

“Deborah and Barak: Calling All Leaders, Both Male and Female” // Judges 4–5 // Broken Saviors #3

Introduction

For those of you that may be new to the church, **I have 3 daughters...** Kharis (11); Allie (9); Ryah (7)... Dec 25, 2009, we finally squeaked in a little boy, right at the buzzer. He is 5 now. **PIC**

- You can **pray for him**—in some ways the deck seems **stacked against** him... he has **four moms** who dress him up like princesses and carry him around; he is a **pastor’s kid**; and, on top of all that, he shares a birthday with Jesus.
- **He developed his** speaking and walking abilities... People ask me why that was... I tell them it is because with 3 sisters he never had a need to do either of those things himself. **Everywhere he wanted to go** one of his moms carried him, and **between them enough words** transpire in our house that neither Adon nor I feel like we have a lot to add.

Anyway, this is my world... **I share all that** because this passage in Judges today has special significance for me, as a dad of 3 smart, high-spirited daughters. This passage speaks to what I hope them, and dream for them, and pray over them...

It is the story of Deborah, the only female judge. **Guys, don’t zone out...** There is plenty in here for you, too.

Judges 4–5: The Story of Deborah and Barak

¹ Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD, now that (left-handed) Ehud was dead. ² So the LORD sold them into the hands of

Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. Sisera, the commander of his army... had nine hundred chariots fitted with iron (If you remember, the 1st week I told you these were like the tanks of the ancient world. They could mow down dozens of foot soldiers—the Israelites didn’t have any... so these people) and cruelly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years.

And Israel cried to the LORD for help.

⁴ Now Deborah, a prophet, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time. ⁵ She held court under the Palm of Deborah... and the Israelites went up to her to have their disputes decided. *Is it a gold and white dress, or black and blue dress? And other stuff like that.*

⁶ She sent for Barak... “The LORD, the God of Israel, commands you: ‘Go, take with you ten thousand men...’ ⁷ I will lead Sisera into your hands.”

⁸ Barak said to her, “If you go with me, I will go; but if you don’t go with me, I won’t go.”

So... Deborah, deep sigh, says, ⁹ “Certainly I will go with you,” said Deborah. “But because of the course you are taking, the honor will not be yours, for the LORD will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman.”

[11] Now Heber the Kenite had separated from the Kenites... and had pitched his tent up by the oak in Zaananim, which is near Kedesh. (This seems like a random detail just sort of stuck in there, doesn’t it? We’re talking about Deborah and Barak and an imminent battle and the author **digresses** to tell us about some dude and his wife who couldn’t get along with their neighbors and so took their trailer and parked it out in the desert.)

But, as you’ll see in a moment, it’s not a random detail at all... **MEANWHILE**, back to the story... **Vs. 12, Deborah directs Barak and**

the army down to a region at the base of Mt. Tabor... it's a **river basin**, which is another important detail.

¹⁴Then Deborah said to Barak, "Go! This is the day the LORD has given Sisera into your hands. Has not the LORD gone ahead of you?" And the LORD routed Sisera and all his chariots and army by the sword, and Sisera got down from his chariot and fled on foot.

- We're going to find out in chapter 5 that **the reason Sisera had to flee on foot** was a sudden rainstorm had come and the river flooded and so Sisera's 900 chariots of iron got stuck. (5:21)
- What is remarkable about this is that it **all took place during the dry season**, when it never rained... If Sisera had thought there was even a chance of rain he'd have never taken his chariots down there because he knew they can get stuck. This was **like a snow in July**.
- In other words, God worked a simple little **miracle that turned** Sisera's great advantage—his 900 chariots of iron—into deadweight.

So Sisera is running on foot and he comes ¹⁷...to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite. (Remember them? Out in the middle of nowhere is a tent all by itself... another miracle of Providence. Their tent is right in the middle of the woods where Sisera is fleeing!)

¹⁸Jael went out to meet Sisera and said to him, "Come, my lord, come right in. Don't be afraid." So he entered her tent, and she covered him with a blanket. ¹⁹"I'm thirsty," he said. "Please give me some water." She opened a skin of milk, gave him a drink, and covered him up. ("There, there... big warrior man needs a little nap..." She sings him a lullaby...)

²¹Then Jael, Heber's wife, picked up a tent peg and a hammer and went quietly to him while he lay fast asleep. She drove the peg through his temple into the ground. And he died. (Not sure that last sentence was necessary. Bet you didn't see that one coming, did you? Neither did he. And then she walked outside and said, "Nailed it!")

- What a **smashing** salvation story, right?
- But what can we learn from it?

