

THE PALM- TREE JUDGE

Deborah
Judges 4
1217–1178 BC

OVERVIEW

BIBLE TRUTH

God gives wisdom.

BIBLE VERSE

For the LORD gives wisdom. Proverbs 2:6

LEARNER GOAL

I understand that God gives us wisdom and helps us to trust in Him above all else.

LAW & GOSPEL

Sin always leads to slavery and ultimately death, trapping me under its control.

Christ rescues me from the oppression of sin so that in Him I might have ultimate freedom and eternal life.

SCRIPTURE SNAPSHOT

Judge Deborah urges Barak to gather 10,000 troops to go up against Sisera's army of 900 iron chariots. When the battle turns against Sisera, he flees on foot, seeking refuge in Jael's tent. Snoozing beneath a rug, Sisera meets his end at the hand of Jael as she pegs him through his temple to the ground.

LESSON PREP

BASIC Read Judges 4 and study notes in *The Lutheran Study Bible*.

MORE TIME Read the leader devotion, found in the digital resource center.

IN DEPTH Read the article "Prophetesses in the Bible" on page 389 of *TLSE* for more context on the prophetic role of Deborah.

SUPPLY LIST

FOR THIS LESSON

- Brown paper lunch bags, stickers, string or yarn
- Green paper palm leaves, chiffon scarves, or ribbon twirlers
- Card-making supplies, envelopes
- Broccoli florets and ranch dressing
- Green and brown construction paper, paper plates
- Digital device

FOR EVERY LESSON

- Bible
- Device with prepped music
- Copies of downloadable activity page
- Copies of Enduring Faith Page
- Supply Box

LAUNCH

Plan your lesson by reading through the options in each section. Choose the activities that will best fit your learners, and mark those boxes to guide you as you teach the lesson.

BEGIN

- Follow the Order of Opening Worship, use the Lesson Opening, or do both (part of the planning resources in the digital resource center).
- Sing songs, using music found in the digital resource center or your own favorite songs.

SAY

- Hi, boys and girls! Have you ever had a problem? Who helped you? Today, we'll hear how God helped His people with a big problem.**
- Do you ever forget things? Do you ever forget important things that grown ups tell you? The Israelites had forgotten what God had told them, and so had their general Barak. Listen to how the Lord worked it all out in an unusual way.**

PRAY

Dear God, You know all about us. You know when we need help. Thank You for loving us and helping us. Thank You for Jesus, who delivers us from our enemies—sin and Satan. Amen.

LEARN

Show your Bible, and remind the children that all the stories in God's Word are true.

TELL THE BIBLE NARRATIVE

Choose one of the options on the next page to tell the Bible narrative.

DO THIS!

Use one or both of the following activities to talk about the Bible narrative as you read it.

- FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE YOUNGER** To help students keep track of the people in this narrative, have them divide a blank piece of paper into four parts (fold in half, then in half again). Have them write one of these names at the top of each box: Deborah, Barak, Sisera, and Jael. As you are reading or retelling the narrative, tell students to draw a symbol or objects to represent what each person does in this narrative.
- FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE OLDER** If your students are mature enough to handle it, read or listen to the narrative directly from Scripture (**Judges 4:17–23**), and then have students “translate” what they have read into modern language. This may be the first time that some students have encountered a brutal death in the Bible like Jael's use of the tent peg. Let students ask questions and talk about their impressions of this narrative.

TALK ABOUT IT

Choose the questions that best fit the learning level of your group.

- Who was Deborah?
- How did God use the different people in this narrative (Deborah, Barak, Sisera, and Jael)? God used each of these people for a different task. How does God use you and other people in your life to share the epic message of the Gospel in different ways?
- Barak turned to Deborah when he didn't understand or trust what God wanted. Who do you turn to for help when you need to understand God's plan for you?

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

Guide discussion, using these key points.

- God gave Deborah wisdom to know God's will; God used Barak to lead the Israelite army; God worked through Jael to defeat the enemy army captain.
- Let children share who they turn to for understanding about God.
- Jael was an unlikely hero. What may seem foolish or ridiculous to us may well be God's wise plan. Jesus dying on a cross didn't seem like a very good plan to the world, but God's plan saved the world.



CHRIST CONNECTION

In Christ, we are given the victory over our enemies—sin, death, and the devil.

