

PPT Title

Deborah and Barak

Main Point: We can trust in God's promises.

PPT Verse

Key Verse: Some trust in chariots. Some trust in horses. But we trust in the Lord our God. - Psalm 20:7

Props: A small inexpensive statue (or doll) painted gold

BACKGROUND/REVIEW

Say: At the end of our lesson last week, Joshua died and we learned that the very next generation of Israelites broke one of the Ten Commandments. **Ask:** Who can remember which commandment they broke? *The first one; They turned away from God and worshipped false gods.*

Say: The Bible has many names for God. Last week, we learned that one of God's names is "Jealous" (Exodus 34:14). This use of the word means that God will not stand for any rival. He is the Creator of the universe, the Beginning and the End (Genesis 1; Revelation 21:6). There is none like Him (Isaiah 46:9). There is no one else in His category. He deserves all praise and all worship (Psalm 29:2), and He will not stand for His people worshipping anything else.

PPT

If..., Then...

God had made an IF, THEN promise to the Israelites. God said IF they followed Him, THEN He would bless them and fight for them (Exodus 34:10-11).



It's like if your parents say, "IF you get a good grade on your Math test, THEN we will go out for ice cream." But what happens if you decide not to study? What if you think, "Oh, my parents don't mean it. I'm sure we'll get ice cream whether I get a good grade or not." So, you play with your friends, watch TV, and do not study. The tests come back and you failed!



Your parents made an IF, THEN promise. You did not do your part - you did not get a good grade. Will you go out for ice cream? No! If your parents are "just", and keep their word, you will not go for ice cream. In the same way, there was another side to God's promise. God had also said that IF the Israelites did **not** follow Him, THEN He would **not** bless them, and He would **not** fight their enemies for them (Joshua 23:12-13). God **ALWAYS** keeps His promises!



Say: This is a lot like a Mom telling her son, "IF you touch the stove, THEN you will burn your hand." How many times do you think a Mom would need to tell that to her son? Well, if the son is very small, she may have to say it many times. But how many times would she need to tell her teenager about the stove, before he understood the warning? Hopefully, just once. The Israelites were definitely grown ups, yet God warned them over and over again that they would be punished if they worshipped anything other than Him.

He first told them in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:3-6). Then He told them many times in the wilderness (Exodus 32:8-10, 34:15-17, Leviticus 19:4, 26:1-39,

Deuteronomy 8:19). Before Moses died, he warned the Israelites that once they were living in the Promised Land, they would forget about God and worship false gods (Deuteronomy 6:13-15). And, before Joshua died, Joshua warned the Israelites not to live with the people in Canaan because they would surely begin to follow the Canaanites' false gods (Joshua 23:12-13,16).

Ask: Do you think this was a fair number of times to warn the Israelites? *Yes, more than fair!*



Say: Let's talk for just a minute about these idols and false gods. **Teacher:** Show your homemade idol, or gold painted doll. The people in Canaan worshipped statues that were carved by people. Look, here is a statue (or doll) that is similar. I painted it gold so it is nice to look at. It looks kind of fancy and expensive. What if I decided to worship it, instead of worshipping God?

Ask: What do you think this statue can do for me? *Nothing!* Well, what if I ask it to make it rain outside? What if I ask it to get me a new job? What if I asked it to bless me? *It can't!* You mean this thing can't do anything for me? *No!* Why not? *It is not alive, It is not powerful, It was created by a person*

Say: If we compare what this statue can do to what God can do, there is absolutely no contest! There is a Bible verse about this. 1 Chronicles 16:26 says:

PPT Verse

All of the gods of the nations are like their statues. They can't do anything. But the Lord made the heavens.

