



## Unit .09

### Session .02

# The Wisdom of a Deliverer

### Scripture



## Judges 4:4-7,14-16; 5:1-5,9-11

**4** Deborah, a prophetess and the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time. **5** She would sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites went up to her to settle disputes. **6** She summoned Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, “Hasn’t the LORD, the God of Israel, commanded you: ‘Go, deploy the troops on Mount Tabor, and take with you ten thousand men from the Naphtalites and Zebulunites? **7** Then I will lure Sisera commander of Jabin’s army, his chariots, and his infantry at the Wadi Kishon to fight against you, and I will hand him over to you.” ... **14** Then Deborah said to Barak, “Go! This is the day the LORD has handed Sisera over to you. Hasn’t the LORD gone before you?” So Barak came down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand men following him. **15** The LORD threw Sisera, all his charioteers, and all his army into a panic before Barak’s assault. Sisera left his chariot and fled on foot. **16** Barak pursued the chariots and the army as far as Harosheth

of the Nations, and the whole army of Sisera fell by the sword; not a single man was left. ... **1** On that day Deborah and Barak son of Abinoam sang: **2** “When the leaders lead in Israel, when the people volunteer, blessed be the LORD. **3** Listen, kings! Pay attention, princes! I will sing to the LORD; I will sing praise to the LORD God of Israel. **4** LORD, when you came from Seir, when you marched from the fields of Edom, the earth trembled, the skies poured rain, and the clouds poured water. **5** The mountains melted before the LORD, even Sinai, before the LORD, the God of Israel.” ... **9** My heart is with the leaders of Israel, with the volunteers of the people. Blessed be the LORD! **10** You who ride on white donkeys, who sit on saddle blankets, and who travel on the road, give praise! **11** Let them tell the righteous acts of the LORD, the righteous deeds of his warriors in Israel, with the voices of the singers at the watering places. Then the LORD’s people went down to the city gates.”

## Intro Options

**Main Point:**  
**God equips His people with gifts to be used for His glory and for their good.**

### Option 1

In the fall of 2017, as deadly wildfires swept through California, Roland Hendel realized he and his family were in danger, so they packed to leave their home. As flames approached, he turned his attention to his eight goats and Great Pyrenees dog, Odin. Hendel didn't have time to load the goats into a trailer, and Odin gave him a look that said, "I'm not moving." So Hendel opened the gates allowing the goats and Odin to escape if needed. He then got into his car and fled with his family and other pets.

When Hendel returned the next day, he found that his entire property had been destroyed, including his home. Odin and the eight goats, however, were alive and well. Odin's pads were burned, his fur singed, and he was exhausted. Hendel deduced that Odin had led the goats to a clearing surrounded by some rocks where they were able to avoid the flames.

#### ▪ When have you witnessed or heard of an unexpected rescuer?

Not every rescuer looks like a Hollywood hero. While Hollywood loves the strong, bold hero, God often chooses a different way. The deliverers God often used throughout Scripture were anti-heroes whose unorthodox power came not from human strength but from the God they believed. And God still does the same today.

In Judges 4-5, we meet one of these unlikely heroes, a woman named Deborah. Deborah was a wise woman who demonstrated strong leadership skills, but these passages are not intended to introduce us to an amazing woman; they are given to us to reveal the strong hand of God working on behalf of His people.

### Option 2

#### ▪ Do you trust God? What is the relationship between how much you trust God and how faithful you are to God?

It's easy to say we trust God, but when life is hard it can be difficult to put our trust into practice. In the wake of current events such as riots, war, violence, and break-ups, life sometimes doesn't seem to make sense. It's hard to be faithful when everything around you screams "faith-less."

No matter how faithless you have been, God promises to remain faithful to you. When you follow up your sin with mistrust or fear of His rejection and abandonment, you continue in faithlessness. When you trust His promises to restore you and to walk with you, you show yourself faithful again.

# TEACHING PLAN

The Israelites were in distress once more. This time, it was at the hands of King Jabin of Canaan, who was subjugating God's people to his military commander, Sisera, and nine hundred chariots. Jabin treated the Israelites harshly for twenty years and they cried out to the Lord for deliverance.

