

LESSON 1

DEBORAH AND BARAK

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Can Work through Unlikely People

SCRIPTURE: Judges 4–5

GOD'S BIG STORY: With the wisdom God gives Deborah, the courage of Barak, and the help of a woman named Jael, King Jabin's army is defeated through unlikely people, and God wins the victory!

WORD OF WONDER: Here is what I am commanding you to do. Be strong and brave. Do not be afraid. Do not lose hope. I am the LORD your God. I will be with you everywhere you go. —Joshua 1:9

CURIOSITY

BELIEF

FAITH

- ****Pre-Service Interactive Game: Unlikely Talents**
- Welcome Question: Has someone ever asked you to do something you were afraid you wouldn't be able to do? Tell about it.
- SMALL GROUP
- Prayer of Invitation
- Declaring God's Wonder
- Worship: Praise, Unstoppable God
- God's Big Story
- Connecting the Wonder Truth
- Responding in Worship: Reckless Love
- Blessing Your Kids



INVITATION

We invite you to pause, listen, and shift your gaze toward the Father ...

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Can Work through Unlikely People

SCRIPTURE: Judges 4–5

WORD OF WONDER: Joshua 1:9

As a “girl dad” four times over, I’m always intrigued by the biblical stories that highlight women of faith. Now, don’t get me wrong—I love football, red meat, and *Gladiator* just as much as the next guy. But I do have a soft spot for the heroines of Scripture.

There was nothing soft, however, about Deborah. Check out Judges 4–5. This woman was a lean, mean, judgin’ machine! As the only female judge in the book of Judges, she thrived in a male-dominated society and proved she was just as capable—and often more so!—than the men of her era. And after her resounding victory over Canaanite king Jabin’s army, it was Jael, another woman, who dealt the final blow to Jabin’s fleeing general with a tent peg!

Deborah and Jael were unlikely heroines because women had far less social clout in this time. But choosing those who might seem unsuitable is God’s *modus operandi*. He loves working through unlikely people.

Aren’t you glad for that? Because it’s so easy to dismiss ourselves as unfit for service in God’s kingdom.

I’m not gifted enough.

My sins and shortcomings are too great.

I’m just so ... regular.

If you’ve ever felt like that (and we all have), you’re qualified to serve the Lord! He displays His power most prominently through weak human vessels (2 Corinthians 12:9). He puts His perfect wisdom on display in situations that seem impossible to us (1 Corinthians 1:25).

If you’re feeling pretty unlikely this week ... get ready. Because God will work through you!

—Josh Cooley

Children’s Minister and Author

Contributor to Wonder Ink

DID YOU KNOW?

FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS

WHO?

Deborah was a judge and prophet who led Israel after Ehud. Barak was a commander summoned by Deborah to fight Jabin, a Canaanite king, and his general Sisera. Jael was the wife of Heber the Kenite. Kenites were nomadic people descended from Moses' brother-in-law Hobab.

WHAT?

Jabin oppressed the Israelites after God's people continued to do evil in God's eyes. They cried out to God, who raised up Deborah and Barak to confront Sisera, Jabin's commander. God worked through Jael, a Kenite, to defeat Sisera, breaking Jabin's hold on the Israelites and bringing peace.

WHERE?

Mount Tabor was located well north of Jerusalem and west of the southern tip of the Sea of Galilee. It overlooked an important crossroads in the Jezreel Valley, so many people coveted control of the area. Jael lived near Kedesh, south of the Sea of Galilee.

WHEN?

The time Judges describes comes after the Israelites entered the Promised Land and before their first king. During this time, "everyone did as they saw fit" (Judges 21:25, NIV). God would raise up leaders (judges) to deliver His people, who would soon return to evil after each leader died.

CONNECTING TO GOD'S BIG STORY

Judges 4–5 highlights how God works through unlikely people to fulfill His promises. God faithfully does this throughout His big story. Jesus' own genealogy is full of wayward, broken people. But this imperfect line leads to a baby in a manger who is the Messiah.



