



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

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

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

tan or neutral-colored
blanket or bedsheet

candle

Grace Notes (GN) 1

Responding

Claiming

SCM 8b, copies of GN 2

Praying

copies of GN 3

Extra

copies of GN 4

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.

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. Invite a volunteer to practice reading today’s Scripture passages. 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. Be sure to include the following: Kadesh in Naphtali, Mount Tabor, Harosheth-ha-goiim, and Wadi Kishon. 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 blanket or bedsheet on the floor to represent the desert. Make a worship space by the palm tree.

As the children work, wonder aloud about the kinds of issues or concerns that children have today. Keep the conversation general rather than asking children about the specific problems they are experiencing. Ask volunteers to write the main points on newsprint. Wonder who we can turn to for help with problems or conflicts.

Singing

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

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

Praying

M

Turn on the candle and remind everyone of God’s presence. Offer the following prayer:

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

C *Some children may take longer to listen and verbalize answers or thoughts. Allow time for these children to feel truly a part of the session. Let them know their contribution is valued.*



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 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.



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.

Hearing the Story LD C

Show the children where to find the story in the Bible (Judges 4). Encourage the children to listen as a volunteer reads Judges 4:1–10 or **SCM 8**. Conclude by saying, “Word of wisdom, Word of grace,” and prompt children to say, “Thanks be to God.” Place the Bible in the worship space.

Form three groups: 1) Deborah, 2) Barak and the Israelite army, and 3) Sisera (King Jabin’s general) and the Canaanite army. Read the story again using **GN 1**, a retelling of the story. Invite each group to follow the movements of their respective characters around the room where you have placed geographic signs (“Welcoming and Preparing”). Movement is noted in brackets on **GN 1**.

Reflecting on God’s Grace C

Invite the children to reflect on this story. Pose some of the following questions and encourage the children to answer them from the perspective of the people they are representing:

- 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?
- Where did you see God in this story?

Singing

Celebrate that God is with us through difficult times when we might be afraid by singing “Dance and Sing”—**SCM 21**. Invite the children to dance with the music. Turn off the candle.



RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and the time available.

Claiming God's Grace

LG

Tell the children that names were important in the Hebrew culture. They often reflected a characteristic of a person or recalled an important event in their lives. Remind the children that the name Deborah means “bee” in Hebrew. Show **SCM 8b** and discuss this amazing insect. Recall some of the characteristics of bees that the children named in “Preparing to Hear the Story.”

Suggest that Deborah was called by God to be brave, fair, fearless, a judge, a mediator, a warrior, and more. God gifted her with qualities of leadership. Hand out **GN 2** and look at the structure of bees and how their characteristics help them. Ask the children to name ways that Deborah demonstrated some of these qualities. Then invite the children to name girls or women they know who, like Deborah, show leadership qualities in these ways. Wonder together about how Deborah and other women use their abilities to follow God's ways.

Celebrating God's Grace

B 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.

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.

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



- F** *Fairness isn't about everything being equal. Fairness is about leveling the playing field so that people get what they need when they need it.*

Praying God's Grace

A **LD**

Suggest to the children that women, like Deborah, have always had gifts of wisdom and been called to positions of leadership. Sometimes they have faced hardships or people have not wanted to hear their voice because they were women, but they persisted.

Hand out copies of **GN 3**. Form up to four small groups and assign one of the stories about Nobel Peace Prize winners to each group. Invite the children to come up with a skit enacting the story. Invite the children to name other women leaders and list them on newsprint. Invite the children to offer prayers of thanks for the women they learned about, as well as other courageous women leaders. Direct the children to the list as they pray.

Extra Activity

LD

Give the children copies of **GN 4** and encourage them to complete the "Make a Word Search" activity. Ask them to think of words that describe Deborah and list them on the sheet. Have them add the names of people who have those same qualities and place their names in the puzzle. Longer words and names should be added first. Some names may not fit once a number of words or names are in the puzzle. They can print the words from left to right, top to bottom, bottom to top, or diagonally up or down. Then fill in empty spaces with random letters. Three words have been provided as an example. After they have finished, suggest that they exchange their puzzles for another person to solve.