Once again, God would answer the cries of His people as He had when He sent Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar. This time, God would provide a person of great wisdom and prophetic abilities, someone who seemed to be ideal to deliver God's people from Jabin. Except for one thing: this person was named Deborah. God was going to use a woman to help rescue His people, a quite unexpected twist in such a patriarchal society.

## Read Judges 4:4-7



Deborah was living in obedience, with boldness and confidence, in what God had called and gifted her to do, even if that calling was quite challenging. And because of this heart posture—faithful obedience to God no matter what—that Deborah was able to serve her people in another way: as a judge God would use to help rescue Israel from Jabin. God guided Deborah to summon Barak, whom God had appointed to lead His people in battle against Sisera's mighty forces. This would not have been an easy message for Deborah to deliver, but she obeyed God. Then when Barak balked at going alone, Deborah agreed to go with him. Deborah was willing to do whatever it took, whatever God called her to do, no matter what.

### ▪ What limits or conditions do we tend to put on our obedience to God? Why?

When Deborah summoned Barak, she reminded him of the plan God had given for defeating Sisera. God was giving Barak all he needed—the plans and the victory. God would lead Sisera where He wanted him to go and God would then hand him over to Barak and his Israelite soldiers. All Barak needed to do was trust God and obey His instructions. That was Deborah's message to him.

### ▪ When has God laid out a clear plan for you to follow? How did you respond?

Barak may have felt that God had put before him an impossible task in leading an inferior army against Sisera and his forces. The struggle was never whether God had the power; the struggle was whether or not His people would believe. And that is what Barak faced in this moment. Would he trust God and rest in His power, or would he turn away in fear and disobedience as God's people had done so often? We can imagine that Barak faced a crisis of faith. He had faltered some before, demanding that Deborah go with him, but now it was time to step forward in obedience. What would he do?

### ▪ How do you typically respond when you are facing what seem to be impossible odds?

## Read Judges 4:14-16



When Barak declared that he would only go to face Sisera in battle if Deborah went with him, he was demonstrating his frail humanity. Unlike Deborah, he was placing conditions on his obedience to God—"I will obey if..." Deborah agreed to Barak's condition.

# COMMENTARY

## Judges 4

**Main Point:**  
God equips His people with gifts to be used for His glory and for their good.

**4-7.** We are introduced to Deborah as a prophetess and a judge. As a prophetess, her primary role was to speak the word of the Lord to His people. This responsibility made Deborah rather unique; we know of only a few prophetesses in scripture: Miriam (Ex. 15:20), Huldah (2 Kings. 22:14), Anna (Luke. 2:36), and the daughters of Philip (Acts 21:8-9).

Deborah's role as a judge seems to be patterned after another prophet who had come before her: Moses. Just as Moses would meet with the Israelites to settle disputes (Ex. 18), Deborah would sit under a palm tree and help resolve the quarrels of her people. Once again, this role made Deborah somewhat unique.

However, Deborah's identity as both prophetess and judge set her apart even more so. Samuel is the only other person in Scripture to hold both the title of prophet and judge (1 Sam. 3:20; 7:15).

Fulfilling either of these roles required a person to submit fully to God. Prophets were often called on to tell God's people messages they didn't want to hear, such as messages of coming discipline because of their unfaithfulness. And judging between the disputes of the people was not much easier. Fulfilling both of these roles was even more challenging. Fulfilling both of these roles as a woman in a patriarchal society was still more challenging. And that is precisely what Deborah was doing when we meet her.

**14.** The hinge of this story hangs on verse 14 when it was asked, "Hasn't the Lord gone before you?" This was the place of confidence and hope for the people of God—the Lord had gone before them. Deborah and Barak and the people of God had faith in the Lord's words. He said they would be victorious. Because He is a faithful God, their faith in His victory was secure.

Faith is what leads us to be courageous when facing impossible odds. Faith is demonstrated by our belief and obedience, our trusting in God and desire to obey Him in faith. Our faith is not rooted in our gifting, or found in our skills, or propped up by our ambitions. Our faith is in the Word of God and in His unshakable character. As the people of God, we build our lives on the promises of God. No other foundation is stable.