BIBLE NARRATIVE FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

STORYTELLING DIRECTIONS: After reading the narrative, sing a song with the children to thank God for always helping them.

God's people, the Israelites, were living in their new land, the land of Canaan. But they forgot about all of the wonderful things God had done for them. They stopped loving God and following God's rules. So God let Sisera, a general for an enemy king named Jabin, make the Israelites Jabin's slaves. Now, the Israelites had a big problem. They had to work day and night for the enemy king.

The Israelites were sorry they forgot about God and were bad. They asked God to forgive them and help them. God never stopped loving His people. He heard their prayer and forgave them.

How would God help His people with their enemy problem?

God gave them a leader named Deborah. Deborah was a judge. That means she listened to people and decided what was the right thing to do so they could get along. Deborah sat by a palm tree in the desert. God made Deborah wise so she could help His people with their problems.

One day, Deborah was sitting under the palm tree teaching the people about God and helping them with their problems. She said, "Please ask Barak, the commander of

the Israelite army, to see me." When Barak came, Deborah said, "God says to gather men who can fight. God is going to save us from our enemies."

But Barak was afraid. He said, "Our enemy Sisera has many iron chariots and a big army. I won't fight unless you go with us."

Deborah had a choice to make. Should she go with Barak? Deborah was not afraid. She knew God would save them. So Deborah went with Barak to lead the Israelites into battle.

God saved His people. He helped them win the battle against Sisera and freed them from slavery to King Jabin. The Israelites were so happy! Then, Deborah and Barak sang a song to praise God for helping them with their problem.

God saved His people from their enemy. God sent Jesus to save us from our enemies too. Jesus won the battle for us over sin, death, and the devil when He died on the cross for us and rose again. We praise God, too, for His love and forgiveness!

BIBLE NARRATIVE FOR OLDER CHILDREN

After Jericho's walls fell, God sent Israel to punish the other nations living in the Promised Land for not believing when Abraham taught them about the one true God. In the south, five kings joined their armies together and went to fight Joshua. But God threw huge hailstones down on them. The scared men turned and started running back to their strong cities. Israel chased after them, but Joshua saw that the armies would get away when it got dark. So he asked God to make the sun stand still in the sky—and God did. Not one of those enemies got back to their homes.

When the kings in the north learned what happened, they joined together to form an even bigger army to fight against Israel. But God gave them to Joshua too. When the fighting was all over, Joshua divided up the land between the twelve tribes of Israel.

After Joshua died, the people forgot about the good things the Lord had done and His promise to send the Savior. They served the false gods of the nations around them. So God brought in nations that treated the Israelites badly. Then, the Israelites asked God to help them, and God raised up leaders called judges, who set them free.

For twenty years, Israel had suffered under a king named Jabin and his army leader named Sisera. Israel prayed to God for help, and God sent a message to a woman named Deborah. Deborah was a prophetess and a judge who knew God's laws and settled disagreements between Israelites. She told an Israelite fighter named Barak that God wanted

him to go fight against Sisera.

But Barak told Deborah he would not go to fight unless she went with him, so she went. But since he didn't trust God enough to go without her, she told him he wouldn't be the one to beat Sisera—a woman would.

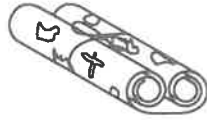
God helped Barak's army attack Sisera's army and destroy it. That scared Sisera. He jumped off his chariot and ran away to hide in the tent of his king's friend. This friend wanted to help Sisera's king, but his wife, Jael, loved God and wanted to help His people. She smiled and told Sisera not to be afraid but to come inside her tent. She covered him with a rug and gave him some milk to drink. He was so tired that he fell fast asleep. While Sisera slept, Jael killed him. She went out of her tent and saw Barak searching for Sisera. She told him, "Come, and I will show you the man you are seeking." When he went inside the tent, he found Sisera lying dead. God had raised up Deborah and Jael to free Israel again.

LIVE

Choose from the following activities and crafts to help connect Bible learning to life.

Bible Scroll Craft

Through His Word, God makes us “wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15). Have children cut the bottom off a paper lunch bag and cut the bag open to make a long piece of paper. Have them draw a cross in the middle of the paper. They will write the Bible Verse on the paper and decorate with stickers. Roll the sides toward the center. Tie with string or yarn to make a Bible scroll. Talk about how true wisdom comes from God’s Word.



