



SERIES: What's Holding You Back?

Week 3: Deborah – Beyond Stereotypes	
<p>Connect</p>  <p>5 – 10 min</p>	<p>Just for fun: Meet 9 year old boxer Evnika in this 6½ minute video from the tv show “Little Big Shots”. She's feisty, fast and totally fierce. youtu.be/d36SjreiKDK</p> <p>What's something you like to do (or have done in the past) that might be considered unusual for your age, gender, background or personality?</p>
<p>Gratitude</p>  <p>10 – 15 min</p>	<p>Celebrate the Lord's Supper together and give thanks for the victory Jesus won on the cross for us all. Read Colossians 2:6-14. Suggested song: Jesus Messiah (Chris Tomlin) youtu.be/QmY3jSugNBU</p> <p>Other song suggestions: This I Believe /The Creed (Hillsong Worship), Ancient of Days (Jamie Harvill, Gary Sadler), At Your Name (Tim Hughes, Phil Wickham), Because of Your Love (Al Gordon, Hanif Williams)</p>
<p>Discover</p>  <p>and</p> <p>Act</p>  <p>35 mins</p>	<p><u>Series Context</u></p> <p><i>What's holding you back? Most of us experience a lack of confidence or competence at different times or in different situations. But 2 Corinthians Chapter 3, verses 4-6 remind us that our confidence and our competence to be God's good news bearers comes from Jesus, not from ourselves.</i></p> <p><i>So what's holding you back?</i></p> <p><i>In this series we look at some less familiar characters from the Old Testament. We'll see how their stories can encourage us to have confidence in God and not hold back on what he wants to do in us and through us.</i></p> <p>THIS WEEK: Deborah - Beyond Stereotypes (See attached teaching and discussion guide)</p>

For Kids Slot or family devotions

Four minute animated version of the story of Deborah: <https://vimeo.com/159493628>
 Same video, but suitable for younger kids (removes reference to Jael killing Sisera with a tent peg through the head): <https://vimeo.com/159493634> (Preview first to confirm it is suitable for your kids.)

House Church Guide



Deborah: Beyond Stereotypes

Judges 4 - 5

These notes are intended to be read aloud by a leader, pausing for Bible reading, discussion & prayer as you go.

1. Introduction

Judges chapter 4 and 5 tell the story of Deborah. Judges 4 gives a straight up narrative account and Judges 5 is a poetic rendition of the same story. (For another poetic/artistic version of the story some of you may enjoy listening to Handel's oratorio "Deborah".)

Deborah was both a prophet and a leader (judge) of Israel. She served at the end of a time of oppression at the hands of Jabin, King of Canaan. She stands out among the other Judges of Israel for her wisdom, courage and faith. The Israelites grew stronger under her leadership and she was ultimately responsible for a forty-year period of peace in Israel.

The label "prophetess" or "woman prophet" is attributed to only five women in the Old Testament: Miriam (Exodus 15:20), Deborah (Judges 4:4), Huldah (2 Kings 22:14; 2 Chron. 34:22), Noadiah (Nehemiah 6:14), and "the prophetess" (Isaiah 8:3). They are women through whom God speaks to his people. Deborah is the only female judge mentioned in the Bible. Nevertheless, there is no evidence that anyone questioned her or thought that a man should have had her position instead.

The people of Israel clearly looked up to Deborah. They trusted her with their problems, and they had faith in her ability to solve them fairly. Men and women alike sought her wise counsel, indicating that she was not only a judge, but a respected and celebrated figure in the Israelite community. It is significant that Deborah's role as a leader is likened to motherhood in Judges 5:7. Deborah is honoured as a fierce leader not in spite of her womanhood, but in celebration and recognition of it.

Two other significant players in the story are a man named Barak, who was called on to lead a military offensive, and Jael, a woman married to Heber the Kenite. The Kenites were an ancient people living near the land of Canaan around the time of Abraham. The Bible mentions several dealings between the Israelites and the Kenites, who were always on friendly terms with each other.

Deborah and Jael may not be the type of women you'd expect to encounter in a strongly patriarchal culture such as that of ancient Israel and its neighbours. Barak is probably not how you imagine a military leader to be. None of these three are held back by stereotypes.

2. Watch the 3 minute animated story "Deborah's Army – The Book of Judges" at youtu.be/myeSLGXHt4k (Preview before showing with young kids present.) *Note: The video has been produced by a Jewish group, and they pronounce Jael as "Yay-el", but we're talking about the same person.*

This brief cartoon version takes some liberties with tone and the portrayal of the characters, but it gives an easily accessible overview of the story. It is important to read the Bible text to get a more accurate picture. We'll look at some extracts now, but during the week it would be great for everyone to read through Judges 4 and 5.

3. Read Judges 4:4-10

In verse 8 Barak says he won't go without Deborah.

- Why might this be?

It's probably not because he's a total wimp or that he wants to see Deborah put her money where her mouth is and face the danger too. More likely, he wants Deborah to accompany him so that he can be assured of God's presence. He also likely wants the prophet with him so that he can consult with her as he has need. While this sounds somewhat reasonable, the problem is God's will has already been revealed to Barak, and he is reluctant to act on the command he has received. The will of God is clear, but Barak puts a condition on obeying God.

Read Judges 4:14 - 17

Deborah encouraged and admonished Barak before he went to battle—she again fulfilled the role of wise leader and counsellor. Both Deborah and Barak knew that the honour of the victory was going to go to an unknown woman, but rather than just accept that reality, they actually went a step further. These humble leaders found out who the woman was, found out exactly what she did to kill Sisera, and made sure that everybody knew that she was the woman who won the battle. They shared their recognition with her.

House Church Guide



Read Judges 5:24-27

Jael is a small of character in the Bible but her courage and story are continuously remembered. This is yet another example of God's unconventional way of using unexpected women and men. We see this throughout the Bible.

4. Think about it

- What could have potentially held Deborah back from functioning well (or at all) in her roles as prophet and leader/judge?
- What potentially could have kept Barak and Jael from playing their parts in defeating Jabin's army?
- What gave them the courage and confidence to serve God and Israel as they did?

5. So.... What's holding you back?

"Such confidence we have through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." (2 Corinthians 3:4-6)

- Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to move for anyone who feels they may be being held back by things such as:
 - Gender expectations
 - Marital or family status
 - Lack of recognition
 - Fear
 - Putting conditions on obeying God
- Pray for the leaders of our nation.

Acknowledgement of sources that have influenced the some of content of these notes

"Deborah and the Box of Womanhood" by Emmaline Kempf - <https://www.cbeinternational.org/blogs/deborah-and-box-womanhood>

"A Smashing Salvation (Judges 4–5)" by Keith Krell - <https://bible.org/seriespage/3-smashing-salvation-judges-4-5>