



## ***LIFE LESSONS FROM THE LADIES***

### **Deborah Squared: Lesson 12**

While studying the life of Deborah in the Book of Judges, I stumbled upon another Deborah I didn't even know existed. Her character seems to be the complete opposite of Warrior Deborah that has inspired many of us. Not much is said of her, in fact, she's only mentioned twice. But the quietness of her character brings much the same strength and courage as the other. I decided to look at both of them, contrasting the two different personalities, callings, and lives, and allow you to choose the one you more closely resonate with. I think you might be surprised!

#### **First Day: Deborah, Warrior #1**

1. Read the two places Deborah is discussed, Genesis 24:59 and 35:8. What facts do these verses tell us about her?

I don't recall ever noticing this Deborah before. When Abraham sent a servant to bring back a wife for his son Isaac, Rebekah's world is suddenly turned upside down. But so is Deborah's! She had been Rebekah's nurse when she was a baby, and now, she is called to follow Rebekah to this new land, at a day's notice. As a faithful nursemaid, Deborah made the 500-mile trip from Haran to Hebron, leaving her family and home as well. We know nothing of the emotions she may have been feeling at the time, just that she was faithful and obedient to her call as a bond servant. She obviously was nurse to Rebekah's twin boys, Jacob and Esau, who seemed to come out fighting! She must have had her hands full with these two, that's for sure! We don't hear anything else about her until her death in 35:8 where they bury her under a tree and call it "The Oak of Weeping" because of the mourning that was happening. Rebekah is thought to have been dead by this time, so obviously Jacob's family has taken Deborah in as their own. She

is thought to be about 140 years old or so at this time. (Yikes!) Her life raises many questions ... why are we told of her death, when the death of her mistress Rebekah isn't even reported? Why does Scripture highlight her death instead of her life? Why was there so much weeping?

Obviously she was very loved by this family. And the mention of her death makes it apparent that her life was very important to Rebekah and her family. The tears that were shed and the amount of weeping was usually reserved for a family member, showing us how much they esteemed and valued her. This blesses my heart so much. Deborah simply did her job, her mundane, every day duties, to the best of her ability. Her name means "bee" and she seems to be "busy as a bee." She didn't win any wars, move any mountains, or even raise any kids of her own. In fact, her life can seem to go unnoticed and be unimportant. But the fact that the Holy Spirit saw fit to mention her, well, that tells us a lot!

2. Mother Theresa said that Deborah "Had hands to serve and a heart to love." What did she mean?
  
3. How does Deborah's life show us how present the Lord is in the common-ness of our lives?
  
4. Whether it's doing dishes, folding laundry, or doing your homework, how can you bring the glory of God into YOUR commonplace?
  
5. How is Deborah an example of selfless love? How can you exhibit more "selfless" love in whatever it is you do?

Their grief expressed evidence of their great love for her. We can imagine she was busy, a hard worker, and probably joyful to boot. She reminds us that no work or calling is trivial to God. Even when it goes unnoticed by others, God sees it and He will never forget your work and labor of love!



3. What's the significance of it being pointed out that Deborah was a wife?

The story is a little bit complicated, only because it was unusual for a woman to be a judge in Israel in that day. Deborah lived during the time when judges ruled the land, before God allowed Israel to have kings to rule over them. As a prophetess and judge, she would discern and declare the mind of God. She ministered as a mediator between God and His people. Inspired by God to speak for Him, she poured out His wisdom, knowledge, and instruction when the people came to her for help. For eighty years, the Jews had enjoyed rest because of the leadership of Ehud, the longest period of peace recorded in the Book of Judges. But no sooner had this man died than the people of Israel lapsed back into idolatry, and God soon punished them by selling them to Jabin, the King of Canaan, and the commander of his army was Sisera. After being harshly oppressed, the children of Israel cried out to God to relieve their suffering. He answered them through the prophetess Deborah.