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

LG

Ask the children to help clean the space.

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 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 find ways to thank the women in their church for all they do.



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

Beginning placement of people in the story:

- Deborah—sitting under the palm tree
- Barak—in Kedesh in Naphtali
- Israelite army—in a small group off to one side of the room
- Sisera—in Harosheth-ha-goiim
- Canaanite army—scattered around the room

The people of Israel were miserable. Twenty years ago, they had fought King Jabin (JAY-bin) of Canaan and lost. Ever since, the king had made life difficult for them. **[Sisera and the Canaanite army stomp feet.]**

Jabin had a big army with nine hundred iron chariots. He used the army to bully the people and hurt them. The Israelites prayed to God for help. **[Deborah, Barak, and the Israelite army bow heads in prayer.]**

In those days, there lived a wise woman called Deborah. **[Deborah waves her hand.]** She was a prophet and a leader. She was as busy as a bee. Every day, she sat under a palm tree and helped people with their problems. **[Deborah points to palm tree she is sitting under.]** Anyone who was arguing could go to Deborah. **[Two of Israelite army go to Deborah.]** She listened to both sides and decided how to stop the argument. Sometimes her decisions stung, but she was always fair. **[Two Israelites shake hands and go back to army.]**

One day, God gave Deborah a message for a man named Barak (BEHR-ak). **[Barak waves hand.]** God wanted Barak to gather an army and take them to fight the king of Canaan. Jabin and his army had made the people's lives miserable for twenty whole years. It was time for it to stop.

Deborah buzzed with excitement when she heard God's message and sent for Barak immediately. **[Deborah calls for Barak. Barak goes to Deborah.]**

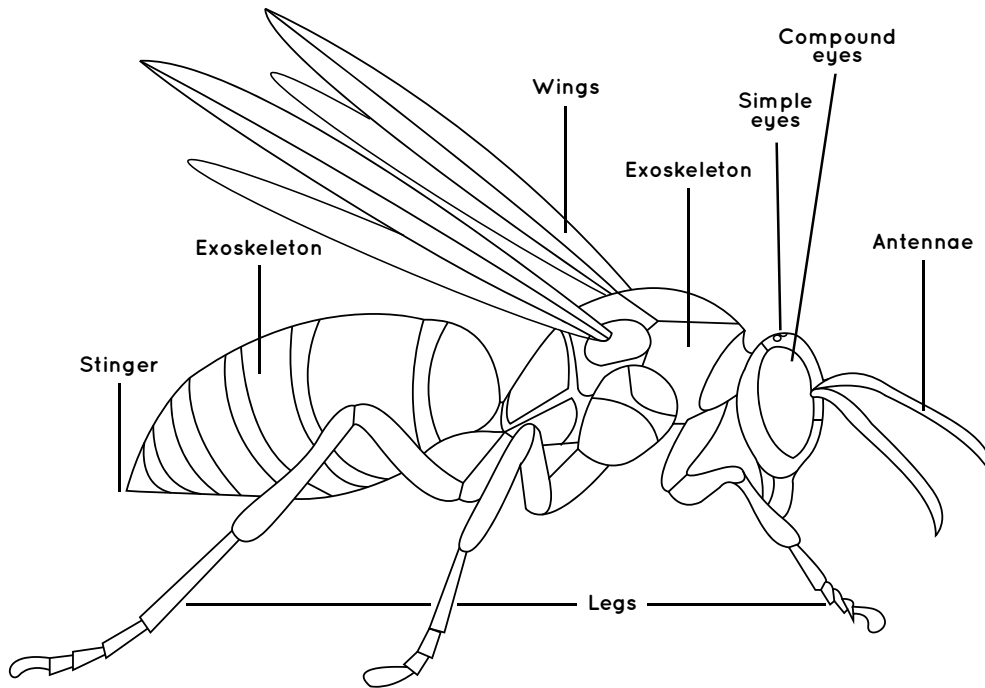
"God has a job for you," explained Deborah. "You must gather an army and get ready to fight Jabin." **[Barak gathers the Israelite army and takes them to Deborah.]**

Barak was afraid. He knew that Jabin had nine hundred iron chariots and lots of soldiers. For twenty long years, no one had been able to beat Jabin's army. **[Sisera gathers the Canaanite army and they go to Wadi Kishon.]**

"I will go," said Barak. "But only if you come with me."

