

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: Be strong and brave. Do not be afraid. God will be with you wherever you go.

—from Joshua 1:9

CURIOSITY

BELIEF

FAITH

- Puppet Intro and Curiosity Questions
- Curiosity Activity: Likely or Unlikely
- Declaring God's Wonder
- Prayer of Invitation
- Worship: My Help, Praise
- God's Big Story
- Connecting the Wonder Truth
- Word of Wonder: From Joshua 1:9
- Prayer and Blessing





INVITATION

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

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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.



LESSON 1 EARLY CHILDHOOD

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

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Welcome

Slide: Series Welcome Loop

As kids arrive...

Walk around the room and welcome as many kids as possible by showing excitement that they have joined you. Give high-fives, fist bumps, encourage them to sit on the floor in their spots, and ask questions about their week.

Video: Countdown

Welcome kids to worship time. Introduce yourself by name.

Puppet Intro and Curiosity Questions

Introduce the kids to Tac, the curious cat.

Leader: Hi friends! I think we should see what our friend Tac is up to! Can you help me call him? On the count of three, everybody shout Tac's name. One, two, three—TAC!

Tac the Cat: (pops up) Well, hello, everybody! It's good to see you all today!

Leader: Hi, Tac! What have you been up to lately?

Tac the Cat: Well, I was just out playing with my new friend, Guppy the Puppy! He helped me be brave, and I was surprised!

Leader: How did he help you?

Tac the Cat: Well, my mom said I had to go to the vet, but I was really afraid. A vet is like a doctor for cats, and I was scared to go. But I went outside, and there was Guppy the Puppy. At first, I was scared, because, you know, cats and dogs don't always get along. But he told me he had just moved in next door and then he asked me if I wanted to be his friend.

Leader: Guppy the Puppy sounds like a nice dog! Did he help you be brave?

Tac the Cat: He did! He asked me why I looked sad, and I told him about my mom saying I had to go to the vet in a few days. He told me that last week he had gone to the vet, and it was no big deal. The vet helped him to feel better. And guess what? He even got a treat when he was all done there!

Leader: Wow! I'm glad that, even though he was an unlikely friend, he was able to help you!

Tac the Cat: Yeah, now I am not afraid to go to the vet anymore. And I'm excited I might even get a treat afterward!

Leader: I think it's neat that God chooses unlikely people to help us—like he chose Guppy the Puppy to help you.

Tac the Cat: God can work through unlikely people—or puppies—to do great things.

Leader: He can! As a matter of fact, in our story we are going to hear how God chose unlikely people to help play a part in His victory.

Tac the Cat: That sounds like a good story! But right now, it's time for me to go to the vet, so I'll see you guys later!

Leader: Bye, Tac! Good luck at the vet!

"Have you ever been curious about something? Let's take a moment and think: can you think of someone who is likely to be a good friend? Allow the kids to respond. Can you think of someone who is unlikely to be a good friend? Allow the kids to respond. We all see and hear things that make us curious. Did you ever stop to think about how God can work through unlikely people?"

SLIDE: WONDER TRUTH

Today's Wonder Truth is **GOD CAN WORK THROUGH UNLIKELY PEOPLE**. Today, we'll discover how God worked through some unlikely people to achieve the victory!"

Curiosity Activity: Likely or Unlikely

Use this activity to introduce kids to the concept of something being likely or unlikely. Gather the kids around you and explain each situation below.

"Today we'll learn that God can work through unlikely people. Unlikely means something that isn't expected, or when something happens you didn't think would happen. We are going to play a game to see whether someone is a likely or unlikely person to help. I'm going to ask a question, and you say what place, person, or result is most likely.

If you wanted to find a book to read, which place would you go?

- A park
- A library
- A restaurant

Allow kids to answer. **Right! You are more likely to go to a library to find a book to read. The word likely means that something is probably going to happen. It's more likely that you would find a new toy to buy at a toy store. It's unlikely that you would go to school to buy a new toy. Let's try another one.**

What is likely to happen if you eat ice cream outside on a really hot day?

- The ice cream will stay cold.
- The ice cream will melt.

Allow kids to answer. **Your ice cream will likely melt if you try to eat it on a hot day. It's unlikely that your ice cream would stay cold on a hot day.**

Who is likely to be a person who takes care of you?

- **A parent or grandparent**
- **A zookeeper**
- **A baby**

Allow kids to answer. **Right! Parents or grandparents are most likely to take care of you! I don't think I would want a baby to take care of me! It's unlikely that a baby would know how to take care of a kid.**

Who is likely to help you when you are sick?

- **A dog**
- **A doctor**
- **A dancer**

Allow kids to answer. **Right! A doctor is most likely to help you when you are sick! It's unlikely that you would want a dog to help you when you are sick!**

In God's big story today, we're going to hear about how God chose some unlikely people to play a part in His victory—God works through people you wouldn't expect!"

Declaring God's Wonder

SLIDE: DECLARATION

Encourage kids to say the statements and do the motions with you.

Thank You, God, that You made me! (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Make prayer hands, then point up to God and to yourself.

And I am Your kid! (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Put your hands on your hips.

Jesus loves me so much; (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Spread your arms out wide to your side one at a time, then pull them in for a hug around your chest.