4. What message does God bring them through Deborah in verse 6-7?

5. How does Barak, an Israelite warrior, reply?

I wonder why God raises up this courageous woman to be the judge in the land. There are many different ideas on that. Warren Wiersbe wrote, "This was an act of grace, but it was also an act of humiliation for the Jews, for they lived in a male dominated society that wanted only mature male leadership." Most believe there was no man mature enough for the job at the time, so He used a woman. Not sure I'm good with that. Perhaps she was simply "The best man for the job" so to speak. When God wants to glorify Himself through His people, He always has a perfect plan. God chose the leader, the place for the battle, and His plan for the army to follow. God knew what He was doing! As far as why Barak said he'd only go if she went, many think he was scared. I personally don't agree. I agree with what Marjorie Kimbrough wrote, "Barak was smart enough to realize that all of the instructions for the victory were being given to Deborah, so he did not want to venture out without her." He saw that God was with her, speaking to her and leading her. I think he was a smart guy! It took some humility to acknowledge that, I would think. It appears that her presence brought strength and confidence to this warrior as he led his troops.

Deborah seems to be a great leader. Elizabeth George points out that she's diligent, devoted, dedicated, available, and prepared. She was a remarkable woman, full of faith, strength, courage, and commitment. She said "yes" to God.

6. How do you think she "prepared" herself for this role?
  
7. Why do you think it would've taken strength and courage for this job?
  
8. Elizabeth George wrote, "To become like Deborah—a woman used powerfully by God, a woman entrusted with leadership responsibility, a woman given a great ground for service to the kingdom—you must first be faithful as a wife. After all, God is honored when you help, submit to, respect, and love your husband (Titus 2:5)." Do you agree or disagree? Thoughts?
  
9. Even though Barak's faith may have wavered, Deborah's didn't. Why not?

Let's end here for today. Wouldn't you like to meet Deborah? I would! I'd have tons of questions about her role and how she could fulfill it with such strength and confidence. Did she have insecurities in her abilities, like me? Did she worry about what others thought about her, like I do? Did she feel inadequate like I always do? Hmmmm...

### **Third Day**

**What's your memory verse?**

1. Read Judges 4 again. When Deborah agreed to go to battle, what did she prophesize, or predict, would happen? Why did she think that would matter to Barak? Did it?
2. Notice Deborah's battle cry in verse 14. What does she remind Barak of?
3. Perhaps Barak was dragging his feet a bit and needed to be reminded that God keeps His promises. Maybe you need that reminder today. Are you fearful or doubtful in a situation? Have you lost hope in some circumstance? Remind yourself of all the promises in His Word and be encouraged! Read them again, hold on to them, and live them! Up! (Like Deborah said!)
4. Describe how Sisera was killed. How did God use another woman to fulfill His purpose?

Jael certainly stepped up to intervene for God's people. Sisera thought he was safe entering that tent, didn't he? He was confident he found a safe place, and then Bam! He sure didn't see that coming! God used Jael to help save Israel from bondage. She didn't murder for personal gain, but she was taking a stand with the people of God. This took a lot of courage on her part. And it was pretty clever. We'll talk about her more later.

5. In all we've read about Deborah, we've seen a woman with much wisdom, yet she exhibits it with much humility. What are some ways we see the evidence of humility in her life?
6. What does 1 Peter 5:5-6 tell us about humility?

7. As a leader, Deborah wasn't self-assertive, pushy, or aggressive. The way to greatness in God's kingdom is the way of humble service. How does this example challenge you? Would you say you are "clothed" with humility or rags of self-righteousness?
  
8. Deborah was a woman of strength; emotionally, spiritually, and probably physically as well. How does one get this mental strength and toughness as well as spiritual maturity?
9. It is said that Deborah never "gave up, gave in, dropped out, or quit, short of God's goal for her." Do you tend to endure and persevere when things get tough, or do you tend to quit? How does quitting once make it easier to quit again? Can you think of any Scriptures that encourage us to keep going?
  
10. Do you feel like you've ever "quit, short of God's goal for you"? Is there something you can do about it?

Let's stop here for today. I pray that you don't get discouraged by her strength, but are challenged to rise up and pursue the Lord like never before!

#### **Fourth Day**

##### **Work on your memory verse.**

1. After God gave them victory over their enemies, Deborah and Barak write a beautiful song together. They wanted to keep the memory alive, so like Moses and others before them, they wrote a song. Let's break it up into sections.
  - a. Read Judges 5:1-12, where they praise the Lord for all He did for His people. What are some of the things they praise Him for?

