

June 28, 2020

Dear Students,

Do you ever have doubts? Do you sometimes wonder if God is real, or if he will really help you?

If so, you're not alone! The Bible (and any church) is full of people who had doubts or weren't always sure. The Bible includes poems (like [Psalm 88](#) and [Psalm 22](#)) written by people with intense doubts and fears.

This week's Bible story is about someone with doubts. A soldier named Barak is afraid to do what God asks by himself - he wants the prophet Deborah to come with him. Barak doesn't get the glory for winning the battle, but God still helps them win.

The point of this week's lesson is: **It's ok to have doubts about God. The best way to overcome those doubts is to step forward, trusting in God. But it's ok to get help from someone with stronger faith or more experience.**

- 1) Read the Bible memory verse 2-3x out loud: **"The Lord is my strength and my song; he has given me victory. This is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him!" (Exodus 15:2)**
- 2) Read the Solo Bible Study below, or watch one of these videos of the story:
 - a) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l137DiB3vN8&list=PLQ_bbwGAYiPwS8HYyMSjBJpQshYih8w7r&index=2&t=198s (Bible story read aloud with images)
 - b) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jxwhdb-WdgU&list=PLQ_bbwGAYiPwS8HYyMSjBJpQshYih8w7r&index=3&t=0s (Animation video of the Bible story)
- 3) Have a good week!

Solo Bible Study

Judges 4:1-5

After the death of Ehud, the Israelites again started disobeying the Lord. ² So the Lord let the Canaanite King Jabin of Hazor conquer Israel. Sisera was the commander of Jabin's army. ³ Jabin's army had nine hundred iron chariots, and for twenty years he made life miserable for the Israelites, until finally they begged the Lord for help.

⁴ Deborah was a prophet and a leader of Israel during those days. ⁵ She would sit under Deborah's Palm Tree between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, where Israelites would come and ask her to settle their legal cases.

- Notice why the Israelites got in trouble again? Another judge passed away, and the people went back to disobeying God and doing their own thing.
- But God doesn't give up, he keeps sending wise judges to guide the people.

Judges 4:6-10

6 One day, Deborah sent word for Barak the son of Abinoam to come and talk with her. When he arrived, she said: "I have a message for you from the Lord God of Israel! You are to get together an army of ten thousand men from the Naphtali and Zebulun tribes and lead them to Mount Tabor. 7 The Lord will trick Sisera into coming out to fight you at the Kishon River. Sisera will be leading King Jabin's army as usual, and they will have their chariots, but the Lord has promised to help you defeat them."

8 "I'm not going unless you go!" Barak told her. 9 "All right, I'll go!" she replied. "But I'm warning you that the Lord is going to let a woman defeat Sisera, and no one will honor you for winning the battle." Deborah and Barak left for Kedesh, 10 where Barak called together the troops from Zebulun and Naphtali. Ten thousand soldiers gathered there, and Barak led them out from Kedesh. Deborah went too.

- God wants Barak to lead an army against the enemy that's oppressing them, but he won't go without Deborah, even though God is promising to help.
- What do you expect to happen next? Will God let Barak fail?

Judges 4:12-24

12 When Sisera learned that Barak had led an army to Mount Tabor, 13 he called his troops together and got all nine hundred iron chariots ready. Then he led his army away to the Kishon River. 14 Deborah shouted, "Barak, it's time to attack Sisera! Because today the Lord is going to help you defeat him. In fact, the Lord has already gone on ahead to fight for you."

Barak led his ten thousand troops down from Mount Tabor. 15 And during the battle, the Lord confused Sisera, his chariot drivers, and his whole army. Everyone was so afraid of Barak and his army, that even Sisera jumped down from his chariot and tried to escape. 16 Barak's forces went after Sisera's chariots and army as far as Harosheth-Ha-Goim. Sisera's entire army was wiped out.

- Barak isn't confident - but Deborah is! And Barak had the courage to do what he needed to do, even if he had doubts.

Judges 4:17-20

17 Only Sisera escaped. He ran to Heber the Kenite's camp, because Heber and his family had a peace treaty with King Jabin of Hazor. Sisera went to the tent that belonged to Jael, Heber's wife. 18 She came out to greet him and said, "Come in, sir! Please come on in. Don't be afraid." After they had gone inside, Sisera lay down, and Jael covered him with a blanket. 19 "Could I have a little water?" he asked. "I'm thirsty." Jael opened a leather bottle and poured him some milk, then she covered him back up. 20 "Stand at the entrance to the tent," Sisera told her. "If someone comes by and asks if anyone is inside, tell them 'No.'"

- Did you notice what Sisera is doing? He ran away from his own army and now he's putting Jael's life in danger too. What Sisera doesn't know is that Jael is working for God, not for Sisera!

Judges 4:21-24

21 Sisera was exhausted and soon fell fast asleep. Jael took a hammer and drove a tent-peg through his head into the ground, and he died. 22 Meanwhile, Barak had been

following Sisera, and Jael went out to meet him. “The man you’re looking for is inside,” she said. “Come in and I’ll show him to you.” They went inside, and there was Sisera, dead. ²³ That same day the Israelites defeated the Canaanite King Jabin, and his army was no longer powerful enough to attack the Israelites. ²⁴ Jabin grew weaker while the Israelites kept growing stronger, and at last the Israelites destroyed him. ...There was peace in Israel for about forty years.

- Reading with modern eyes, the history we learn in the Bible can seem very violent. Remember that at that time, there were no law courts or police or professional armies. Everyone who could fight had to act like a soldier to defend their homes and families against raiders. God also helped the people who followed him fight against the evil forces around them.
- Barak lacked confidence, but God helped Barak directly by making the enemy panic. God also helped Barak through other people. Deborah gave him advice and went with him, his army fought bravely for him, and then Jael killed Sisera for him.
- God wants you to have the confidence to trust him on your own, but he’ll also give you help from other people when you need it.
- Having doubts or worries is not a sin! Rejecting God is a sin. Ignoring God is a sin. Not being sure? That’s something that happens to Bible people and to us.
- The point of today’s lesson is that **It’s ok to have doubts about God. The best way to overcome those doubts is to step forward, trusting in God. But it’s ok to get help from someone with stronger faith or more experience.**
- Do you have a situation this week, or this summer, where you need help trusting God or having confidence? Who can you ask to be with you or support you?
- Is there someone you can help who is trying to trust in God?

“Dear Jesus, sometimes I have doubts. Please help me trust in you, even when I’m not sure. Please give me a friend or mentor to encourage me. Help me be a good example for someone else, too. Amen.”

With love,

--Sharon Rauenzahn (sharon@shroop.net 408.316.0136)