- (Some say, "Violent...?" I'll explain that.)

What piercing truths can we learn from Deborah, Barak, and Jael?

1. God gives to women the same spiritual gifts he gives to men

- This story, as much as perhaps any in the Bible, gives you a glimpse into the role God has for women in his kingdom.
- Deborah was a prophet, a wise and respected leader in Israel.
 - Some people have said that **the only reason** Deborah was a prophet is because there were no men around to lead, which speaks to the moral degradation in Israel.
 - But there is **nothing in this passage** that indicates that... it is **true that we see Barak** waver in his faith, but even before that Deborah was an established leader and teacher in Israel. The **story says she was in the place she was** because of her gifting.
- **Which leads me to emphasize something we believe** very strongly here at the Summit Church: Women have access to every spiritual gift men have access to.
 - **There is a myth alive in certain parts of the church** that men in church should be taught deep, rich theology and women should learn how to match their curtains with the pillows on their couch or how to not feel sad on rainy days
 - I saw **one Christian author point out** that any time you go to a Christian women's conference and they teach out of the book of Ephesians, the **only part of the book** they teach on is Eph 5, where Paul discusses the role of the wife in the marriage—**as if the rest of the book** is written for men and just that one part is for women.
 - **The whole book of Ephesians is for women, and you women need to learn all of it.**

- I **did not marry a weak**, superficial woman, I am not **raising my daughters** to be them, and I **don't want this church** to create them, either.
- Our **ministry to women here at the Summit Church** aims, yes, to help you ladies be **better wives or mothers**, if that is a role God has given to you, but it is also passionate to see those of you whom God has called to be leaders become leaders.
- **Now, having said that**, in both the Old and New Testaments, God establishes certain positions that he wants only men to play and others he wants only women to play.
 - In the OT, for example, **women could not be priests.**
 - **Or you see here in this story** that Deborah **won't lead the army.** When Barak demurs, she doesn't say, "OK, I'll do it."
 - Or **did you notice that when she** is introduced in chapter 4, she is identified as the "**wife of Lappidoth.**" The **writer doesn't ever do that** for the men. It doesn't say, "**Joshua**, the husband of Kim" or "**Barak**, the husband of Michelle."
 - **That's a Hebrew way of indicating** that she has an identity in a home led by her husband... even in her role of prophet, she identifies herself in a home led by her husband, because that is a role God has given him to play.
 - **In the NT**, Paul says very clearly that women should not serve in the role of pastor-elder at the church (1 Tim 2:12–3:1).
 - **But that doesn't prohibit them leading** in other spheres, or from exercising all the same spiritual gifts that men have, including leadership and teaching—**just not in the capacity of pastor-elders.**
 - There's a **really controversial** statement in Paul's letter to Timothy, 2:12 where Paul says: "*In the church, a woman should learn with all submissiveness.*" What does he mean?
 - Well, it **can't mean that women** should not speak prophetically, or teach... we see them doing that all through the NT. They are **called prophetess, deaconess...** Priscilla in Acts 18 is said to be the tutor of the great preacher Apollos...¹
 - **Paul tells you exactly** what he means in his next statement... **right** after he makes that statement, he says that women are not to be ruling elders in the church. (*unfortunate chapter break between 2 and 3*).
 - That's all he means. **Of course they teach and prophesy**, we see that in the NT... *just not in the capacity of pastor-elders.*
 - Tim Keller: "God forbids *one* kind of role in the church to women, as he did in Israel. We must not jump from that to forbidding *all* teaching and tasks to women; and we shouldn't assert all sorts of specific tasks are off-limits to women (for e.g.: working outside the home, teaching males over 12, speaking from the front of church services, etc). *It is better to say that everything a man who isn't an elder can do, a woman can do also.*"²
 - There has been a **false dichotomy** put forward in the church: Either you believe there is **no distinction** of roles at all; or you **believe women can only serve** in some kind of diminutive role because they *don't have the capacity* to lead...
 - **We need to reject that dichotomy** and instead adopt what the Bible puts forward as our standard.
 - **Women are equals without being equivalents!**
 - **The Bible teaches equality of position; equality of gifting; but with distinctive roles to play in family and church.**

Specifically to women, I want to say 3 THINGS...

¹ Acts 18:26; Acts 2:17; Romans 16:1; Philippians 4:2–3

² Tim Keller, *Judges for You*, 59.

