

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!

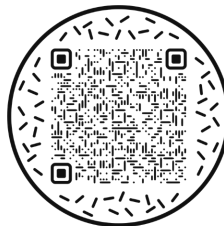
WORD OF WONDER: Here is what I am commanding you to do. Be strong and brave. Do not be afraid. Do not lose hope. I am the LORD your God. I will be with you everywhere you go. —Joshua 1:9

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.
- Curiosity Questions
- Discussion Questions for Younger and Older Kids
- Small Group Prayer Time
- Word of Wonder: Joshua 1:9
- Word of Wonder Activity
- LARGE GROUP
- Responding in Worship: God, Work through Me



[Victory Elementary Spotify playlist](#)

INVITATION

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

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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.

Small 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

Pre-Service Connection (15–20 min)

RESOURCES: [Coloring Page](#), whiteboard, poster paper, or butcher paper, writing utensils
Small group leaders should be seated in place in their small groups 20 minutes prior to service time. Have play stations with various board games, activities, or use games from the extra Games & Activities Guide to keep children occupied and engaged WITH you. This time is important to build relationships, welcome new kids, and keep structure in the room - you should be an active participant with them!

Learn the kids names, and make sure they all know yours too!

Warmly welcome new friends, and introduce them to your group.

Allow quieter kids who don't engage with the board games to color. Involve them in the curiosity questions.

As kids arrive..

Invite them to write/draw the answer to the Welcome Question: on the designated board:

“Has someone ever asked you to do something you were afraid you wouldn’t be able to do? Tell about it.” Set out sheets of paper and colored pencils.

While kids are playing in their opening activity groups..

Pose the following “I’m curious” questions. Say “I’m curious...” before each question and give kids a chance to think about and answer each one. After each question, consider having kids share their ideas with a neighbor before you call on one or two of them to share with the group.

- **Do you think fear can keep people from doing hard things? Why do you think that is?**
- **Think about some stories from the Bible. Can you name some unlikely people God worked through to accomplish His plan?**

****NEW!!** Large Group leaders will now lead an opening game or activity 10 minutes before service begins. It is very important that you are with your groups and ready to participate with them!

Small Group Begins

After the Opening Activity, Large Group Leader will begin small group time by reading the Welcome Question aloud and inviting everyone to open their Bibles and begin.

Small Group Discussion: Younger Kids 5–8 min

SUPPLIES: Bibles (1 per kid), **God's Unlikely Helpers Sheets (1 per SG)**

Invite kids to grab their BBibles, and help them find Judges. You will not read directly out of the Bible for the story today, but we do want kids to have an understanding of where the story comes from.

Pass out the God's Unlikely Helper Sheets to 5 volunteers. Instruct kids to hold out their picture when they hear their character's names. You might have to point at younger kids to help them when it's their turn.

Read the story summary found on the following page aloud, then discuss the questions below:

- **In God's big story today, who was the powerful king with 900 chariots? Was he for the Israelites or against them?**
- **Why did the Israelites cry out to God for help?**
- **Who did God work through in today's story? What did each person do?**
- **Why do you think Barak was afraid of King Jabin's army even after God promised to give him victory?**
- **Deborah was very courageous and wise. She wasn't afraid. What are some things that make you courageous?**
- **What are some scary things (or situations) that you want to ask God for courage to face?**

"It doesn't matter how young or old a person is—God can work through anyone. He worked through unlikely people like Deborah and Barak, and He can work through you too. He gives us the courage to overcome our fears, and He promises He will be with us. Let's talk to God in prayer and ask Him to work through us today."

Prayer Time: Younger Kids

Gather kids together in a circle and ask them to share their praises and requests. Pray for kids by name who shared about scary things they are facing. Then remind kids of the Wonder Truth and how no matter what they face, God promises to be with them and can work through them.

Leader Tip: This is a great opportunity for kids who are new to church and the Bible to hear true stories about Jesus! Encourage the kids sharing to give as many details as they can, and fill in the gaps or gently correct misinformation as needed.