## 99 Essential Doctrines *(p. 80, DDG)*

### Faith

Biblical faith is the resting, or trusting, in Christ alone for salvation (John 3:16-21). More than being simply a mental agreement of historical facts, genuine faith begins with a recognition and confession of the truth of the gospel (1 John 4:13-16), followed by a receiving of Christ as Lord and Savior of one's life (John 1:10-13). Biblical faith is not blind faith, for it rests on the historical life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

# TEACHING PLAN

Yet, despite his apparent fear, Barak obeyed. With Deborah at his side, he gathered the ten thousand troops and ascended Mount Tabor. When Sisera heard the Israelites had gathered there, he rounded up his chariots and his army and marched toward the outmatched Israelites.

Obedient faith in the face of fear is still obedient faith. Sometimes Christians believe that because we're called to be courageous, we should not fear. However, courage is not the absence of fear, but controlled fear. Fear says, "I cannot so I will not." Courage says, "I cannot, but God can, so I will." That is what God calls us to demonstrate, even in taking one small step of faith at a time. For Barak, that first step was having the courage to go to Mount Tabor. Then the next step was to come down from the mountaintop to attack Sisera. Each step of faith God calls on us to take is to be taken knowing He is with us, leading us, and empowering us. Being afraid is no excuse for disobedience. God doesn't want fearlessness from us, only trusting obedience. 


- **What situations are you facing today that might make you fearful? What does your first step of faith look like?**
- **How does knowing that God is with you help you remain faithful to Him?**

The victory over Sisera did not come without a fight. Though God had the power to simply annihilate the oppressive army of the Canaanites, He chose to involve His faithful people in the battle. Success was never in doubt, but it still took the swords of the Israelites to defeat their enemies. Chapter 4 recounts the story of God's rescue. Now, in chapter 5, the author transcribes a beautiful piece of poetry—the song of God's rescue.

## Read Judges 5:1-5, 9-11



Sometimes songs are the best way to communicate a story. Songs teach. And the focus of this song is not on the characters in the story, but on God as the rescuer. The leaders' egos and the people's accolades fade away in light of the glory of the one true God (4:14). It was the Lord who called Deborah to sit as a judge over His people. It was the Lord who gave Barak skills and leadership to assemble and train an army. It was the Lord who delivered Sisera into the hands of a housewife (Jael, the woman who struck down the mighty general with a tent peg). It was the Lord who went out before them.

The story and the song of Deborah is our story; it's our song. We were captive to sin and we had no hope. Satan and his 900 chariots were stacked against us; we could not fight on our own. Yet the Lord stood in our place, fighting on our behalf, claiming victory over the enemy in an unlikely way—through a cross. Today, we are the people of God because through Christ, God has crushed the head of the serpent. It's through this great rescue that we have been forgiven once and for all. We are like the Israelites, continually running after things we think will give us life. What does the world offer? The same lies the serpent offered in the garden: You can be greater than God; you can be the hero. But here we see there is only one hero. The hero of this story is God alone. The hero of the story of our rescue is Christ alone. 

# COMMENTARY

## Judges 5

**Main Point:**  
God equips His people with gifts to be used for His glory and for their good.

**1-5, 9-11.** Human leaders are not the object of our praise. Regardless of the speaking ability of a pastor or evangelist, the stage presence of a worship leader, or the depth of understanding of a discipleship pastor or small group leader, these individuals are not stars. Rather they are servants of God and His people, pointing to the One who does deserve the praise. Our leaders should be recognized, appreciated, and encouraged for being the gifts from God that they are, but ultimately, they are conduits channeling gratitude and praise to God, the One who works in and through them. We are idolatrous to lift up mere humans, when it is actually God who is the One at work. Just as we don't praise the paintbrush, rather the artist who wields the brush, we don't praise the individuals God uses and stop there.