Ask: Okay, so maybe my statue can't *do* anything, but how about if I worship it just because I think it deserves to be praised? Doesn't it deserve to be praised because it is so great? *No.* I think it is great because it is shiny and has a nice face carved on it. *(List some additional attributes of the statue as reasons to worship it.)* But, wait just a minute. Now that I think about it, the statue did not create itself. Someone made this statue. If I think the statue is so great, isn't the one who created it much greater? *Yes!*

Say: This is absolutely true of God! He is the Creator of heaven and earth (Genesis 1). If we look around, we see all the amazing things He created. He created the mountains, the oceans, the sun and moon, and each of you. There is nothing more worthy of our worship than God is. Yet, the Canaanites worshipped things that were created rather than **the Creator**. The Bible puts it this way:

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*They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served **created things** rather than **the Creator** - Who is forever praised. - Romans 1:25*

Say: And then there were false gods. These were not objects, but made up spirits. They were not real gods. They were just imaginary. The people made up names for them and worshipped them as though they were real. Over and over, God warned His people, the Israelites, not to worship idols and false gods. But, as soon as Joshua and the men of his generation died, listen to what the Israelites did:



The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. They forgot the Lord their God. They served the gods that were named after Baal. They also served the goddesses that were named after Asherah. So the Lord's anger burned against Israel. He gave them over to the power of Cushan-Rishathaim. He was the king of Aram Naharaim. For eight years Israel was under his rule. - Judges 3:7-8

After all the blessings God had given them and after all the fighting God did for them, the Israelites forgot God and began to worship false gods. Just like He promised He would do, God stopped blessing and protecting His people. Another king took them over and ruled them for eight years. This is the first time the Israelites had been under someone else's rule since they God freed them from slavery in Egypt, decades earlier.

Even though it was their own fault for ignoring God's warnings, listen to what happened next:

They cried out to the Lord. Then he gave them a man to save them. His name was Othniel, the son of Kenaz. He was Caleb's younger brother. - Judges 3:9

Remember, Caleb was Joshua's good friend. The Bible says that he followed God with all of his heart. Joshua and Caleb were the only two Israelites who were faithful to God way back before they entered the Promised Land (Numbers 14:24, 31). Now, God raised up Caleb's brother to lead the Israelites, and free them from the foreign king. The Bible says the Spirit of the Lord filled Othniel. He went to war and God handed the king over to Othniel.

So the land was at peace for 40 years. Then Othniel, the son of Kenaz, died. - Judges 3:11



Say: Finally, the people turned back to God. In His mercy and love, God rescued His people, and there was peace for 40 years. Now, it would be great if the story stopped there. But as soon as their Othniel died, they forgot about God again! In fact, this becomes a tragic pattern, or cycle, with the Israelites. A cycle is a chain of events that happen over and over. The entire book of Judges that we are studying tells of this cycle that the Israelites do over and over. Let's look at the cycle. **Teacher: Discuss the cycle, beginning with the top. Say:** When the Israelites were under Joshua's leadership, they followed God. They obeyed Him and worshipped Him. **Moving clockwise, point to the correlating entry on the chart. (If not using the powerpoint presentation, explain the cycle by drawing the chart on paper or white board.)** But soon they forgot about God and worshipped Baal. Then they were taken over by the king of Aram. The Israelites cried out to God. God raised up Othniel. Othniel went to war and the Israelites were rescued. While Othniel was alive, the Israelites followed God again.

Ask: Remember, a cycle runs over and over again. So as soon as Othniel died, what do you think will happen? *They will forget about God again, they will worship false gods* **Point to the words, "Israelites sin & worship false gods."**

Once again the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. Because they did that, the Lord gave Eglon power over Israel. - Judges 3:12

Say: Eglon was the king of Moab. He got two other nations to join him, and together, they attacked the Israelites. This time, the Israelites were captured for 18 years. 18 years is a really long time. It is longer than any of you have been alive. Just imagine, your family and friends being captured and treated badly for as long as you have been alive. So, in keeping with the cycle, what will happen next? **Point to chart.** The Israelites cried out to God (Judges 3:15). And then? **Point to chart. Encourage the kids by saying, "Now you're getting the hang of this chart."** God sent a judge, or deliverer (Judges 3:15). This judge's name was Ehud. He tricked the king of Moab, and killed him. Ehud also led the Israelites in battle. God gave Moab into the hands of the Israelites (Judges 3:28-30). **Point to, "Israelites are rescued."** This time there was peace for 80 years. **Point to, "Israelites follow God."**

Say: Sadly, the Israelites do NOT learn from the cycle they are in. They choose not to REMEMBER their own history. And, even sadder still, the cycle chart should actually look more like a downward spiral. The Bible tells us that every time the Israelites went through this cycle, their sinning against God became worse and worse!