Bible Story Summary – Younger Kids

In Judges 4, the people of Israel were in trouble because they had turned away from God, and a king named Jabin was treating them badly. He had a powerful army with 900 chariots led by a man named Sisera, and the people were very scared. They cried out to God for help, and God listened.

God chose a woman named Deborah, who was a prophet and a leader in Israel, to help. She sent for a man named Barak and told him that God wanted him to lead the army to fight Sisera. Barak agreed, but he said he would only go if Deborah went with him. Deborah agreed, but she said that because of this, a woman would get the honor of defeating Sisera.

When the battle began, God helped Barak's army defeat Sisera's army. Sisera ran away on foot and hid in the tent of a woman named Jael. She pretended to be friendly, but while Sisera was sleeping, Jael defeated him, and Israel was saved from their enemies!

Small Group Discussion: Older Kids 8–12 min

SUPPLIES: Bibles (1 per kid), [God's Unlikely Helpers Sheets](#) (1 per SG)

Invite kids to grab their Bibles, and help them find Judges. You will not read directly out of the Bible for the story today, but we do want kids to have an understanding of where the story comes from.

Pass out the God's Unlikely Helper Sheets to 5 volunteers. Instruct kids to hold out their picture when they hear their character's names. You might have to point at younger kids to help them when it's their turn.

Read the story summary found on the following page aloud, then discuss the questions below:

Turn to Page 3 of this guide and help kids understand the context of this passage.

- In God's big story today, why did the Israelites cry out to God for help?
- Who did God work through in today's story? What did each person do?
- What did God promise would happen when Barak led 10,000 men into battle?
- Why do you think Barak was hesitant about what God asked him to do, even though God promised to give Barak victory?
- Who are you most like in today's story? Tell about it.
- What's the hardest part of giving your fears to God?

"Don't you love how God chooses people we might not expect to accomplish His plan? Because of His great love for you, God sees things in you that you may not see in yourself. When He asks us to do things, we can trust that God knows what is best and will be with us every step of the way, just as He was with Deborah and Barak. Let's talk to God in prayer and ask Him to work through us today."

Prayer Time: Older Kids

Encourage kids to sit in a circle and share their praises and requests. Remember many kids this age deal with anxiety and identity questions. Guide the conversation, reminding them whose they are and how God sees them as important and valuable to His Kingdom. For those who would like to tell God in prayer about their fears, encourage them to do so and then remind them to ask Him for courage and help. They can pray out loud or silently. Finally, remind them they can trust God in all things and that He is always with them.

Older Kids – Notes Page

**Complete the Notes Page with kids. Helping them to fill out all of the spaces. This is an important way for parents to see what their kids are learning each way and have meaningful conversations at home!

Leader Tip: This is a great opportunity for kids who are new to church and the Bible to hear true stories about Jesus! Encourage the kids sharing to give as many details as they can, and fill in the gaps or gently correct misinformation as needed.

Bible Story Summary – Older Kids

In Judges 4, the Israelites had turned away from God, and because of that, they were being ruled by King Jabin of Canaan. His army commander, Sisera, had 900 iron chariots, and he oppressed the Israelites for 20 years. The people cried out to God for help.

At that time, Deborah, a prophet and judge of Israel, was leading the people. She called for Barak, a military leader, and told him that God commanded him to take 10,000 men and go to battle against Sisera's army. Barak agreed but only if Deborah would go with him. Deborah agreed to go but told him that because of his request, the honor of defeating Sisera would go to a woman, not to Barak.

When the battle started, God confused Sisera's army, and Barak's forces defeated them. Sisera escaped and ran away on foot to the tent of a woman named Jael. She welcomed him in and gave him a place to rest. Sisera fell asleep, and while he was sleeping, Jael used a tent peg to kill him. When Barak arrived, Jael showed him what she had done. Through Deborah's leadership and Jael's bravery, Israel was saved from their enemies, and there was peace for 40 years.

