

The Lord's Message: Deborah: Faithful Leader for God

Date: August 16, 2026

Where: Tilghman Methodist Church

Scripture Reference: Judges 4:1-10

What are the names of great leaders in the Old Testament? David, Moses, Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, etc.... What do all these leaders have in common? They are all men. Did you know one of the greatest leaders for God found in the Old Testament was a woman named Deborah? We are going to study her as one of the Faithful Women of the Bible this morning. So, I would like you to open your Bibles to Judges 4. Through Deborah's life, my prayer is that we will learn to be a faithful leader for God, in our homes, on the job, and in our community. It will not make any difference whether we are male or female.

Let us pray.

We are going to be going through a lot of names this morning and so that you do not get confused, I suggest that you open up either your Bible or the pew Bible to Judges 4.

When we open up our Bibles to the book of Judges, we find this pattern going on. The people sinned against God and refused to follow Him. God punishes them by allowing other nations to take advantage of them. They cried out to God and repented of their sins. God forgives them and raises up a Judge to rule over them. There is peace in the land for a period of time while the judge is living. After the judge dies the people become complacent and fall away from God. The reason is given in **Judges 2:10**. "After that the whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the Lord nor what He had done for Israel." This is the same reason which was given as to why the Pharaoh hated the Israelites and forced them into slavery, because of fear that they would join their enemies. This Pharaoh did not know Joseph and what Joseph had done for the Egyptians. It is important for people to know their history.

My prayer every day and I hope that it is yours, is that my children have an intimate relationship with the Lord. All throughout the Bible, this theme is repeated over and over again. David failed with most of his sons for them to have an intimate relationship with God. Solomon was the only one to have such a relationship, but he allowed wealth and marrying women who worshipped idols to interfere in that relationship. Eli the priest and Samuel the judge's sons did not grow up to have a relationship with God. You do not start pressing this onto your children when they are a grown adult, but you start modeling this to them when they are first born and continue to model this to them as they grow up in your home.

The result is that the whole cycle repeats itself. There is another phrase that runs through the book, “Once again the Israelites do evil in the eyes of the Lord, and because they did evil the Lord gave them over to their enemies to punish them.” The punishment was to bring them back to the Lord, not for the Lord to abandon them.

Let us look at the many responsibilities that Deborah has. Deborah is a prophetess, a wife, a mother, and Israel’s leader.

In **Judges 4:4**, we learned that Deborah is a prophetess. She is a direct spokesperson for God. God has chosen her to hear His word and communicate His divine will, wisdom, and direction to the people. In verse 5, we are told that she does this by holding court “under the Palm of Deborah.” She is following in the footsteps of Moses, **Exodus 18:13**. She is the Israelites’ Moses.

Also in verse 4, she is the wife of Lappidoth. Lappidoth means torches or flames. It is interesting that the husband’s name is mentioned in the Bible, but there is nothing else said about him. Unlike of sections of the Bible that mention a woman’s name, we are given her father’s name, her husband’s name and what he did and any extraordinary feats that he may have accomplished. Here, we are given the husband’s name and that is it. She is the one that is most important for the writer of the book of Judges. She is the one who is the torch and flame for Israel.

She is a mother, but we do not know how many children she has or how many are boys or girls. It is not mentioned in verse 4, but she says this in **Judges 5:7**.

She is Israel’s leader. In **Judges 4:5**, we are told that “the Israelites came to her to have their disputes decided. She is the one who sends for Barak and tells him in verses 6-7, “The Lord, the God of Israel commands you: Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun, and lead the way to Mount Tabor. I will lure Sisera, the commander of Jabin’s army, with his chariots, and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into your hands.”

There is one more important trait to Deborah. Her name means honeybee in Hebrew. She is the person that the Lord uses to buzz around to others and ignite the flames of faith in them. We see this with Barak. We see this in the people that she counsels. She is the one that ignites the flames of faith throughout Israel.