Service Project

Deborah was a judge. People came to her to help them settle disagreements. The Fourth Commandment tells us that God wants us to respect and obey our parents, teachers, police, and others in authority. Set out paper, markers, and decorating supplies to make cards for judges and other people who work at the courthouse to thank them for serving our community and making it a better place to live. Deliver to your local courthouse.



Sing and Praise

Give children construction-paper palms, green chiffon scarves, or ribbon twirlers. Play favorite praise songs and encourage children to wave their palms, scarves, or ribbons as they sing along.



Who Am I?

Identify four volunteers to be Deborah, Barak, Sisera, and Jael. Have them come before the rest of the class to guess who they are. Volunteers can give hints such as “I sit under a palm tree,” “I am a leader of an army,” “I was scared and ran away,” or “I was the hero of the Israelite people.”



Palm Tree Snack

Give children broccoli florets and ranch dressing. Talk about how the broccoli looks like little trees. Say, **Palm trees remind us of Deborah, who sat under a palm tree to help God’s people with their problems.**



Palm Tree Craft

Using green construction paper, cut palm-shaped leaves. Cut a brown strip of paper for a tree trunk. Glue the colored paper onto a white paper plate. Draw Deborah below the palm tree. Have students write today’s Bible Verse on the plate, or have printed copies of the Bible Verse ready to be glued on the plate.



Unlikely Heroes

Have older students do online research about these unlikely heroines of the Bible. Encourage them to report to the rest of the group.
Shiphrah and Puah (Exodus 1:15–22)
Rahab (Joshua 2:15–21)
Joanna and Susanna (Luke 8:1–3)

SEARCH

Bible Heroes

LEAVE

SAY

God gave wisdom to Deborah and Jael. Even though we’re in different situations, God gives us wisdom to use too.

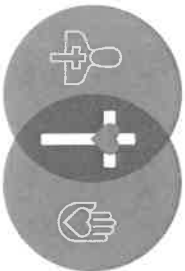
PRAY

Dear Lord Jesus, You give us all that we need—forgiveness and eternal life in You. Thank You for also providing wisdom and guidance and people who can help us to know You better. In Your name we pray, Jesus. Amen.

THE PALM-TREE JUDGE

LESSON 6
Judges 4

GOD GIVES WISDOM.



BIBLE VERSE

For the LORD gives wisdom.
Proverbs 2:6

SCRIPTURE SNAPSHOT

Judge Deborah urges Barak to gather 10,000 troops to go up against Sisera's army of 900 iron chariots. When the battle turns against Sisera, he flees on foot, seeking refuge in Jael's tent. Snoozing beneath a rug, Sisera meets his end at the hand of Jael as she pegs him through his temple to the ground.

TAKING IT HOME

- ▶ *On the Go*—What had the people of Israel done that God allowed them to fall under the control of Jabin, the king of Canaan?
- ▶ *At Meditme*—Moses praised God with a song after the Israelites crossed the Red Sea (see Exodus 15:1–19). What words in the song of Moses are similar to the words of Deborah and Barak's song? What causes you to sing praises to the Lord?
- ▶ *Something to Do*—Recount a rescue story you recently heard in the news. How is that rescue story like the account of Deborah in the Bible?
- ▶ *Before Bed*—As a family, pray together for the female leaders you know.

CONNECTING IDENTITY & CALLING

IDENTITY: WHO AM I?

God gives me wisdom to trust in His rescue.

CALLING: WHY AM I HERE?

I can trust in God as He delivers me from evil.

GROWING IN FAITH FOR LIFE

See how this lesson builds on previous learning for each age.

ADULT

I can paraphrase how God's wisdom is different from worldly wisdom.

YOUTH

I can give examples of the difference between God's wisdom and the world's wisdom.

ELEMENTARY

I understand that God gives us wisdom and helps us to trust in Him above all else.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

I know God gives me wisdom through His Word.



Leader Devotion **LESSON 6**
THE PALM-TREE JUDGE—DEBORAH
JUDGES 4

BIBLE TRUTH

God gives wisdom.