1. **God has a calling on your life...** Yours is not just to simply sit on the sidelines and make coffee. Do you know what that calling is? Have you risen up to *obey it*? Like **Deborah**, you need to get into the fight.
2. **You are a leader with spiritual authority.** I know a lot of women who are entirely too dependent on their husbands... who never take spiritual responsibility... That's not what you see in Deborah. Here you see a leader of the highest caliber... She is the wisest and most courageous person in all of Israel!
3. **You can do all this while respecting God's order**, as you see Debbie do here... (She **refuses to take positions** God had assigned to men and **identified herself** in a house headed by her husband).

We need to reject both sides of the dichotomy—that God doesn't give women the same gifts he does to men, or that there is no distinction of roles in the church.

I mentioned I have **3 daughters**... one of the things I pray for them is to be Deborahs! (That is *literally how I have it written down* in my prayer list. **We need a lot more Deborahs in this church...**

- **Deborahs in the home.** Speaking courage into their husbands...
- Deborahs **in ministry**... calling us to give and pray and go and sacrifice and leading us in that
 - I think of **Jamie Warren: helps lead our** prison ministry and my prayer team
 - **Bonnie Shrum**...
 - Didn't get their permission... but you know what, if Deborah was willing to go into battle you can't be mad about me mentioning your names.
- We need **more Deborahs** in society... who rule and lead and teach with wisdom and courage and faith
- That's what our ministry to women here is about.
 - **Worship Guide: Conference**... How to be a woman growing in gifting and leadership in the kingdom of God.
- **Men: maybe you are married to a Deborah. You need to help platform her** like Lappidoth did.

- **Cindy/John:** "I have to answer to God for how I stewarded you."

So, that's lesson 1. God gives to women every spiritual gift he gives to men.

There's more, though... Deborah writes a song—and in it are four important lessons for both men *and* women... (BTW, if you are one of those people who feel like women can never teach you in church, you should excuse yourself... this next chapter is written by a woman.)

2. When the leaders lead, the people praise the Lord (5:1, 9)

- Deborah says, "When the princes in Israel take the lead, when the people willingly offer themselves—praise the LORD! ...My heart is with the willing volunteers among the people." (5:1, 9)
- She then, v. 13, begins to list out the various tribes who stepped up to fight and those who didn't.
 - Vs. 14, From **Ephraim** they came...
 - vs. 15; the **Issachar** faithful followed us... and
 - vs. 18, the people from **Zebulun** risked their very lives... Anyone here from Zebulun?
 - **Vs. 17, however, "Gilead remained in Jordan, and Dan lingered with the ships..."**
- Blessed are the ones, she said, who stepped forward in faith to fight.
- Since I have spent a lot of time on the 1st point with the women, let me direct this **next one specifically toward the men.**
 - **We have a lot of men hanging back by the ships when they ought to be out in the fight**
- There is one way of reading Gen 3 in which you **see the original sin as passivity on the part of the man**, a failure to get involved...
 - **God had given Adam** the responsibility to lead his wife, spiritually, and to serve and protect her.
 - Gen 3: **He was "with" her.**
 - Even **BARAK** demurs at first...

- THE GREAT TEMPTATION TO MEN IS NOT TO DO EVIL, BUT TO DO *NOTHING*
- Same today: We have a **lot of men who are not bad** guys; they are **just hanging back by the ships** when they **ought to be** leading out in the fight.
 - The IMB says that **female applicants outnumber male ones** 4 to 1 for those places. Not to take anything from those women, but, where are the men?
- **When the *princes* lead**, says Deborah, we praise the Lord. **Men, God, has given you a crucial role to play** that can't be replicated by anyone else and if your family and this church is going to praise the Lord, it is because you step forward to lead...
 - Every sociological study done points to the fact that the leadership of the father is the greatest determining factor on how the kids turn out. For instance, one study found these stats:
 - If a child is the first to become a believer in Jesus, there is a 3.5% chance the rest of the family will become Christian.
 - If the mother converts first, that number rises to 17%.
 - But if it's the *father* first, the percentage raises to 93%!³
- When the princes lead, we praise the Lord. When the princes abdicate their duties, the people suffer...
 - I'm reading a book right now by Dr. Meg Meeker, *Strong Fathers, Strong Daughters*. Tells story about a girl named Leah who sat in her office very sullen, exuding all the symptoms of depression.
 - After some questioning, the girl revealed that the son of a family friend had date raped her. As Dr. Meeker questioned her, Leah revealed that she had told her dad about it, and his response was, "Well, boys will be boys," and kind of shrugged it off. Then he, in her words, "went golfing."
 - Dr. Meeker says, "The assault was devastating to Leah, but the blow that really seemed to have brought her down was the fact that her father didn't care and defend her." She says, "A sexual assault is possibly the most traumatic event a girl can experience. Now consider that many psychologists and psychiatrists say your response to your daughter's assault (—especially if you are the first one that she comes to—is among the most important factors) in shaping your daughter's future emotional health after the event."
 - **She continues**, "When a child is humiliated or harmed, her natural instinct is to get back at the offender, to fight, to defend herself. But she is physically weaker than her attacker. Now she sees you. In her eyes, dad, you are big, tough and smart. Her gut tells her, 'He can help. He's the answer. My dad will make things right because he loves me. He'll stand up for me.'" Before you even learn what's happened, she has imagined your heroic response. If you do what your instinct tells you to do—if you get angry and take action—she will feel loved. She will feel defended. She will feel a sense of justice. She will (move closer to) a sense of closure over the incident." Had Leah's dad responded the right way, she said, "had he acted as a man, rather than shrugging his shoulders in weakness, I submit he might have prevented Leah's depression" (or, if he didn't prevent it, I might add, at least helped mitigate the depth of it.)
 - Dr. Meeker talks about how in our culture masculinity has been disparaged by feminists or displayed wrongly, as through many rap artists. "**True masculinity**," she says, **is the "moral exercise of authority."** "You were made a man for a reason... You were made a man to be a strong, loving

