



# God Chooses Deborah as a Leader

Goal: To affirm the leadership of women in God's plan.

## RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

### . . . In Judges 4:1-10

Deborah is one of the judges in the Bible. Judges were charismatic leaders, not judges in the modern sense. However, they may have had some military and legal roles. Deborah is the only female judge listed in the Bible and the only judge called a prophet. Deborah is an important figure in the defeat of the Canaanites by the Israelites, a victory described in both Judges 4 and in “Deborah’s Song” in Judges 5, one of the oldest parts of the Bible. Deborah may have written the song herself shortly after the original events, sometime around 1125 BC. The name *Deborah* means “bee” in Hebrew. Barak is the commander of the Israelite militia. The name *Barak* means “lightning.” Barak and Deborah face the 900 chariots of the Canaanites. These are camped on the strategic plain of Esdraelon, a wedge-shaped valley across Canaan’s northern hills. The Canaanites include archers armed with long-range bows, iron spears and shields, iron helmets, and coats of mail. Deborah instructs Barak to muster military support from the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali. Barak gathers ten units from these tribes (not 10,000 as the passage suggests). They will face the Canaanites with bronze and copper daggers in their hands, along with swords, slings, and short-range bows and arrows.

### . . . In Your Children’s Experiences

Beginning with this week’s story, you are going to be helping the children learn about women and men who were called by God to be leaders for God’s people. There are several ways you can help children connect with Deborah and her role as a leader in the community and her work as both a mediating judge and counsel to the military leader, Barak. Older children will be familiar with the term *judge*. Invite them to share some of the things that a judge does. This will provide a nice introduction to the story you will be telling about Deborah. All ages will be able to identify with Deborah’s work in supporting Barak.

### . . . In Your Relationships with the Children

As you tell children the stories of God’s leaders—prophets, a judge, rulers, apostles—children will be able to see how these women and men constitute a family tree of faith. As they meet them, they will learn about the gifts they possessed as leaders of God’s people. Deborah’s story will help them remember how God is grateful when we live and work as peacemakers. Children will be able to give examples from their own lives of times when they have helped people settle an argument or supported someone when they had a hard job to do.

*O God, give me a wise heart so that—like Deborah—I will offer  
wise counsel and leadership in Christ’s name. Amen.*



## Supplies

### Music & Melodies

[bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies](http://bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies)

### Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 8, 8a, 8b, 8c, 21, 22

basic supplies  
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)  
(see p. vii)

internet-connected  
device

tan or neutral-colored  
blanket or bedsheet

candle

## Responding

### Claiming

dates to eat, colored  
chalk

### Offering

clear self-adhesive  
paper

### Extra

copies of **Grace Notes**  
(GN) 1

## GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Post **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule,” to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM iii–iv** for the key to icons (for example, **LG** **T**) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

“Claiming God’s Grace” and “Offering God’s Grace” require more prep.

### Welcoming and Preparing

**LG** **A** **B** **M** **MS**

Welcome each child with “Grace and peace be with you, *(Name)*.” Prompt the children to respond: “And also with you.”

Ask some children to prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two lead today’s singing.

Draw the children’s attention to **SCM 8a**. Explain that they are going to create Canaan during the time of the judges around 1100 BC. Have the children look at the map and create signs representing the different landmarks indicated on the map. Have them make a palm tree using available materials, or they can draw a palm tree on mural paper. Together, decide where in the room the palm tree and signs should be placed based on their relative locations on the map. Arrange everything accordingly, then spread the neutral-colored or tan blanket or bedsheet on the floor by the palm tree to represent the desert.

As the children work, wonder aloud about the kinds of problems or worries that children have today. Keep the conversation general rather than asking children about the specific problems they are experiencing. Write key words on newsprint. Wonder who we can turn to for help with problems or conflicts.

Cut out the figures from **SCM 8b**.

### Singing

Invite the children to sit on the bedsheet by the palm tree.

Play “Freedom Is Coming”—**SCM 22**. Play the song, inviting the children to sing along. Suggest the children add motions to the song.

### Praying

**M**

Turn on the candle reminding us of God’s presence. Offer the following prayer:

God, you know the difficulties we face. You know all about our conflicts and our problems (*pause*). Help us to feel your care (*pause*). Help us to be open to your way (*pause*). Amen.



### Preparing to Hear the Story C

Invite the children to tell you what they remember about Moses. If not mentioned, remind them that Moses led the people out of Egypt and toward a new homeland, called Canaan. Explain that Moses did not enter Canaan, the Promised Land. Joshua took the people into Canaan to settle. The Israelites faced people who did not want them there. The story of Deborah is about one such battle against a much bigger and stronger foe.

Explain that the name *Deborah* means “bee” in Hebrew. Talk about some of the characteristics of bees. They are courageous, fiercely protecting the rest of the bee community. Bees also show traits of wisdom through the ways they perform their tasks. The construction of beehives and honeycombs requires a lot of skill and hard work. In Bible times, honey was highly prized and very valuable.