Curiosity

Belief

Faith

Identity

LESSON 1 ELEMENTARY

Large Group

Spark curiosity, encourage exploration, and get kids thinking about the wonder of God.

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Can Work through Unlikely People
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WORD OF WONDER: Joshua 1:9

As kids arrive...

Around 20 minutes before service begins, display series theme loop. Play high-energy music in the background.

LG Leader walks around the room on mic and greets kids by name as they enter the room. Welcome kids by name and greet them with enthusiasm. Be extra intentional about hearing and responding to what they say.

SLIDE: SERIES THEME LOOP

VIDEO: COUNTDOWN (2min OR 30sec) Start a countdown to begin game 10 minutes prior to service start)

Pre-Service Interactive Game: Unlikely Talents **10 mins prior to service time

SUPPLIES: pens or pencils, cardstock (optional), clipboards (1 per group, optional)

RESOURCES: Unlikely Talents Sheet (1 per group)

SLIDE: UNLIKELY TALENTS

Before kids arrive, print an Unlikely Talents Sheet for each group. If possible, attach each sheet to a clipboard. Set out pens or pencils.

Help kids form groups of about five, and give each group a pen or pencil and an Unlikely Talents Sheet.

"Today, let's see who has some unlikely talents! Just like it might seem unlikely that God would work through some people, each of us can have talents that seem unlikely, or surprising or unexpected to others.

Read the unlikely talents in each box on the Unlikely Talents Sheet. Have kids sign their names in the box if they have the unlikely talent and can demonstrate it to their group. If the group fills in five boxes in a row, vertically, horizontally, or diagonally, the kids can shout, "Unlikely!" For the "Free Choice" boxes, kids can share any talent or skill they have! Everyone gets credit for the "Free Space" box in the center! For a variation of the game, encourage kids to try to fill in every box with a name.



Leader Tip: For Older Kids. Modify this activity for the older kids in your ministry by challenging them to move throughout the room looking for people who can do the talents listed on the sheet. When they find someone, they can ask that person to show off her talent and sign her name on the sheet. If your group is large, challenge kids not to repeat any names. When an entire row is filled with names, they can shout, "UNLIKELY!"

Once all the groups have finished, invite several kids to share their unlikely talents with the whole group. **"I'm guessing some of you didn't know you could do some of these things! In today's story, we're going to see how God can work through unlikely people, like you and me, to accomplish His plan."**

SLIDE: WONDER TRUTH

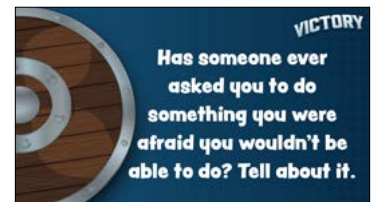
Today's Wonder Truth is **GOD CAN WORK THROUGH UNLIKELY PEOPLE."**

Welcome Question

SUPPLIES: paper, coloring utensils, poster board (optional), whiteboard (optional), dry-erase marker (optional)

SLIDE: WELCOME QUESTION

At service start time, draw kids' attention to the Welcome Question: "Has someone ever asked you to do something you were afraid you wouldn't be able to do? Tell about it." Invite kids to write answers on the poster board or whiteboard.



"God chose unlikely people to help defeat an army of over 900 chariots—or horse-drawn carts—with iron parts! We're going to learn all about that today, starting in our small groups! Everyone turn and face your small group leader. I'll see you in a few!"

Small Group

Introduce small group time. While kids are in small group, consider sitting in the groups for a few minutes each. Engage and interact as is appropriate.

Countdown

After about 15 minutes of small group, give a 5 minute warning and begin the countdown.

VIDEO: COUNTDOWN

"Hey everyone! Welcome to our Large Group Worship time! My name is _____ and I'm excited to take this time to worship God, review what we just read, and talk about ways we can respond to what we are learning about God! We are going to pray as we prepare our hearts to worship God!"