BIBLE VERSE

For the Lord gives wisdom. Proverbs 2:6

LAW & GOSPEL

Sin always leads to slavery and ultimately death, trapping me under its control.

Christ rescues me from the oppression of sin so that in Him I might have ultimate freedom and eternal life.

DEVOTION

The Bible, especially the Old Testament, contains many accounts that we don't normally teach in Sunday School. Some of these accounts are difficult to understand; others contain difficult names or convoluted story lines. But some of my favorites are just plain gross. Maybe it's all the time I spent working with junior high boys—who love gross stories—that influences my viewpoint.

The account of Jael and Sisera is one of those “gross” stories. God uses someone least expected to fulfill His plans. “We, too, can be weak and slow to act. Yet the Lord is with us, alongside us. Jesus went ahead of us to the cross and through death to everlasting life. He will lead us to the victory ground of heaven” (*TLSB*, p. 390).

Pray: Lord, give us faith to believe Your promises and courage to wage our battles and win the victory You have already given us. Amen.

LESSON 6 OPENING

THE PALM-TREE JUDGE—DEBORAH

Can anyone tell me what I have in my hands today? *Hold up the hymnal.* This is a hymnal. It contains hundreds of songs. When we go to church, we like to sing a lot. We have hymnals like this one in our pews and in our Sunday School rooms. Why do we use hymnals? Why do we sing?

God's people in the Old Testament used music to praise God too. They sang many songs about what He did for them. In our lesson today, we will hear about a time they sang to tell the story of how God had saved them. The Book of Psalms was a lot like a hymnal for God's people in the Old Testament. A psalm is a poem that can be set to music. We don't know exactly how psalms were used in worship, but there are hints that choirs sang them, liturgical dancers danced to them, priests said one part, the congregation said other parts, and more. Parents taught the psalms to their children, and people kept them close to their hearts throughout their lives. (See *The Lutheran Study Bible*, p. 959.)

We use our hymnal in many similar ways. It gives us ways to keep our worship ordered and clear. The hymns are divided by the seasons of the Church Year, so we know what songs to sing around Christmastime and which ones to sing around Easter. Most important, hymns tell the story of God's saving power. "The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came" (LSB 356) is a clear account of everything that happened to Mary before Jesus was born. In "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" (LSB 380), we sing along with the angels who proclaimed the birth of the Savior on Christmas morning. Other hymns tell of Jesus' suffering, such as "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" (LSB 425).

Then come the most joyful hymns of the Church Year! Easter hymns proclaim Jesus' resurrection and victory over death! My favorite is this one: (sing or speak) "Christ the Lord is ris'n today! Saints on earth and angels say; Raise your joys and triumphs high; Sing, ye heav'ns, and earth reply" (LSB 469). Isn't that an exciting way to tell the Good News of Jesus?

Other hymns are written to comfort believers in times of trial. The hymn "Amazing Grace" (LSB 744) is a great hymn of hope and comfort. Other hymns simply praise God for all the amazing things He has done, such as "O Sing to the Lord" (LSB 808). No matter what the Church is doing, there is a hymn for the occasion! When you worship, pay close attention to the hymns you sing. God's people have used music to praise Him since the Old Testament times, and we will continue praising Him with song for years to come!

Close by reading Psalm 146:1–2.

Pray: Dear Lord, thank You for the gift of music. Help us glorify You with our songs. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

LESSON TEXT

Judges 4

BIBLE TRUTH

God gives wisdom.

FAITH FOCUS

Means of Grace

LAW & GOSPEL

Sin always leads to slavery and ultimately death, trapping me under its control.

Christ rescues me from the oppression of sin so that in Him I might have ultimate freedom and eternal life.

BIBLE VERSE

For the LORD gives wisdom. Proverbs 2:6

VISUAL HELPS

Lutheran Service Book
Hymnal

Bible

THE PALM-TREE JUDGE—DEBORAH

Unit 5, Lesson 6

God's Wise Words

Directions: Look up in the Bible one of the wise references printed below. Print the Bible verse and its reference on the palm frond (leaf) below. Color the palm frond green and cut it off the page. Then, follow your teacher's instructions.

Proverbs 16:3

Matthew 7:7

John 3:16

John 14:6

John 15:12

Proverbs 30:5

Matthew 28:20b

John 11:25–26

John 15:5

Ephesians 5:1