Deborah agreed to go with Barak and lead the army. **[Deborah, Barak, and the Israelite army go to Mount Tabor.]** She buzzed around the camp before the battle. She was a good leader and wanted to encourage the soldiers as they got ready to fight. **[Deborah, Barak, and the Israelite army go to Wadi Kishon.]** When the time came to fight, Deborah told Barak and the army that they would win the battle. That is precisely what happened. Jabin was defeated. **[Sisera and the Canaanite army lay on the ground. The Israelite army spreads around the room.]**

From that day on, Jabin left the people of God alone. Deborah went back to her palm tree and continued her job as a leader and prophet. **[Deborah goes and sits under the palm tree.]** Finally, after twenty long years, peace had come to the land.



Structure of bees	Helps the bee to ...	We might be like a bee when we ...	Leadership qualities of Deborah	Girls or women I know with these qualities
Exoskeleton: small, movable plates on the outside of the body	protect its insides, like armor	persist in spite of difficulties are tough when needed		
Two sets of wings	fly	get to where we need to go		
Two sensory antennae	be aware of its surroundings	are aware of our surroundings		
Five eyes—three simple eyes and two compound eyes	detect patterns	look for solutions		
Legs with joints that correspond to human feet, shins, thighs, and hips	stand up	stand up for what's right		
Stinger	protect its hive	protect others		

Malala Yousafzai was born in 1997 in Pakistan. Her father, Ziauddin, always loved learning and ran a school next to the family's home.

When she was twelve years old, Malala began writing a blog for a news service about her fears that her school would be attacked. Women weren't allowed to go shopping. Television and music were banned, and her father's school had to close.

Because she wrote about her belief that everyone should be able to go to school, Malala was attacked. After the attack, two million people signed a petition for rights to a free education for all. In 2014, Malala was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. She contributed her prize money to the Malala Fund for education.

Malala Yousafzai said, "One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world."

Mother Teresa was born in 1910 in what is now the Republic of Macedonia. When she became an adult, Mother Teresa answered God's call to become a nun. She began working in India, teaching in a school. A few years later, she heard a second call to work with the poorest and sickest people.

Many people joined Mother Teresa in this work. She founded a leper colony, a nursing home, and numerous medical facilities. She began the Missionaries of Charity. The organization grew to more than four thousand members and thousands of volunteers. Mother Teresa won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979.

Mother Teresa said, "If you can't feed a hundred people, then feed just one."

Rigoberta Menchú was born in 1959 in the Quiché region of Guatemala. Guatemala has a long history of tension between groups, and abuse of native Guatemalans is common. As a young person, Rigoberta picked cotton and did other farm work. Often she didn't have enough food. She didn't get to go to school. In Guatemala, farm workers are often treated very poorly.