Prayer of Invitation

Before entering into worship, lead kids in a prayer of invitation. Use own words. Here is an example: **God, we ask You to lead us, teach us, and work through unlikely people like us. May Your Holy Spirit reveal truth and love to us as we dig deep into Your Word today. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

Declaring God's Wonder

SLIDE: DECLARATION

Read each line boldly and invite kids to repeat after you.

Thank You, God, that You are good! (Kids repeat.)

You made me on purpose, for a purpose. (Kids repeat.)

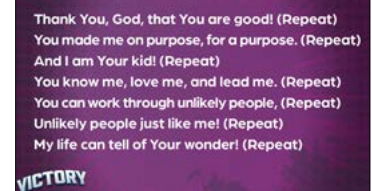
And I am Your kid! (Kids repeat.)

You know me, love me, and lead me. (Kids repeat.)

You can work through unlikely people, (Kids repeat.)

Unlikely people just like me! (Kids repeat.)

My life can tell of Your wonder! (Kids repeat.)



Worship

****NEW SONGS!!** Consider sharing some about the songs you are going to sing. What they mean, why we sing them, why they are meaningful and important to you!

"We're going to stand and sing together! One way that we show love to God is to worship through song! So stand up, sing loud, and join in the motions with us. God loves to hear us sing praises to Him! Let's stand together and sing!"

WORSHIP VIDEOS: Praise, Unstoppable God

God's Big Story

SLIDE: TITLE

Explain that Judges in the Old Testament, in the front part of their Bibles.

"Let's start by watching part of God's big story directly from the Bible.

Afterward, we will watch and experience more of the story!"

VIDEO: GODS BIG STORY



LESSON 1 DEBORAH AND BARAK EXPERIENCE IT! SCRIPT

SUPPLIES: tape (prep only)

RESOURCES: God's Unlikely Helpers Sheets, Objects Sheets

Ahead of time, print the God's Unlikely Helpers Sheets and Object Sheets and tape each picture to the wall or a whiteboard where kids can see them. As you tell the story, kids can take down the pictures that do not show one of the unlikely helpers.

"Hi, everyone! Today we are going to hear about some unlikely people whom God worked through to accomplish His perfect plan. These people also used some tools to do what God wanted. I need your help though. I have some pictures (point to the God's Unlikely Helpers Sheets), but I need you to pitch in to identify God's unlikely helpers. As I tell this story from the Bible, do you think you can figure out which of these unlikely people God worked through? Pause for kids to respond. Perfect!

Slide: Unlikely Slide 01

Let's start by looking at the pictures. I'd like to hear about who you think God's unlikely helpers are. **SLIDE: 02**

We have King Jabin. Hmm. I bet he is powerful if he is a king. **SLIDE: 03**

Then we have Sisera; he looks strong. **SLIDE: 04** We have Deborah.

For each person displayed, feel free to add a comment, especially highlighting aspects that we might use to disqualify people, such as looking older or not as strong. **SLIDE: 05** I wonder whether God works

through Barak. **SLIDE: 06** Finally, we have Jael. Let's do a

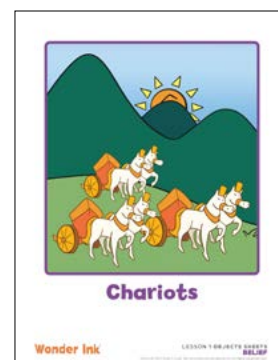
quick vote. Who do you think God will work through to do something amazing in this part of His story? For younger kids who have trouble reading, consider going back

through slides 2–6 and referring to the numbers on each slide in addition to saying the person's name. Then ask the kids to vote on which of the five people they think God will work through. **Soon we'll see if you are correct!**

But first, let's see look through some tools and guess which tool you think God's unlikely helper will use to accomplish God's plan. Advance through slides 7–11, naming each of the objects on the slides. This time, I want you to tell your neighbor which tool you think God's unlikely helper is going to use. Give kids about 10 seconds to share with their neighbors. Then call on several kids to share their guesses with the group. They might say things such as "Jabin with the chariots" or "Deborah with the lion." Don't comment on whether they are right or wrong; simply affirm them for guessing.

