

Deborah

(Judges 4, 5)

Introduction

What do you think makes a person a good leader? [Teacher, lead the children in a discussion about leadership.] A good leader is someone who will show people the right way to go. So, a good leader must know the way himself. A good leader must be strong, courageous, and trustworthy.

A good leader is one that has faithful followers, too. How would it be if you were trying to lead some people who suddenly decided to follow their own way? Good followers always listen and obey their leaders; they show their love and respect by always following the rules! They don't go off and do their own thing.

Jesus is our leader. He has not only told us how to live our lives in a way that is pleasing to God, but He has also shown us the way to live, too. He was loving and kind. He laid down His life for His followers, didn't He?

Today we are going to look at Deborah, and see what made her such a good leader.

Opening Prayer

Father, we want to be good leaders in our homes and at our schools. I pray that as we learn what made Deborah a good leader, we would try to be more like her because, Lord, we want our lives to please You. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

Don't let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity. (1 Timothy 4:12 NLT)

Lesson

[Teacher, as an alternative to teaching this lesson verse-by-verse, you may want to read the passage out of an easy to understand translation and then help the children discover what made Deborah such good leader.]

Last week we began a new series of lessons from the book of Judges. We learned that after Joshua had died, the children of Israel were left with no leader.

Even though the children of Israel had promised God to love Him with all of their hearts, when their godly leaders had all died and they were left with no leader, the people eventually broke their promise to God. They became close friends with the Canaanites who didn't even believe in God. Soon the children of Israel began worshiping Baal, a false god.

This made God angry and He used Canaanites to punish them. God allowed the Canaanites to have victory over the children of Israel. Then the people cried out to God for help. And God in His mercy appointed a leader called a *judge* to lead the people in victory against their enemies.

Judges were not kings; they were more like an umpire in a baseball game. They made decisions that helped bring peace and justice to the people. They were also leaders who led the people in battle against their enemies.

Israel went through seven cycles of rebelling against God, being overrun by their enemies, being rescued or saved by a God-fearing judge, remaining loyal to God under that judge for awhile, and then, again forgetting God after the judge died.

This morning we pick up the story in Judges Chapter 4, I'm going to read this story to you. It's very exciting:

Judges 4 (The Living Bible translation)

...the people of Israel again sinned against the Lord, so the Lord let them be conquered by King Jabin of Hazor, in Canaan. The commander-in-chief of his army was Sisera.... He had nine hundred iron chariots, and

made life unbearable for the Israelites for twenty years. But finally they begged the Lord for help.

Israel's leader at that time, the one who was responsible for bringing the people back to God, was Deborah, a prophetess... She held court at a place now called "Deborah's Palm Tree," ... and the Israelites came to her to decide their disputes.

One day she summoned Barak... and said to him, "The Lord God of Israel has commanded you to mobilize ten thousand men ... to fight King Jabin's mighty army with all his chariots, under General Sisera's command. The Lord says, 'I will draw them to the Kishon River, and you will defeat them there.'"

"I'll go, but only if you go with me!" Barak told her.

"All right," she replied "I'll go with you..."

When Barak summoned the ... ten thousand men... Deborah marched with them....

When General Sisera was told that Barak and his army were camped at Mount Tabor, he mobilized his entire army, including the nine hundred iron chariots...

Then Deborah said to Barak, "Now is the time for action! The Lord leads on! He has already delivered Sisera into your hand!"

So Barak led his ten thousand men down the slopes of Mount Tabor into battle. Then the Lord threw the enemy into a panic, both the soldiers and the charioteers, and Sisera leaped from his chariot and escaped on foot. Barak and his men chased the enemy and the chariots... until all of Sisera's army was destroyed; not one man was left alive.

... So that day the Lord used Israel to subdue King Jabin of Canaan. And from that time on Israel became stronger and stronger....

Please open your Bibles to Judges 4. [Teacher read these verses to the children so they do not stumble over the hard-to-pronounce names. But, have them look at the words as you read.]

Judges 4:1 [Teacher, read...]