### Hearing the Story L C

Show the children where to find Judges 4 in the story in the Bible. Encourage the children to listen as you tell the story from **SCM 8**. Use your voice, expressions, feelings, and body to make the story livelier. Vary the tone, speed, and pitch of your voice to indicate changes in mood. Conclude by saying, “Word of wisdom, Word of grace,” and prompt the children to say, “Thanks be to God.”

Read the story again using **SCM 8**. Invite the children to choose lines or paragraphs to read, or to join in by saying, “Buzz, buzz,” whenever they hear Deborah’s name.

After the children have heard the story, ask them to consider why Deborah might have been given her name.

### Reflecting on God’s Grace C

Let the children choose one of the figures from **SCM 8b** to hold as you reflect on this story with the children. Let the children take turns holding the figures. Pose some of the following questions and invite the children to answer them from the perspective of the figure being held. Use the name of each figure (or “soldier”) as you ask each question to help the children focus on that person’s perspective.

- ▼ How did you feel about going into battle?
- ▼ What did you think about a woman being the leader of Israel?
- ▼ How did you react to God’s message?
- ▼ What did you think when the Israelites prepared to do battle?

### Singing

Play, sing, and dance to “Dance and Sing”—**SCM 21**. Turn off the candle.



Today’s story can be found in *Growing in God’s Love: A Story Bible*, edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), [www.pcusastore.com](http://www.pcusastore.com).



## RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and the time available.



### Claiming God's Grace

FA TD

Show **SCM 8c** and explain that this is a palm tree like the one Deborah sat beneath. It's where she went when she wanted to think and pray. Sometimes people visited Deborah there and asked her to help them settle an argument or a problem. The tree was called the "palm of Deborah." It was a special place where people knew to come to be guided by Deborah, a woman chosen by God to lead her people.

Explain that a date palm tree grows to be about eighty feet tall and can be seen from far away. It is a welcome sight to travelers in a dry land because it grows near water. In Bible times, a palm branch was a symbol of victory. They were waved to welcome home victorious armies. Date palm fruit was one of the few sweet foods in ancient Israel. If you have them, give the children a date to taste. Wonder together if there is a special tree anyone likes to sit under, if friends are met there, and if a tree is ever used as a quiet place to sit and pray.

Invite the children to make a chalk tree picture to remind them of their special trees and the palm of Deborah. Give each child several cotton balls. Invite the children to draw the outline of a palm tree with a piece of colored chalk. Then dab and smear the chalk with cotton balls to fill in the tree. Print the words *The Tree of (child's name)* across the bottom of each picture. Encourage the children to hang the pictures on their walls at home as a reminder of today's story.

**TD** *Some children struggle with textures. Chalk is a common trigger and can cause feelings of nausea or anxiety. Give advance warning and provide options such as paint markers or sponge-tip squeeze bottles. Allow the child to wash their hands if needed.*

### Celebrating God's Grace

M MS F

Recall that in today's Bible story, Deborah was a judge. Invite the children to share some things that a judge might do. Suggest that people would come to Deborah, a wise person, to help them with a problem or settle differences. Play a game about working together to find solutions.

Using masking tape, mark off a small area in the middle of the room that would accommodate all the children, but not easily.

Have the children form four groups and name them *North, South, East, and West*.

Have each group gather in a corner. Instruct the children to run around the room. Then shout out the name of one of the groups.

Those group members then run to the center of the room and work together so that all of them can fit into the area you have marked.

When marking off your small area, include enough space to accommodate children in wheelchairs.



Then call out the names of each of the other groups. Give each group time to join the others in the marked-off area. Encourage the children to use creative ways to fit everyone in. When everyone has managed to squeeze into the area, they all have won.

Play again, with a volunteer leading the game. For more of a challenge, consider making the space smaller the second time.

Gather the children. Ask the children if it was hard to find a solution that included everyone. Ask them if anyone was a “Deborah,” offering wise ideas for a solution.



### Offering God’s Grace



*Before the session, cut two 7" circles of clear self-adhesive paper and cut a 5" or 6" circle from the center of a paper plate for each child.*

Ask the children to think of women from your congregation who have been a help to them, perhaps a parent, pastor, secretary, teacher, or choir director. Affirm all answers. Tell the children that they will make something to thank these women.

- Hand out a paper plate, scissors, and two 7" circles of clear self-adhesive paper to each child.
- Ask the children to write “Thank you!” or “Thank you for helping me!” along the bottom edge of the paper plate.
- Show the children how to cut out a 5" or 6" circle from the center of the plate, making a round frame out of the plate.
- Help them adhere one of the clear self-adhesive circles to the back of the plate, sticky side up.
- Invite the children to add small pieces of colored tissue paper onto the sticky side of the clear circle.
- Help them place the other clear circle on top of their design, sealing in the tissue paper creating a stained glass effect.
- Have the children cut 12" lengths of yarn or ribbon. Show them how to punch a hole at the top of the plate. Have them thread the yarn or ribbon through the hole and tie the ends together.

Encourage the children to present their gifts of thanks to the women they named earlier.