Now that we've picked our unlikely helpers and tools, let's hear God's big story! And when you hear a clue that helps us eliminate some of these choices on the wall, I want you to raise and wave your hand. We'll think about the clue together!

Deborah and Barak lived during the part of God's big story described in the book of Judges. Judges were men and women God raised up to lead His people.



During this time, the Israelites were wishy-washy about their love for God. Sometimes they followed God and His commands. But they often forgot about God. And when they forgot about God, things went badly for the Israelites. Their enemies grew strong while they became weak.

One of the Israelites' enemies was King Jabin, a powerful king who ruled from a place called Hazor. Because the Israelites were doing evil, God allowed Jabin's power over them to grow. Jabin terrorized the Israelites for 20 long years. If kids are not raising their hands or you have a group of younger kids, consider giving the following help: **Hmm ... If King Jabin terrorized the Israelites for 20 years, it doesn't sound like he's helping them, does it? I don't think he is God's unlikely helper ... what do you think?** Pause for responses. **Let's take down the picture of King Jabin.** Choose a volunteer to take down his picture.

Eventually the people cried out to God, "Help us! Help us!" What would God do? Would God listen? God heard His people and acted to rescue them. Though King Jabin was strong, Jabin's strength didn't scare or impress God in the least. God gave great wisdom to a woman named Deborah, a prophet who spoke God's messages to the Israelites. She led the people and served as their judge, settling their disagreements. If kids are not raising their hands at this point, pause to talk about Deborah. **Hmm ... so King Jabin tried to hurt the Israelites, but God gave wisdom to a woman named Deborah. Do you think she could be God's unlikely helper? Let's keep her picture on the wall and continue with our story!**

Deborah sent for another judge named Barak. She told him God was going to set a trap for Sisera, who was the commander of Jabin's army. God wanted Barak to lead 10,000 men to Mount Tabor. That would get Sisera's attention! God promised to give Barak victory over Sisera's army and all those fancy chariots. If kids are not raising their hands, pause here: **Did I just hear another clue? Deborah said that God promised to give Barak victory over Sisera's army. Is he God's unlikely helper? And what about Sisera? Let's keep listening.**

But Barak hesitated. He wouldn't go unless Deborah went with him. She agreed to go but told Barak he wouldn't receive honor for defeating Sisera. Instead, God would defeat Sisera by the hands of a woman. I wonder what woman was Deborah talking about?

Barak led 10,000 men to battle. Sisera heard about this and gathered his troops and chariots. Barak charged down the mountain with his 10,000 men, and God Himself sent Sisera's army into a panic. All their strength and chariots were no match for God. Barak chased down Sisera's army until they were completely defeated. Then Sisera fled the battle on foot. Pause here if kids are not raising their hands. **I think we can take another name off the wall, don't you?** Allow kids to respond. **It doesn't sound like Sisera is God's unlikely helper, but Barak might be ... let's keep listening!** Call on a volunteer to remove Sisera's picture.

Sisera ran and ran. His feet must have ached from all that running. He ran until he came to the tent of a woman named Jael. Sisera thought he had escaped God's great victory.

Jael welcomed Sisera. She gave him milk to drink and covered him with a blanket. Sisera told Jael to watch the doorway of her tent. Then he slept. He was worn out from all that running. But Jael didn't watch the doorway. Instead, she took showed courage by standing up against someone who was hurting others. It wasn't an army who killed Sisera, but Jael! God had defeated Sisera by the hands of a woman, just as Deborah said He would.

Oh wow! Can we guess who God's unlikely helper is now? Multiple kinds of answers are acceptable here: Jael by herself or Deborah, Barak, and Jael working together can be considered the unlikely heroes. **Now let's review the tools that each person used to play their part in God's victory.** Using the slides or papers on the wall, go through each of the tools until kids remember that Deborah used wisdom, Barak an army of men, and Jael the cup of milk and blanket. **Did anyone guess a helper and tool correctly from the very beginning?** Allow kids to respond.