³ P. House. "What Your Church to Grow? Then Bring in Men," www.bpnews.net, 2003. (Stats from Focus on the Family)

husband and father. So listen to your instincts and do what's right. Be a hero."⁴

- **When the princes lead, the people praise the Lord.**
- **There are plenty of guys in the world, dudes, we need men.**
- **So men, Deborah up and be a man.**

This leads to #3...

3. God curses spectators (5:23)

- As she lists out the people who sat on the sidelines, she crescendos in vs. 23, 'Curse Meroz,' said the angel of the LORD. 'Curse its people bitterly, because they did not come to help the LORD, to help the LORD against the mighty.' (5:23)
- **It doesn't say they did anything bad.** Doesn't say, "They hung back and smoked dope and raided everyone's tents..." just that they did *nothing*.
- **You guys have heard me rail** against those who look at this church like a *religious event* they attend... (they are not involved)... **I usually point out** how much you are missing out on. Here is what you see from this passage: **God curses this kind of inactivity.**
- Sitting on the sidelines not only robs you of reward, it puts you under a curse.
 - *Active with your time*
 - **Your talent?**
 - **Treasures:** how much is engaged in the expanse of God's kingdom?
- Don't tell yourself that you are ok as long as you are not committing crimes.
- There is **more than one way to be wicked**: wickedness can come from what you do; but it can also come from what you *fail* to do.
- Jesus didn't say, "Watch me attentively." He said, "follow me."

- Some of you need to **act on this *this weekend***. Join; get involved; Start to invest your time and talents and treasures for the Kingdom of God.
- **Persecuted church...** pray. Get involved in your local church... give Summit: We have people in those same places ministering in our name.

4. All God requires of us is simple obedience (5:24, 4-8)

- We see in this story a **recurring theme** in Judges. God **brings down the most powerful tyrants** with **very weak** instruments. In this case, a **housewife with a tent peg**.
 - BTW, a tent peg in those days was a **common household item**, not a war weapon. It's like he was being killed by a frying pan or an iron.
- Over and over the book of Judges teaches us: God does his work in the world through our **availability, not our ability**.
- (vs. 24) "**Most blessed of women be Jael,**" a housewife with a frying pan that said, "Here am I, send me."
- **When I see "Most blessed"...** Do you know whom I think of? Mary! That's what the angel said of her: "Blessed are you among women." Here you had a **virgin who is told she is going to give birth** to a Son who will be the Savior of the world.
 - **As a virgin, she has no ability** to make that happen.
 - Mary's prayer: "Be it unto me according to your word." That's a prayer of **surrender** and **faith**. "God, I'll do what you say. I'll trust you with the results."
- That is always how God brings salvation into the world.
- Are you willing to pray that? Be it unto me... God, **I'll give** where you tell me to give. I'll **serve** where you tell me to serve. I'll **rest** when you tell me to rest. I'll **trust** where you tell me to trust.
- What this story shows you is that when you do that, *God will fight for you!*
 - Real quick. I love the contrast set up in 6: **5:6**, "**In those days, the highways were abandoned, the villagers ceased...**" The people were so weak, they couldn't even travel.