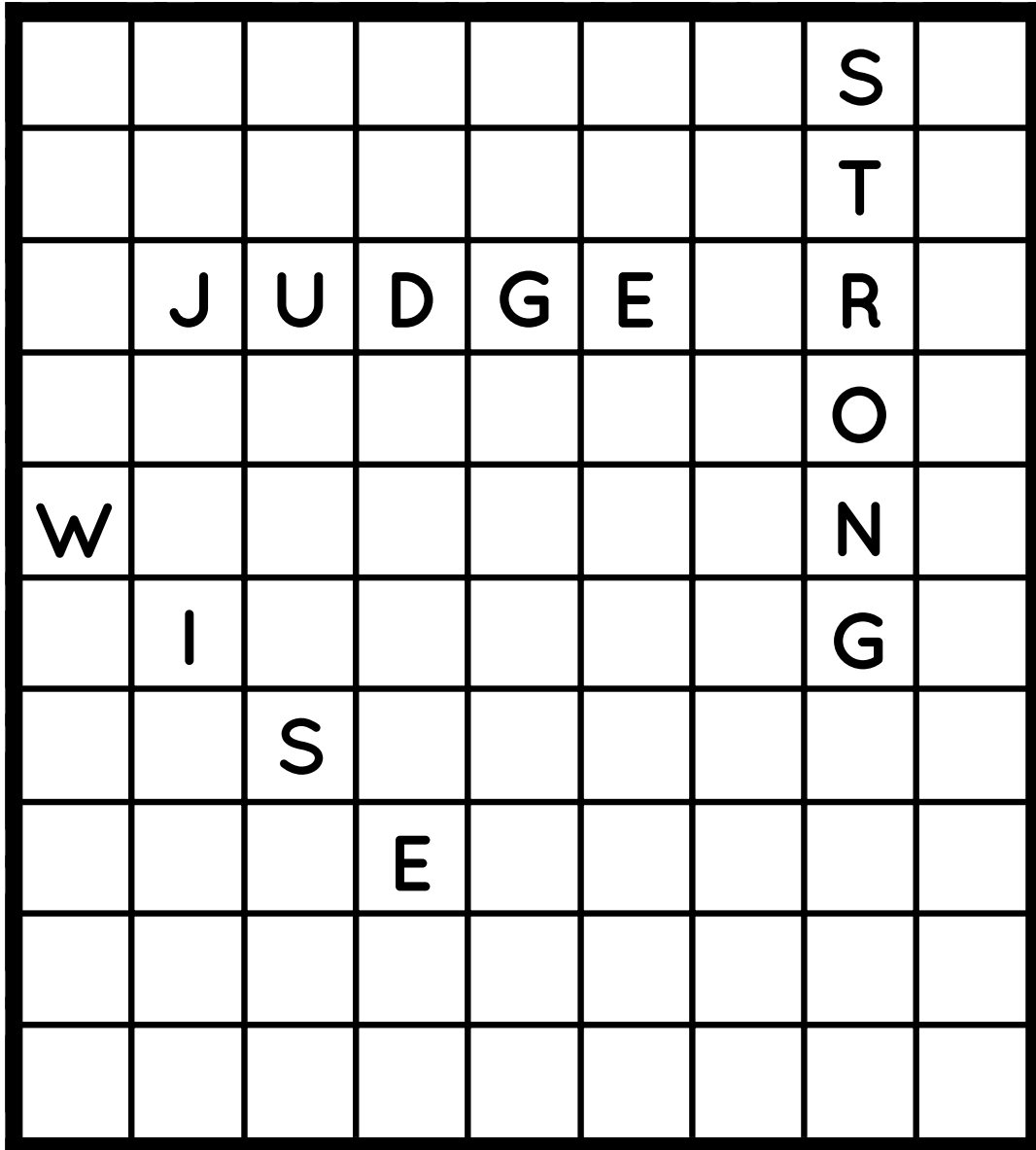
When Rigoberta was a young adult, she became active in the cause for the rights of native Guatemalans. Instead of violence, Rigoberta worked for reconciliation between the government and rebel groups. In 1992, Rigoberta was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her social justice work and reconciliation efforts among the ethnic groups of Guatemala.

Rigoberta Menchú said, "When you are convinced your cause is just, you fight for it."

Wangari Maathai was born in Kenya in 1940. She was the first woman in her country to earn a doctorate in biology and the first woman to become a professor.

In 1977, Wangari led a movement to stop deforestation. The movement led women to plant trees and to be concerned about the environment. The movement promoted *sustainability*, which means living in a way that is good for all and makes resources last. Wangari believed this promoted democracy, women's rights, and relations with other countries. The movement spread to countries outside of Kenya.

Wangari won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004. The Nobel committee said of Wangari Maathai, "She thinks globally and acts locally."



Words

judge _____

wise _____

strong _____