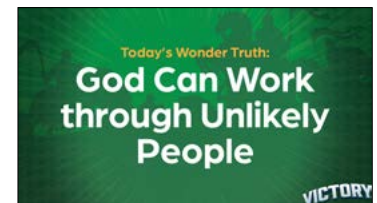
On that day, Deborah and Barak sang a new song, praising God and singing blessings over Jael for her role in God's victory. Deborah, Barak, and Jael all played a part in God's victory. God can work through unlikely people."

Connecting the Wonder Truth

SLIDE: WONDER TRUTH

Pose the following question to kids to help them connect the Wonder Truth to God's big story:

"Our Wonder Truth today is GOD CAN WORK THROUGH UNLIKELY PEOPLE. Where did you see our Wonder Truth in the story? Allow kids to answer freely.



The story of Deborah, Barak, and Jael highlights how God works through unlikely people to fulfill His promises. Jesus' own family line is full of imperfect, unlikely people. Many of Jesus' ancestors were unlikely to have such large roles in God's big story. Think of Jacob, who lied to his father. Or remember Ruth, who was a foreign woman. Even David was the youngest of his brothers. All their lives led to an unlikely baby in a manger who came as the Savior of the world—Jesus!"

Responding in Worship

SLIDE: RESPONDING IN WORSHIP

Talk about ways we can respond to what we are learning with next steps such as tithing, prayer, asking questions, and worship. Encourage kids to ask their SG leaders any questions they were wondering during the lesson.

*****Introduce this next song and invite kids to respond and participate in worship. See the "Worship Posture Tutorial" on the RBKids Resource Page.**

WORSHIP VIDEO: I Exalt Thee / I Speak Jesus



Blessing Your Kids

Speak a blessing over your kids, as a group or as individuals. Use your own words. Here is an example:

Blessing: You are important to God. He sees you, loves you, and can work through unlikely people like you. May He work through you this week in ways you never thought imaginable. Be strong. Be brave. God is with you wherever you go.

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1
VICTORY

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2
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4
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Unlikely Talents Slide.png
4
UNLIKELY TALENTS

Today's Wonder Truth
God Can Work through Unlikely People
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5
Deborah Wonder Truth Slide.png

6Deborah Welcome Question Slide...
6
victory
Has someone ever asked you to do something you were afraid you wouldn't be able to do? Tell about it.

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8
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Deborah Declaration Slide V2.png
8
Thank You, God, that you are good! You made me on purpose, for a purpose. And I am Your Kid! You know me, love me, and lend me. You can work through unlikely people. Unlikely people just like me! My life can tell of Your wonder!

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Unlikely Slide 02.png

3:44.27
10 Unstoppable God - Motions.mp4
10
Motions with Kids
10
Unlikely Talents Slide.png

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11
VICTORY

In God's Big Story! Deborah and Barak Judges 4-5
12
Deborah Title Slide.png

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13Victory Elem Gods Big Story L1.m...
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Unlikely Slide 01.png

14
victory
Who's God's Helper? What Tool Is Used?
14
Unlikely Slide 01.png

15
victory
King Jabin
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Unlikely Slide 02.png

16
victory
Sisera
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Unlikely Slide 03.png

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victory
Deborah
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Unlikely Slide 04.png

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victory
Barak
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Unlikely Slide 05.png

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victory
Jael
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Unlikely Slide 06.png

20
victory
Charlots
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Unlikely Slide 07.png

21
victory
A Cup of Milk and a Blanket
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Unlikely Slide 08.png

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victory
Army of Men
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Unlikely Slide 09.png

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Wisdom
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Unlikely Slide 10.png

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Lion
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Unlikely Slide 11.png

25
victory
Today's Wonder Truth
God Can Work through Unlikely People
victory
25
Deborah Wonder Truth Slide.png

26
victory
Responding in Worship
26
Responding In Worship Slide.png

5:32.10
27
Reckless Love - Lyric.mp4
27

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victory_theme_loop.mp4
28
VICTORY