Barak is the commanding general of the armies of Israel. Barak in Hebrew means to bless, praise, or respectfully kneel down. Barak has been respectfully kneeling down to the Canaanites and not engaging them in battle. This might be because Israel has no weapons. We are told that in **Judges 5:8**, “not a shield or spear was seen among the forty thousand in Israel.” So, you are a commander of the armies of Israel. You have forty thousand men, but no weapons. Your enemy is equipped with 900 iron chariots, plus swords and shields. How are you going to fight against this force? Barak does not see a victory, but a tremendous slaughter and defeat. Barak does not have faith to see what God is going to do. Deborah has to sting Barak to ignite this faith. There are times in our lives where we need to be stung by God to ignite our faith. Sometimes, God uses others to accomplish His goal in our lives. The truth hurts, but it is necessary for our faith.

Sometimes, when we are fighting our battles with medical problems or relationship problems or financial problems, we only see defeat, not victory. In these situations, we should turn to God for us to gain the victory. Let God fight our battles for us.

God helps us fight our battles by shifting our reliance on our limited power and strength to fully relying on His unlimited power and strength. We do this by allowing Him to take control of our lives, by allowing Him to renew our strength, letting Him clear the obstacles before us, and allowing us to remain calm and trusting in His perfect timing. In the midst of the battle, we turn our focus on God through prayer and gratitude and praise Him for what He is doing in our lives. This theme of turning our battles over to God is often repeated in scripture, **2 Chronicles 20:15**. This summer I have observed this twice with my aunt and uncle fighting cancer. They were courageous in the battle with cancer. Several times, they said that the victory was God’s. They won the battle. Even though we feel the loss, the battle is won, because they are in Heaven with God. That is the ultimate victory. Focus on God and let God fight your battles.

Now, Barak cannot see the victory. His faith is weak. He tells Deborah in verse 8, “If you go with me, I will go; but if you don’t go with me, I won’t go.” He does not have the faith to see the victory that God is going to accomplish.

Deborah responds in verse 9, “Very well, I will go with you. But because of the way you are going about this, the honor will not be yours, for the Lord will hand Sisera over to a woman.” When we do not respond in faith, the honor will go to another. In those days, a woman receiving honor over a man was the ultimate insult.

Now, let us look at God's battle plan. In verse 10, Israel's force is ten thousand men without swords and shields. The Canaanite force under Sisera is 900 iron chariots, plus swords and shields. Israel may have more men, but no armament for the men to use to fight the Canaanites. Israel is occupying Mount Tabor. Mount Tabor rises from the Kishon River approximately 1300 to 1400 feet. Who has the high ground? The Israelites. In battle, you want to get and occupy the high ground. You can rain down rocks and other projectiles on your enemy. Look in verse 14, God sends Barak down from Mount Tabor to fight Sisera and the army of the Canaanites. Why? The answer is found in **Judges 5:20-21**. God sends a rainstorm that causes the Kishon River to overflow its banks and cause the mighty, heavy iron chariots of Sisera to become stuck in the mud. The Israelite army swarms in and, using the Canaanites' own swords, slaughters them.

In **Judges 4:17**, Sisera flees the area and hides in a tent of Jael, because they are on friendly terms with the Kenites. Now the Kenites are the in-laws of Moses. If you recall Moses's father-in-law, Jethro only had daughters. One of the daughters married Moses and another one married a Kenite. So, by hiding in the tent of a Kenite, Sisera thinks that he is safe. God has other plans. Jael, the wife of Heber, hides Sisera under blankets in her tent. Jael is a Hebrew name meaning mountain goat or climber. After Sisera falls asleep, Jael climbs on top of him and drives a tent peg through his temple into the ground, killing him. This fulfills what Deborah told Barak, that a woman would receive the honor of killing Sisera and not him, because of his unfaithfulness.

When we are unfaithful, God will give the glory to another.

What have we learned. God can and will use anyone who are faithful to conduct His plans. God use a woman named Deborah to sting the Israelites into action and victory. If we have faith and allow God to fight our battles, there will be a great victory. We will have peace; despite the tough times we may face or be going through. Even when we do not see the victory, the victory is coming. We need to put our trust in God.

Let us continue to listen to God and do what He says. Amen.