- b. Read Judges 5:13-23. Deborah was happy that many men offered themselves willingly in God's service (2, 9), but there were 4 tribes who wouldn't do their share of the fighting. Who were they?
    - c. Read Judges 5:24-31. Describe Deborah's blessing upon Jael.
  2. Weirsbe wrote, "The people of God today are not unlike the people of Israel when it comes to God's call for service: Some immediately volunteer and follow the Lord; some risk their lives; some give the call serious consideration but say no; and others keep to themselves as though the call has never been given." (Ouch) Which of these phrases best describes you? Be honest. Is God calling you to make any changes?
  3. Read the above quote again. Can you think of a time when, regarding God's call on your life:
    - a. You immediately volunteered and followed the Lord?
    - b. You risked something? (Maybe not your life, but something else?)
    - c. You gave it serious thought, but said no?
    - d. You kept doing your own thing and pretended you didn't hear it?

4. What kinds of “risks” can there be in following God’s call on our lives?
  
5. Read Judges 5:31 again. Describe the contrast between the enemies of the Lord and those who love Him.
  
6. What did Deborah call herself in Judges 5:7?
  
7. In both chapters, who does Deborah give all the glory to regarding the deliverance of Israel?
  
8. In 5:1 and 9, what attitude of a leader’s heart is Deborah praising?

I’m part of a conference called “*When Leaders Lead*” and I love this title so much. Strong leaders “willingly offer themselves” and, I will add, to the Lord, and to one another. A leader serves with a grateful heart, a loving heart, a brave heart, and a willing heart. Deborah had a willing heart to be used by God in a crucial time in history.

9. How about you? God is still calling men and women to rise and lead the charge to love, follow, and serve Him wholeheartedly. Is your heart willing to follow?

### **Fifth Day**

**Write out your verse by memory!**

1. Today let's look at some general questions and observations regarding the life of Deborah #1 and Deborah #2. First of all, who do you relate to better, and why?
2. Would you consider yourself a leader in some way? Are you dragging your feet for some reason, or are you pressing forward?
3. Do you have any insecurities as a leader? Are you relying on the Holy Spirit to accomplish His work? What does Paul say about this in Philippians 4:13, 2 Corinthians 12:9 and Ephesians 6:10?
4. Have you ever been called to be in the role of leadership over a man? Have there been any challenges that come with that role? How did you handle them?
5. Deborah definitely was a warrior. She also was an example of a virtuous woman as described in Proverbs 31:10-31. In the Old Testament the word "virtuous" is used more than 200 times to describe an army and means "able, capable, mighty, strong, valiant, powerful, worthy." This certainly defines her. Whether you see yourself as an actual "warrior" or not, we are called to face life with a "warrior-like" attitude. One of bravery, courage, valor, stamina, endurance, and **HIS** power. Today, are you facing the challenges in YOUR life with this attitude? What difference does your attitude make in the battle?

6. Explain how you can be a warrior in the mundane, commonality of life.
  
7. After their victory, Deborah's heart was filled with praise. Why should gratefulness be another characteristic of a leader's heart?
  
8. As a prophetess and judge, Deborah was a "witness" for the Lord. She lived in dark and evil times, and she was like a light on a hill. How about you? We also live in dark and evil times. People today also need to hear the Word of God and see Him through the lives of believers. Are we providing a good, clear, and loving witness for the Lord? Are you like the sun "when it comes out in full strength"?
  
9. Random question. Is God calling you to be brave in some situation you're facing? Deborah showed such bravery in what she did. Now, I don't know if she "felt" brave, but she showed it. God is saying to you today the same thing he told Joshua when he needed to be brave, "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."  
Joshua 1:9

10. Deborah and Barak commend Jael for the murder of Sisera in Judges 5. It seems a bit strange to praise someone for murder, but she was considered a heroine and a woman who was “the friend of Israel.” George wrote, “They praised the faith of Jael, a foreigner who acted out that faith in her family’s tent, by herself, in the only way that she, a Bedouin tent-woman, knew. Using the tools and skills of her daily life, Jael did battle for God in a time of war.” She’s another example of a woman who showed bravery while probably shaking in her boots! How can you use your tools and skills to help God’s people and His purposes?

**Just an FYI:**

**BRAVE:** Ready to face and endure danger or pain, showing courage, endure or face unpleasant conditions of behavior without showing fear.

**Synonyms:** Courageous, valiant, lionhearted

**See you next week!!**

