Why is that an important reminder to the Israelites and to us?
- The Bible continually reminds us that only God is our true rescuer. How does the Cycle of Judges remind us of that? Why is that important to remember?

PERSONAL REFLECTION:

Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-11

- Who are the spiritual leaders that helped lay the foundations in your life?
- Whether you believe it or not, God has used you in the lives of others. How do we help each other grow in faith? How can we be like Deborah, Barak, or Jael?
- Unfortunately, we tend to elevate certain human leaders, and what danger does that have on our faith?
- Jesus, our great rescuer, is our only foundation. What happens when we forget that? How is that similar to what the Israelites went through in the cycle of Judges?

Hebrews 12:1-3 Therefore, since we also have such a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every hindrance and the sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us, 2 keeping our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. For the joy that lay before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For consider him who endured such hostility from sinners against himself, so that you won't grow weary and give up.

Prayer Time: God has placed godly leaders in our lives, but they are not our rescuers. Spend time thanking God for the cloud of witnesses in your life that has helped you grow in faith. Confess how you many have elevated them more than you should have. Reflect (of consider) all that Jesus has done to rescue you. Thank Him and ask his to help you to run with endurance the race of faith God has for you.

HOMEWORK: Judges 5 retells the story of Judges 4, but as a song. Spend time this week reading through chapter 5 and compare it to what you learned in chapter 4. How does it provide deeper insight into The Cycle, the heroes, and God the Rescuer.