

Rise Up Small Group Guide

Warm-up Question: (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part altogether, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. What is one skill you have that many people don't know about?
2. Have you ever changed a flat tire on your own?

Read the following passage: Judges 4:1-24

Deborah and Jael lived during the period of the Judges. This was a wild time in the history of Israel. On four separate occasions the author of Judges reminds us: "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes." Israel had very little unity and very little leadership. Even worse, they began worshipping Baal and Ashtoreth, two of the most prominent pagan deities in the region.

In the middle of this turbulent season, God raised up an unlikely hero: Deborah. Deborah's leadership was unexpected because she lived in an overwhelmingly patriarchal culture. But Deborah knew God. And because she was connected with God, the people relied on her wisdom and Barak responded (once he received the assurance of Deborah's presence!) when Deborah called him into action.

Jael was also an unlikely hero. Jael's husband had pulled back from his clan's alliance with the Israelites and, instead, formed an alliance with Jabin (Judges 4:17). Jael's decision to kill Sisera was an extraordinary act of defiance. She risked her own life out of devotion to God. Her actions are a striking reminder that, in all circumstances, we should obey God first.

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. What clues in the text suggest that Deborah was a secure leader?
2. What internal or external obstacles might you need to overcome in order to become an effective (or more effective) leader?
3. Read Psalm 139:13-14. How can these verses help us when we fall into the trap of comparison? Generally speaking, are you more prone to see yourself as better than others or lesser than others? Explain.
4. As a woman and as a prophet, Deborah's role in Israel certainly made her an outlier. How does the new covenant change things for us? Consider Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Joel 2:28-29.
5. Deborah's relationship with God was the key element of her leadership. Are you prioritizing the development of your relationship with God? Do you see relationship with God as the crucial factor when it comes to the impact your life ultimately

makes? Explain.

6. Deborah did not try to do everything on her own. She called Barak into action. How well do you work with other men and women? Do you value both your own role and the roles others play? How can you improve the way you work with others?
7. Are you helping other people connect with God and walk in the purpose God has for their lives? If so, how?
8. Can you think of any recent occasions when obeying God was costly or difficult for you? Explain. (If not, do you think you are genuinely doing all that God wants you to do?)

Pray