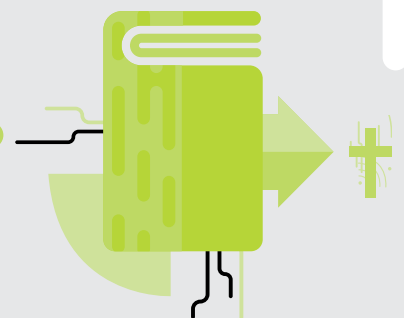
But while God may be our primary audience, He is not our only audience. For when we sing, we also sing to ourselves. We sing to remember. We sing to drive truth deeper into our minds and hearts. We sing to be transformed, to live differently in light of the gospel we proclaim in song. And sometimes we sing to foster worship. There are times when we stand empty before God. We are spiritually dry. Praise is not found in our minds or hearts and yet, we sing. We place words of praise on our mouths so that they might work their way back down into our minds and hearts.

Then there is the third audience of our songs: others. We sing so that others might hear truth. So that others might hear of the beauty and glory of the Lord and be inclined to join in our songs. We sing to others because our hearts cannot contain our praise; we cannot keep it to ourselves. We sing because if we do not, we will burst.

It shouldn't only be when we gather together as the church that we sing praises to God, but also during the daily rhythms of life. We are to speak of God and sing to Him, ourselves, and others when we go about our daily lives (Deut. 6:7). Praising God should be the normal posture of our minds and hearts, and should run throughout every aspect of our lives. Giving God glory is our ultimate purpose, and it's not to be confined to the walls of a sanctuary.

## (p. 81, DDG) Christ Connection

Deborah was the chosen leader of God who ruled with wisdom to rescue her people. Her life points forward to Jesus Christ, the Wonderful Counselor whose kingdom is marked by justice and righteousness.



# Our Mission

God's Story has always been designed to connect with our story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own. Suggested answers to these questions can be found on the right-hand side of the page for leaders.

## Head



**Why is it important to remember that victory belongs to God when the odds are stacked against us?**

**How do we tend to look at the “odds” of victory in the battles we face?**

## Heart



**What does the song of Deborah and Barak teach us about worshiping God through song today?**

**Where and how can you praise God this week in your normal rhythm of life?**

## Hands



**In verses 14-16, what did Deborah do for Barak? How can this be a powerful weapon used in the service of others?**

**What can we do to better encourage one another toward deeper dependence on God and faithfulness to Him?**

**Main Point:**  
**God equips His  
people with gifts to  
be used for His glory  
and for their good.**



## Head

Remembering who brings the victory is what enables us to stand firm in faith during the battle no matter how unlikely victory might appear. What prompted Barak to charge into battle was not looking at the odds—they were stacked against him. The odds said to flee, or at least to hold firm on the high ground. The odds made victory seem impossible for Barak and his ten thousand men. But the problem with looking at the odds, is that we often look at them the wrong way. Because the odds were never about Barak and the Israelites against Sisera and the Canaanites. That is the wrong lens. The odds were about Sisera and the Canaanites against God Almighty. And those odds were even worse—they were impossible odds—but not for God and His people, but for the helpless Sisera and his forces.



## Heart

When we sing, our songs of worship should be offered to the Lord as sacrifices of praise. The words that we sing should be rooted not on a page of a hymnal or a screen, but rather in our hearts. We are to sing truth, motivated by a deep love and gratitude for who God is and what He has done for us, especially in Christ. This is why we see Deborah and Barak sing not seeking their own glory, but God's glory. They remembered that God provided the plan and the power to achieve victory. Deborah had led through her wisdom, prophecy, and wise judgment. Barak had led with his sword and ability to gather an army. But neither sought acclaim for themselves. Theirs was not a song of praise to themselves, but to the Lord.



## Hands

Though Deborah did not pick up a sword and fight alongside Barak, she did something just as powerful: she encouraged the military leader by reminding him of God's power. Notice her final words to Barak: they were focused not on the strength of his army nor on the tactical advantage the Israelites enjoyed in that moment, but rather on God's promises and power. Barak was able to fulfill the purpose God had for him because he was strengthened by these powerful words from Deborah.

Our role is sometimes to fight; other times, it may be to encourage. Encouragement is always a weapon in our tool belt to use generously with others. Paul gave this message to the believers in Thessalonica when he said to encourage and build up one another (1 Thess. 5:11). Boaz encouraged Ruth (Ruth 2:13), Jonathan encouraged David (1 Sam. 23:16), and Hezekiah encouraged the Levites (2 Chron. 30:22). Deborah encouraged Barak. And we are to encourage one another in the Lord.