### Extra Activity

Hand out copies of **GN 1** to the children. Recall the palm tree that Deborah liked to sit beneath. Invite them to do the “Find the Palm Tree” activity. Deborah’s tree is pictured. Challenge the children to find and circle the shadow that matches the tree exactly. Invite them to color in Deborah’s palm tree. Suggest that each child draw a picture of himself or herself sitting underneath the tree.



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so that you can provide them with the link to [www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads](http://www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads), where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).

## LOVING AND SERVING GOD

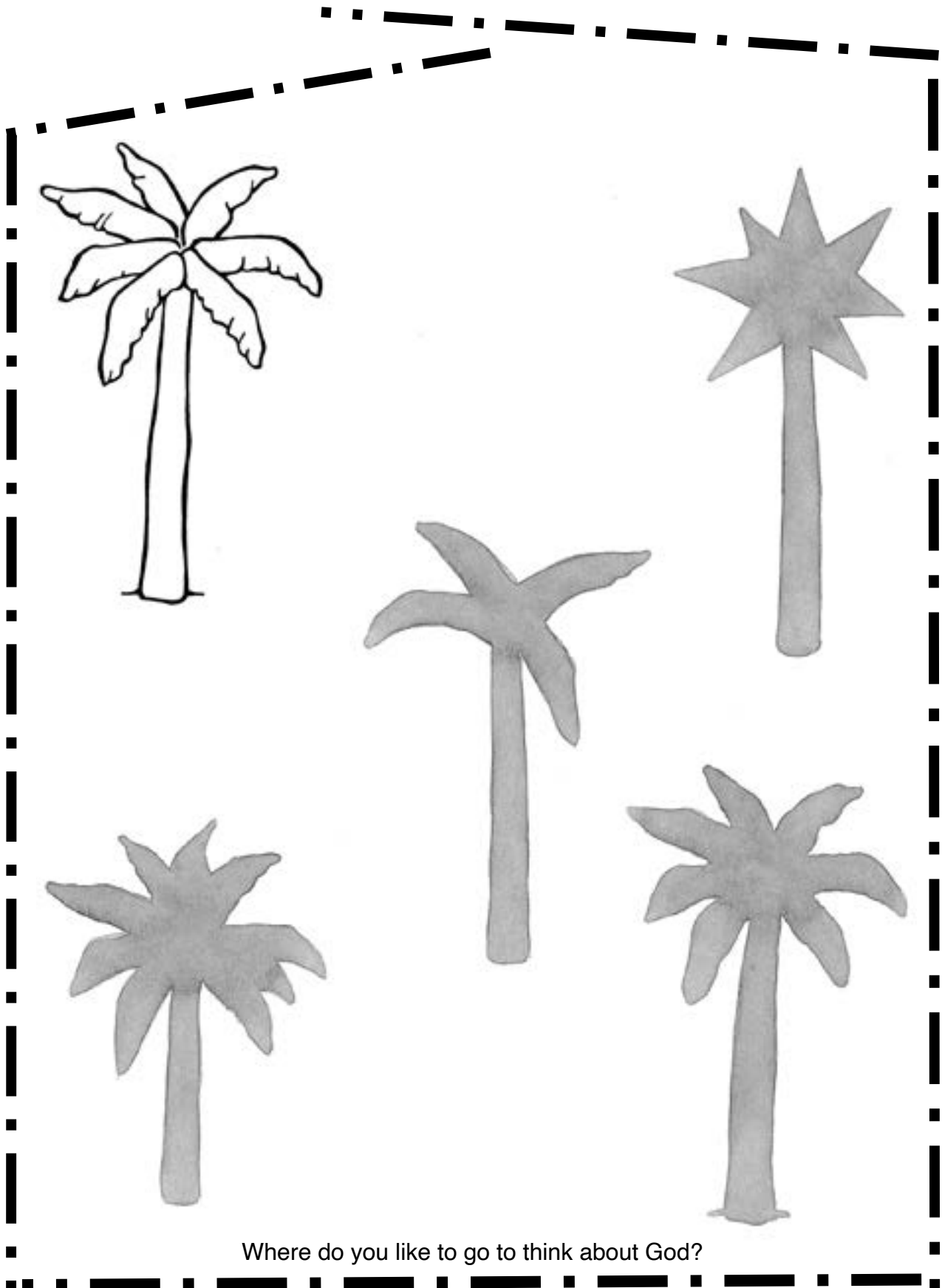


Give each child an opportunity to tell what they have learned about the story of Deborah.

Stand in a circle and hold hands. Invite the children to think about something they would like to pray about to God. Begin by saying, “Thank you, God, for this time together. Please hear our prayers, whether we say them aloud or in silence.”

Then squeeze the hand of the person to your right. That person then says his or her prayer aloud or silently and then squeezes the hand of the next person. That person does the same, and so on until all have had a turn. Say “Amen” to close.

Charge the children to remember that the God of Deborah is also their God, that God loves them, and that God cares for them. Challenge them to keep their promises and find ways to thank the women in their church for all they do.



Where do you like to go to think about God?