When the Lord gave them a leader [or judge], He was with that leader. He saved the people from the power of their enemies. He did it as long as the leader lived. He was very sorry for the people. They groaned because of what their enemies did to them.

*The enemies beat them down. They treated them badly. But when the leader died, the people returned to their evil ways. The things they did were **even more sinful** than the things their people before them had done. They followed other gods. They served them. They worshiped them. They refused to give up their evil practices. They wouldn't change their stubborn ways. - Judges 2:18-19*

God raised up another judge after Ehud. His name was Shamgar. We are not told too much about him, except that he killed 600 Philistines and he also rescued the Israelites.

After their eighty years of peace, the Israelites chose to sin once again. As we know from the verses we just read, they were even more sinful this time than before. The Lord gave them into the hands of Jabin, the king in Hazor. The commander of Jabin's army was Sisera. The Bible tells us that Sisera had 900 iron chariots and that he was very cruel to the Israelites. Jabin and Sisera ruled over the Israelites for twenty years. Just as before, the Israelites cried out to God. This time, God raised up a woman named Deborah. Deborah had been a leader of the Israelites. The people came to her when they had disagreements, and she would decide who was right and who was wrong, much like a judge does today (Judges 4:5). The Bible often speaks about prophets. A **prophet** is a man to whom God gives messages and insight. Often, prophets in the Bible tell what is going to happen in the future. A **prophetess** is a woman prophet. The Bible tells us that Deborah was a prophetess (Judges 4:4). All of the Israelites would have respected her and would have known she was a messenger from God. Deborah called for a man named Barak (pronounced Baw-rawk').



*Deborah said to Barak, "The Lord, the God of Israel, is giving you a command. He says, 'Go! Take 10,000 men from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun with you. Then lead the way to Mount Tabor. **I will** draw Sisera into a trap. He is the commander of Jabin's army. **I will** bring him, his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River. There **I will** hand him over to you.'*" - Judges 4:6b-7

PPT

I will!

Say: Wow. This command would have been a really tall order. And, humanly speaking, it would have been very scary. But there are two little words that change everything: "I will." God said "**I will!**" *I will* draw Sisera into a trap, *I will* bring him and his chariots, and *I will* hand him over to Barak. The "I will" makes all the difference because it is God who is doing the work. There is nothing too difficult for God. And when God says He *will* do something, we can be sure it will be done! God always keeps His promises! Because God promised it, Sisera and his army were sure to be destroyed. It was like a gift that Barak was chosen to receive this command from the all-powerful Lord. Let's read Barak's response to Deborah.

Barak said to her, "If you go with me, I'll go. But if you don't go with me, I won't go." - Judges 4:8



Say: Well, Barak was not exactly overflowing with confidence. He did not refuse to go, but he demanded that Deborah - a woman - go with him. We see Barak's hesitation as a lack of faith in God's promise. Perhaps he wanted Deborah to go so that she could give him Godly advice along the way. Deborah agreed to go with him. But because Barak put conditions on God's command, Deborah told him that the victory would go to a woman instead of to him.

"All right," Deborah said. "I'll go with you. But because of the way you are doing this, you won't receive any honor. The Lord will hand Sisera over to a woman." - Judges 4:9a

DAY OF BATTLE (Judges 4:9-24)

Barak and Deborah set out and led 10,000 men up Mount Tabor. When Sisera heard



that Barak and his men were there, Sisera led his army and his chariots up the mountain toward them. Deborah told Barak to go down. She announced that God had gone ahead of him, and that very day God would win the battle against Sisera's army. As Barak's men marched down, God drove Sisera away from the battlefield. All of the chariots scattered, and Barak's army killed every single man in Sisera's army.

But Sisera ran away on foot. He ran to the tent of Jael. She was the wife of Heber, the Kenite. Sisera ran there because Heber's family was friendly toward Jabin, the king of Hazor.