After Ehud's death, the Israelites again did evil in the LORD's sight.

The people started worshipping the Baals! It made God so angry at them that He allowed Jabin, the king of Canaan, to overcome them. He treated them harshly for twenty years under the rule of his army captain, Sisera.

Judges 4:2 [Teacher, read...]

So the LORD turned them over to King Jabin of Hazor, a Canaanite king. The commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-haggoyim.

After 20 years of Jabin's harsh treatment, the people finally *cried out to the Lord for help.*

Judges 4:3 [Teacher, read...]

Sisera, who had 900 iron chariots, ruthlessly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years. Then the people of Israel cried out to the LORD for help.

God, in His mercy, sent them a woman named Deborah to be a judge over them. Let's see what made Deborah such a good leader. As we talk about Deborah, I'll write her character traits on the white board.

Prophetess

Deborah was a prophetess.

Judges 4:4 [Teacher, read...]

*Deborah, the wife of Lappidoth, was a **prophet** who was judging Israel at that time.*

Does anyone know what a prophet is? A prophet is not only someone who can tell you what is going to happen in the future. A prophet is also someone who is inspired by God to tell you what God's will is. A prophet represents God and speaks forth from Him. A prophet encourages people to obey God. When a prophet speaks, you should

listen. Deborah was a good leader because she reminded people of God's goodness and encouraged the people to live for God!

Just and fair and wise

Verse 4 says that Deborah "*was judging Israel at that time*". People came to her for advice.

They trusted her. People would come to her when they had disagreements. She was like an umpire in a baseball game. If two people were arguing about something they could come to her and she would settle their disagreement.

She must have been just and fair. She encouraged people to make Godly choices; ones that were pleasing to God. She was wise.

Do you know how you get wisdom? The Bible tells us that we get wisdom by spending time with God (Proverbs 9:10). She must have spent a lot of time seeking God for His wisdom. I bet she read His word and talked to Him in prayer often. And I bet she didn't gossip. When people came to her and told her about their issues and concerns, I'm sure she didn't go spreading their issues around to other people. I'm sure she kept people's secrets confident.

Respected

Deborah was a highly respected woman.

Judges 4:5 [Teacher, read...]

She would sit under the Palm of Deborah, between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites would go to her for judgment.

The people respected Deborah's wisdom because they came to her for advice and counsel. She helped them know what to do. They had

faith in Debora's advice. People wouldn't have come to her if they didn't believe that she would help them.

I bet Deborah was also a good listener. She had to listen to both sides of an argument before she could decide the cases she was hearing. I bet she was compassionate, too. She was so well known that the palm tree was named after her, "the Palm of Deborah."

Judges 4:6-7 [Teacher, read...]

One day she sent for Barak son of Abinoam, who lived in Kedesh in the land of Naphtali. She said to him, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, commands you: Call out 10,000 warriors from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun at Mount Tabor. And I will call out Sisera, commander of Jabin's army, along with his chariots and warriors, to the Kishon River. There I will give you victory over him."

God had confidence in Debora, too. In verse 6 God told Deborah to tell Barak to mobilize the army against Jabin. God didn't speak directly to Barak, God asked Deborah to deliver His message to him.

Appreciated

Deborah was highly appreciated.

Judges 4:8

Barak told her, "I will go, but only if you go with me."

Barak said he wouldn't go to battle without her. She must have been a great leader!

Brave

Deborah was very brave.

Judges 4:9-10

"Very well," she replied, "I will go with you. But you will receive no honor in this venture, for the LORD's victory over Sisera will be at the hands of a woman." So Deborah went with Barak to Kedesh. At Kedesh, Barak

called together the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali, and 10,000 warriors went up with him. Deborah also went with him.

She went with Barak into battle and she marched with the warriors. In those days women didn't go into battle with the men.

Encourager

Deborah was a great encourager.

Judges 4:14

Then Deborah said to Barak, "Get ready! This is the day the LORD will give you victory over Sisera, for the LORD is marching ahead of you." So Barak led his 10,000 warriors down the slopes of Mount Tabor into battle.