⁴ Meg Meeker, *Strong Fathers, Strong Daughters*, 38-39, 47-48

- **5:4:** “When the Lord went out... the earth trembled, the clouds dropped water in dry season, the mountains quaked.”
- Look at the contrast... when the Lord **rolls out**, the earth shakes and he *makes* it rain.⁵
- Think about an EARTH QUAKE. You see a bunch of squirrels on ice... I weigh so much, the ice quakes. God’s power is so overwhelming the earth can’t stand up under the pressure.
- Some of you have problems... like the squirrel. God has never needed you to crack the ice... just to obey... TRUST AND OBEY

5. God will one day right every wrong (5:28–30)

- Toward the end of Deborah’s song she **begins to mock Sisera**... In **vs. 28** She **sarcastically puts words** in Sisera’s mother’s mouth. Deborah **pictures her** peering out the window, wondering... *“Why is my son Sisera taking so long to return?”* The sycophant ladies of the court all around her say, *“Oh, because there is so much Israelite spoil to divide up.”* In **vs. 30** they say, really crudely, *“And there’s a womb or two for every man.”* In other words, *“The men have girls to rape.”*
- Meanwhile, Sisera is in a tent being killed *by a woman*.
- **Do you see that is happening?** Perfect justice is being served. Sisera has spent his life oppressing and abusing women. In the end, he’s brought down by a woman with the Hebrew version of a frying pan.⁶
 - This is the OT version of *Kill Bill*.

Vs. 26 Deborah sings... [5:26] She struck Sisera; she crushed his head; she shattered and pierced his temple.

⁵ Dale Ralph Davis, “A New Song,” Judges 5.

⁶ Keller, *Judges for You*, 64.

Maybe that’s not the tune... but **scholars say** the way this is written, she is mimicking the blows of the hammer against Sisera’s skull...

[27] Between her feet

he sank,
he fell,
he lay still;
between her feet
he sank,
he fell;
where he sank,
there he fell—
dead.

Israel loved these stories of how God delivered them... they loved to savor them like a fine wine, sip by sip.

Deborah ends her song this way: [31] “So may all your enemies perish, Lord! But may all who love you be like the sun when it rises in its strength.”

(You say) **“But we don’t always see justice served like this.”** Not every story we know has this happy ending. Not every rapist, not every sexual predator, is brought to justice.

And that is true, in this life—we often see the guilty go unpunished. But that doesn’t mean the discussion is over.

- In this story we **get a glimpse** of how it is all going to end... God settles all scores.
- *This story... like all of the stories of the Judges, points us to Jesus.*
 - **Like Jael**, he will be the unexpected Savior whom everyone assumed was weak, who slew the enemy by surprise.
 - In him, **oppression is ended; justice is restored**, and **for those in Christ, the sun of God’s love and life** rises on us in strength

making the **fog and darkness** of what we are in today disappear!

- **Eternity is coming—it's not that far away**, saint, and you'll be in a land **bursting with the brightness** of justice and **glowing with the glory** of love... where there is **no pain**, no **sadness**, and God wipes away every tear from our eyes, and there will no more mourning nor crying nor pain... the **old things** have passed away and all things have become new!
- Bible: heaven, no sun or moon, the Lord our God is the constant light...

*Now, before I end, let me deal with one other objection, I alluded to at the beginning: **Some people read this and say, "These kinds of stories lead us to violence.** People taking justice into their hands and killing their enemies?" **Not at all**, if you understand them right. In fact, they do exactly the opposite.*

- God **commands us in Rom 12** to never take vengeance into our own hands because he will repay...
- **And what these stories show you** is that one day God will restore justice. And **if I believe he will restore** justice, I don't feel like I have to.
 - Think about it: **When an atheist believes** that there is no God who serves out justice in eternity... who bears the burden of making sure justice is served? They do.
 - **When you don't believe God** will bring justice, you seethe under injustice and it just eats at you until you have avenged yourself...
 - **What kind of world** does that create? Hateful, vengeful, fearful.
- **The cross creates a different kind of world... BECAUSE**
 - In the cross I see two things: 1. That all wrongs will be righted. 2. I see that the wrongs that I have done personally were put on Jesus' head.

- **THAT MEANS: A.** I don't need to take vengeance into my own hands, and that I am a forgiven man, which means I have no right to judge.
 - I know that **every sin ever committed against me** will either be paid for in hell or on the cross.
 - **So I can release myself** from the necessity of getting justice, and that **as one who has been forgiven**, I should forgive.
 - I **no longer have to carry around the tent peg** of justice to drive into the skulls of those who hurt me. **Why? Because God carries** the pegs of justice, and the peg for my justice he put into Jesus' body.

Conclusion