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 (NirV)

Word of Wonder

SUPPLIES: Bibles (1 per kid), *Word of Wonder Poster* (1 per SG)

"The Word of Wonder for the Victory series is Joshua 1:9. In God's big story today, we saw how God worked through Barak even though he was hesitant. God chose Barak to defeat the army and promised to go ahead of him in battle. This verse is a reminder of how God is always with us. We don't have to be afraid or worry. We can be brave and trust that God is always there. Let's read the Word of Wonder together!"

Encourage kids to open their Bibles to Joshua 1:9. Read the verse once together. Encourage kids to read it again with their bravest voice. Then encourage them to stand and read it one more time with a loud, brave voice while making a superhero pose.

Talk about these questions:

- **Think of stories about Jesus in the Bible. When did Jesus choose to be courageous and to remember God was with Him?**
- **If God commands us to be strong and brave, what does that mean? How does being strong and brave allow God to work through you?**

Leader Tip: For Younger Kids. Consider using the *Preschool Word of Wonder* for kindergartners instead if your group struggles with longer verses!

Word of Wonder Activity

SUPPLIES: posterboard (½ sheet per group), permanent marker (prep only)

Before kids arrive, use a permanent marker to write the Word of Wonder on half sheets of posterboard (one per small group).

Then give each small group a posterboard with the verse on it, and encourage kids to read the verse together several times.

"Let's play a game called Back and Forth to Victory! I'm going to point to myself and start at the beginning of the verse, saying a few words of the verse, and then I will point to one of you. Whoever I point to will say a few more words of the verse and then point to someone else. This will continue until we say the entire verse. At the end, let's join in and all shout, "Victory!"

Invite kids to try the game several times, saying the verse faster each time.

Leader Tip: For Older Kids. Have kids practice writing out the Word of Wonder by memory on their Notes page!

Large Group!

Responding in Worship: God, Work through Me

SUPPLIES: crayons or markers, kid-safe scissors (1 per kid), glue sticks (1 per kid), posterboard (1 sheet per group), permanent marker (prep only)

RESOURCES: [God, Work through Me Sheet \(1 per kid\)](#); [Victory Elementary Spotify playlist](#)

Before kids arrive, write “God, Work through Me” across the top of each posterboard. Print one copy of the God, Work through Me Sheet per kid.

Gather kids together.

"In God's big story today, God heard His people crying out for help and put a plan into action to rescue them. Did you know that God never lacks courage? He's never afraid. King Jabin's huge army and 900 chariots didn't scare Him. In fact, God worked through some unlikely people to accomplish His plan to defeat King Jabin's army. Deborah, Barak, and Jael listened to God and trusted Him. Though they may have been afraid and worried sometimes, they knew God was already ahead of them, and they trusted His plan.

Close your eyes. God sees you, knows you, and loves you. Now imagine God choosing to work through you. What do you think God might ask you to do? Pause and allow time for kids to process. **What do you think He might ask you to say?** Pause and allow time for kids to process. **What do you think He might ask you to help with?** Pause and allow time for kids to process. **Open your eyes.**

God sees you and your gifts and talents. He also sees the people in your life who don't know Him and those who need encouragement, help, and kindness. God can work through unlikely people like you to tell and show others how amazing He is.

Invite kids to get into small groups. Give a posterboard to each group and a God, Work through Me Sheet to each kid. Set out crayons or markers, kid-safe scissors, and glue sticks.

Encourage kids to color the person outline on their sheet to look like them. Then below the person, they can write or draw their answers to each prompt. Consider giving a couple of examples for how they might answer the prompts.

For example, kids might write, “God, work through me to be patient with my little brother” and “God, work through me to tell my friend that Jesus loves her.” Play the [Victory Elementary Spotify playlist](#) quietly in the background as kids respond.

As kids finish, they can cut out their people outlines and the prompt boxes and glue them to the posterboard. When everyone is finished, pray over the kids and their responses and ask God to work through these amazing, unlikely kids to show His love to others.

Leader Tip: For Younger Kids. Encourage leaders to circulate throughout the room, helping younger kids read their sheets as needed. Prereaders can draw their answers, or they can share their answers with a leader, who can write on their sheets for them.