His love for me is big. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Hold your arms up high and wide above your head.

The Holy Spirit leads me, (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Bring your arms down from the sky, making a path in front of you.

And I can follow You. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

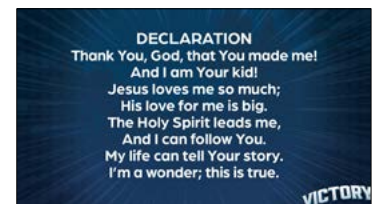
March like you're following the leader.

My life can tell Your story. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Hold your hands in front of you like an open book.

I'm a wonder; this is true. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Put your hands up, shaking your fingers, celebrating ("praise hands").



Prayer of Invitation

Before entering into God's big story, lead kids in a prayer of invitation. Use your own words. Here is an example: **God, please help us listen to what You have to say to us today. We invite You to open our hearts and minds as we learn from Your Word. May the unlikely people You chose in today's story remind us of what You can do and how You care. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

Worship

"Today, we'll learn about how God can work through unlikely people. Let's sing about God's victory and power together."

Worship Songs: My Help, Praise

God's Big Story

SUPPLIES: Bible

Hold up a Bible and show the kids. Tell them today's story comes from the book of Judges in the Bible. Open a Bible and show them where to find the story.

Bible Time Rhyme

Say the Bible time rhyme (with motions) each week before the Bible story to remind kids that what they're about to hear is part of God's big story.

I open my Bible and what do I see? (*Hold your hands together, then open your palms, as if opening a book.*)

God's big story, waiting for me! (*Point to yourself.*)

"Let's watch part of God's big story, which comes from the book of Judges in the Bible."

VIDEO: GOD'S BIG STORY

GOD'S BIG STORY SCRIPT

SUPPLIES: Bible, tape

RESOURCES: God's Big Story Pictures

Ahead of time, print the God's Big Story Pictures and hang them on the walls of your room in the order they appear in the story; spread the pictures out so they are evenly spaced in your room. The kids will travel from picture to picture as you tell the story.

"Today we're going to hear about how God chose some unlikely people to win in a battle. Two of these people were named Deborah and Barak. Deborah and Barak lived during the part of God's big story described in the book of Judges. Judges were men and women whom God raised up to lead His people, the Israelites. During this time, the Israelites sometimes followed God's commands and sometimes forgot all about God. That's when things went bad for the Israelites! Their enemies grew strong while they became weak.



Leader Tip: If you have a small room, you can even travel outside of the room on your God's Big Story journey. Pictures could be hung in the hallway or other areas nearby. If it's nice out, you could even have your group travel outside!

Travel with the kids to Picture 1. **This is King Jabin. He was a powerful king who ruled a place called Hazor. He had a big and powerful army. King Jabin even had 900 chariots, which are carts pulled by horses to fight battles. The Israelites were scared King Jabin would defeat them. They cried out to God, "Help us! Help us!" Do you think God will help them? Let's travel to our next picture and see!**

Travel with kids to Picture 2. **This is Deborah. God gave great wisdom to a woman named Deborah, a prophetess. A prophet or prophetess is someone who spoke God's message. God allowed Deborah to lead her people as a judge. A judge is someone who helped God's people make decisions. Let's see what God helped Deborah do.**

Travel with kids to Picture 3. **This is Barak. told Barak that God was going to trick Sisera, who was the leader of Jabin's army. God wanted Barak to lead 10,000 men to battle the enemies. That would get the attention of their leader, Sisera! God promised that Barak's army would win the battle.**

But Barak was worried. He said he wouldn't go unless Deborah would go with him, and she agreed to go. Barak gathered 10,000 men, and he and Deborah headed out to find Sisera, the leader of the enemy's army. Let's see if we can find Sisera!

Travel with kids to Picture 4. **There is Sisera. As Sisera's army approached, Deborah told Barak, "Go! Today the Lord will let you beat Sisera. Hasn't the Lord gone ahead of you?" Barak ran down the mountain, and God himself made Sisera's army scared and worried. All of their strength was no match for God! Barak and the Israelites beat the enemy army and Sisera with the help of a woman named Jael who killed Sisera.**

On that day, Deborah and Barak sang a new song of praise to God! Deborah, Barak, and Jael all played a part in God's victory. God can work through unlikely people."

Connecting the Wonder Truth

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

SLIDE: WONDER TRUTH

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

The story of Deborah, Barak, and Jael shows how God works through unlikely people to fulfill His promises. Jesus' own family line is full of unlikely people. Many of Jesus' relatives were unlikely to have such important roles in God's big story. All the lives of these unlikely people led to an unlikely baby in a manger who came as the Savior of the world—Jesus!"

Prayer and Blessing

After the kids finish their activity, pray together, thanking God for working through us as unlikely people. Use your own words. Here is an example:

God, thank You for working through unlikely people in incredible ways. Help us to always be willing to do what You ask, to help in ways You want us to help, and to say the things You want us to say. We love You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Encourage the kids to hold their hands out in front of them, with palms up, as if their hands were open to receive something. Tell them to listen and receive the blessing as you speak it over them. Use your own words. Here is an example:

May you always remember to do what God asks you to do—to help in ways God asks you to help and to speak in ways God wants you to speak. Remember that God can work through unlikely people to do great things!