



Deborah, the Prophetess – Judges 4-5

When we think of heroes in the Bible, we remember kings, prophets, and apostles. But tucked in the book of Judges is the short but remarkable story of Deborah, a woman whose courage, wisdom, and faith stand as a timeless example for every believer. Her story, found in Judges 4-5, is about more than a military victory. It is about trusting God's voice, stepping into His call, and leading with humility and strength.

A Call to Courage

For twenty years, Israel was oppressed by Jabin, a Canaanite king. When the people finally cried out to God for help, Deborah stepped up to lead. She was already a spiritual leader of her people when God called her and told her to gather an army to march into battle. Then He showed Deborah exactly how He would help them defeat the enemy.

She immediately summoned Barak, the military leader, and delivered God's command to gather ten thousand men for the battle. But Barak, who should have been a fearless warrior, hesitated. He told Deborah, *"If you go with me, I will go. But if you don't, I won't go."* (Judges 4:8) Like a true leader, she went with him and rallied the troops.

It's hard to blame Barak for being hesitant, because Israel was hopelessly outgunned. The Canaanites had a huge military force, with over 900 iron chariots. The Israelites only had a rudimentary army. But God was with them, and the battle unfolded in a miraculous way. Heavy rain rendered the iron chariots useless, and the Israelites routed the enemy.

Fighting Spiritual Battles

That's the short version of what happened. But there is much more to explore behind the scenes about the Israelites' spiritual rebellion, Barak's reluctance, and Deborah's faith, that can give us direction in our own spiritual lives.

The Israelites' Spiritual Rebellion – After the Exodus, Israel never fully conquered the Promised Land as God had told them. As a result, they became heavily influenced by, and were often subjugated by, the pagan Canaanites. When Joshua and their first generation of leaders died, they were left adrift with no central leadership and a splintered faith system.

Judges 17:6 perfectly describes this dark period of over four hundred years: *"In those days, Israel had no king, and everyone did what was right in his own eyes."* So here's my question – Do we ever get so caught up in the godless culture that seems to surround us today, lose sight of our faith, and do what is right in our own eyes without regard to God?

Of course we do. Sadly, we are often no different than the ancient Israelites. This should be a warning to us to stay grounded in the things of faith, not in the things of the world. Ephesians 6:10-19 encourages us to understand that we are in a cosmic spiritual battle and that, to stand firm in our faith, we must arm ourselves daily with spiritual weapons.

Barak's Reluctance – Barak's first reaction was to refuse to go into battle unless Deborah went with him. Remember, he had been trained for combat, and Deborah had already told him that the Lord had assured them of victory. So why did he initially hesitate, and what can we learn from his reaction and Deborah's mentorship?

Being pulled out of our comfort zone to follow God into a new venture is always challenging and scary. But human support and mentorship can often strengthen us in ways we cannot replicate on our own. That's why it is important to build strong relationships with others we can rely on when needed, and who we can encourage when they need us.

Deborah's Faith – Deborah, a prophetess, was already a spiritual leader when God called her to step into a larger leadership role. She had spent years listening to God and helping people with legal disputes and spiritual issues. She had already trained and was equipped for leadership when God called her.

There is an old saying that goes something like this: *"God doesn't call the qualified; He qualifies the called."* Deborah had spent her whole life becoming both qualified and available to answer God's special call when it came. When the time came, she was ready and able to lead her people into battle and to serve as a mentor and encourager to Barak.

What About Us - How are you becoming more qualified and available to meet God's next call on your life? Are you just moving from crisis to crisis, calling on God to bail you out as the Israelites did? Or are you actively preparing for your next spiritual assignment from God by serving others and growing your faith in the little things as Deborah did?



Joy For Your Journey,
Andy Raub
andy@andyraub.com