Jael went out to meet Sisera. "Come in, sir," she said. "Come right in. Don't be afraid." So he entered her tent. Then she covered him up.



"I'm thirsty," he said. "Please give me some water." So Jael opened a bottle of milk. The bottle was made out of animal skin. She gave him a drink of milk. Then she covered him up again. - Judges 4:17-19



Cleverly, Jael offered the exhausted Sisera milk to drink instead of water. Sisera told her to stand guard so no one would find him. Exhausted, with a belly full of warm milk, and sure he was safe for the time being, Sisera fell fast asleep. Jael seized the opportunity and killed Sisera while he slept. Soon, Barak came near the tent looking for Sisera. Jael took Barak into her tent and showed him that Sisera was dead. The Bible says the Israelites grew stronger and stronger until they destroyed King Jabin who had been ruling over them.

After Sisera was killed, Deborah sang a song of praise to God.

*"Kings, hear this! Rulers, listen!
I will sing to the Lord. I will sing.
I will make music to the Lord. He is the God of Israel.
Lord, you went out from Mount Seir.
You marched out from the land of Edom.
The earth shook. The heavens poured.
The clouds poured down their water." - Judges 5:3-4*

In her song, Deborah also praised Jael's heroic act.

*"May Jael be the most blessed woman of all.
May the wife of the Kenite Heber be blessed.
May she be the most blessed woman of all those who live in tents." - Judges 5:24*

So, it came to be that a woman was given credit for rescuing the Israelites from the cruel commander, Sisera. This happened, just as Deborah told Barak it would.

Application: Barak did not obey God without hesitation as Abraham and Joshua did when God called them into action (Genesis 12:4; Exodus 17:10, Numbers 14:6-9, Joshua 1:2, 10). Barak's answer was more like that of Moses at the burning bush.



The Bible says that Moses was well educated and a powerful speaker (Acts 7:22). But Moses told God he could not speak in front of Pharaoh. Moses even referred to himself as, "slow of speech and tongue." (Exodus 4:10 NIV) God assured him, "**I will** help you speak. **I will** teach you what to say." (Exodus 4:12) Yet Moses did not relent. Finally, God gave Moses what he asked for. God allowed Moses' brother, Aaron, to go with him to speak to Pharaoh. Later in Exodus, however, we see some disastrous consequences to the authority given to Aaron when Aaron leads the people in forming a golden idol to worship (Exodus 32:1-8).

We can't help but wonder what the outcome would have been if Moses had obeyed God's original command fully, without question. Certainly, God would have given Moses the words that He promised to give him. Likewise, we wonder how Barak's story would have ended if Barak had submitted completely to God's order. We are certain that God would have handed Sisera and his entire army right into Barak's hand, just as He promised.

Yet, despite their lack of faith, both Moses and Barak were unquestionably used by God. Surely each man did have some faith. The Bible says we can do great things with faith as small as a mustard seed (Matthew 17:20). At times, we can each understand how these men felt. Another man in the Bible put it this way, "I do believe; help me overcome my disbelief!" (Mark 9:24 NIV) Inwardly, we each struggle with moments of doubt. Perhaps, both Moses and Barak doubted their own abilities. Maybe they were overwhelmed by their great enemies. Either way, their focus was on the wrong thing. Look again at this verse from Psalm 20:

PPT Verse

*Some trust in chariots. Some trust in horses. **But we trust in the Lord our God.** - Psalm 20:7*

PPT

full obedience
= full victory

The key to overcoming our disbelief is focusing *not* on ourselves or our circumstances, but on the Promise Maker! When our eyes are *not* centered on the One who can do all things, our doubt keeps us from submitting fully to His will. When we hold back from **full obedience**, we will miss out on the **full victory** God has in store for us. We may miss out on some of the blessings He has planned for us.

However, even when our faith is not perfect, we must act on the faith we do have. Because he **did** go to war, Barak is mentioned among the great people of faith in Hebrews 11. Barak is listed as one of those, "whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies." (Hebrews 11:32-34 NIV)

PPT Main Point

Main Point: We can trust in God's promises.