Deborah cheered Barak and the army on to victory.

What a great leader Deborah was! Why do you think the army was so willing to follow her into battle? [Teacher, discuss her leadership qualities, such as helping the men before battle, being with them in battle, showing confidence in God rather than in herself.]

Deborah listened carefully to God's instructions and had total confidence in God's ability to give victory, even in the face of death.

Judges 5

Deborah loved God and worshipped Him. Chapter 5 records a beautiful victory song that she composed and sang.

Judges 5:7

There were few people left in the villages of Israel—until Deborah arose as a mother for Israel.

In her song, she describes herself as a "mother to Israel." What comes to your mind when you think of a mother? A mother is someone who is in authority over others. A mother is someone who is

loving and kind; someone who takes care of and protects people; someone who lays down her life for others. Deborah was like a mother to the people.

God used Deborah as a brave leader to deliver the people of Israel. And after the victory over Jabin and Sisera, Israel had peace for 40 years.

If you know Jesus as your Savior, you can ask God to help you be a good leader for Him, too. Even though you are a child, you can be a good example to others by how you live. Other kids may come to you for advice or just to talk about their problems. Maybe you have a friend whose dad left home or maybe your younger brother or sister is afraid of storms.

How could you be a good leader? What would you say to your little sister who is afraid of a storm? (Remind her that God loves and cares for her.) What could you do to help a friend whose dad just left home? (Take time to listen to your friend; maybe he wants to talk about it.) What kind of attitude should you have if your friend comes to you to talk about a problem he is going through? (Be a compassionate listener.)

How can you grow up to be a great leader that others will respect and follow? Be faithful to help others in the little opportunities God gives you before you grow up. Don't just tell others what to do but show them how. For example, you need to be brave in a storm for your little sister's sake. You may have to trust God in tough times in your own home. Put your confidence not in your own abilities, but in God. To be a good leader for God, you must first and always be a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You can ask God to help you be a good leader for Him. Look for opportunities this week to be a good example in all that you think, say, and do. You can be a good example for others as you follow your leader, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Closing Prayer

Father, Deborah was a faithful follower of You – she listened for Your voice and did what you commanded. This made Deborah a good leader. Lord, we want to follow Deborah example.

Help us to be good leaders in our homes and at school. Give us opportunities to be good examples to our friends as well as to our brothers and sisters. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Game Center

Use the following questions in a game of your choice:

1. What did the children of Israel do to sin against the Lord? (They turned their backs on the only true God, and started to worship the false gods of the Canaanites.)
2. What did God do when the people finally called out to Him for help? (God in His mercy sent them a woman named Deborah to be a judge over them.)
3. What is a judge? (Someone like an umpire in a baseball game; she settled people's differences and arguments.)
4. It says in verse 4 that Deborah was also a prophetess. What is a prophet? (A prophet is someone who is inspired by God to tell you what God's will is. A prophet encourages people to obey God.)
5. What was the tree called that she sat under? ("The palm tree of Deborah.")
6. What makes you think that Deborah was highly respected? (People came to her for advice.)
7. Why do you think that God gave Deborah His battle plans rather than speaking directly to Barak? (Deborah spent time with God listening to His voice and doing what He commanded; He had confidence in her; she was His chosen messenger.)
8. What did God tell Deborah to tell Barak? (To mobilize an army against Jabin.)
9. When Deborah told Barak that God wanted him to go into battle, what did Barak say? (He wouldn't go to battle without her!)
10. How did Deborah encourage Barak and the army? (She cheered them on and reminded them that God was going to give them the victory.)
11. Why do you think the army was so willing to follow Deborah, a woman, into battle? (Deborah listened carefully to God's instructions and had total confidence in God's ability to give victory.)
12. What did Deborah do after the victory to express her love to God? (She composed and sang a beautiful victory song.)
13. In that song, how does Deborah describe herself? (As a mother to Israel)
14. How could you be a good leader in your home, in school, or here at church? (First of all you need to be a good follower of Jesus. Then look for opportunities to be a good example in all that you think, say and do.)

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