

UNLIKELY HEROES

"RIGHT WOMAN FOR THE JOB" JUDGES 4:1-5:13

This Week's Core Competency

Identity in Christ – I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God. John 1:12 *Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.*

"I could never do that!" "I don't have what it takes." "I'm not even qualified." "What would others think?" Have you ever had thoughts like these? Often we are reluctant to do something God is nudging us to do because we fear the unknown. Fear of failure, objections, or the ridicule of others often prevents us from stepping into God's plan. In order not to make waves, sometimes it's easier just to stay out of the water.

Katie Davis, founder of Amazima Ministries, if she is anything, is decisively a wave-maker! In 2006 at age 18, Katie took a life changing short-term mission trip to the impoverished country of Uganda. She was so touched by the people and their needs, she returned in 2007 to teach kindergarten at a Ugandan orphanage. Beyond the scope of her daily teaching, she began to see and feel the effects of poverty upon children in Uganda. Walking through the villages where her students lived, Katie found that many children of school age could not afford tuition. Some families were too poor to send their children to any school. Other children had no homes and were living on the street. Someone had to do something! So Katie started an educational sponsorship program for Ugandan children. Western donors were invited to

***We are all manufacturers—some
make good, others make trouble, and
still others make excuses.***

- Anonymous

sponsor a child's education. Three hundred dollars a year would supply education, meals, spiritual instruction and medical care for one child. By the end of 2008, Katie saw 150 children sponsored. Today over 700 children have sponsors.

Katie's work is amazingly robust now, with teams helping her reach out to tribal groups with feeding programs, vocational training programs for mothers and educational program-ming in the now-formal Amazima School. Amazima also provides medical care to families and farming education for local Ugandan farmers. All this from the heart and hands of a young single woman! Learn more about her story from her bestselling book *Kisses* from Katie or her website amazima.org.

As exciting as all this ministry sounds, what is even more compelling about Katie's "wave-making" is her personal commitment to the people of Uganda. Katie, early on in her time in Uganda, began to open her home to orphaned Ugandan girls. By the age of 22, she was a foster parent to 13 orphan girls. Katie has mothered these motherless children as a single mom for three years now. Just this January Katie married and now shares these 13 children with her young husband, Benji. Who would have ever thought that 13 orphaned Ugandan girls would have a mother from Tennessee and now a father as well!

Critics are quick to point out the uniqueness of Ms. Davis' story, cautioning others from following such an unorthodox path. Katie's story is often messy and unconventional. But what cannot be dismissed is Katie's dependence upon God and her obedience to do what God has put in front of her. Katie has little room for excuses or conditions while loving the children of Uganda.

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When asked if she would advise others to follow her example, Katie reveals the heart of a willing and excuse-deficient servant:

"I think prayer is key. I would encourage people to follow and obey, and try to serve others one step at a time, whoever is in front of them . . . And as you meet the needs right in front of you, He can build something different than we ever would have thought or planned." (*Christianity Today*, Oct 25, 2011)

What excuses or conditions are you holding on to that would keep you from serving Christ?

day **1** ENCOUNTER – read God’s word to put yourself in touch with him.

Judges 4:1-24

1 Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord, now that Ehud was dead. 2 So the Lord sold them into the hands of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. Sisera, the commander of his army, was based in Harosheth Haggoyim. 3 Because he had nine hundred chariots fitted with iron and had cruelly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years, they cried to the Lord for help.

4 Now Deborah, a prophet, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading[a] Israel at that time. 5 She held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites went up to her to have their disputes decided. 6 She sent for Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, "The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you: 'Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead them up to Mount Tabor. 7 I will lead Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into your hands.'"

8 Barak said to her, "If you go with me, I will go; but if you don't go with me, I won't go."

9 "Certainly I will go with you," said Deborah. "But because of the course you are taking, the honor will not be yours, for the Lord will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman." So Deborah went with Barak to Kedesh. 10 There Barak summoned Zebulun and Naphtali, and ten thousand men went up under his command. Deborah also went up with him.

11 Now Heber the Kenite had left the other Kenites, the descendants of Hobab, Moses' brother-in-law,[b] and pitched his tent by the great tree in Zaanannim near Kedesh.

12 When they told Sisera that Barak son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor, 13 Sisera summoned from Harosheth Haggoyim to the Kishon River all his men and his nine hundred chariots fitted with iron.

14 Then Deborah said to Barak, "Go! This is the day the Lord has given Sisera into your hands. Has not the Lord gone ahead of you?" So Barak went down Mount Tabor, with ten thousand men following him. 15 At Barak's advance, the Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots and army by the sword, and Sisera got down from his chariot and fled on foot.

16 Barak pursued the chariots and army as far as Harosheth Haggoyim, and all Sisera's troops fell by the sword; not a man was left. 17 Sisera, meanwhile, fled on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, because there was an alliance between Jabin king of Hazor and the family of Heber the Kenite.

18 Jael went out to meet Sisera and said to him, "Come, my lord, come right in. Don't be afraid." So he entered her tent, and she covered him with a blanket.

19 "I'm thirsty," he said. "Please give me some water." She opened a skin of milk, gave him a drink, and covered him up.

20 "Stand in the doorway of the tent," he told her. "If someone comes by and asks you, 'Is anyone in there?' say 'No.'"

21 But Jael, Heber's wife, picked up a tent peg and a hammer and went quietly to him while he lay fast asleep, exhausted. She drove the peg through his temple into the ground, and he died.

22 Just then Barak came by in pursuit of Sisera, and Jael went out to meet him. "Come," she said, "I will show you the man you're looking for." So he went in with her, and there lay Sisera with the tent peg through his temple—dead.

23 On that day God subdued Jabin king of Canaan before the Israelites. 24 And the hand of the Israelites pressed harder and harder against Jabin king of Canaan until they destroyed him. (NIV 2011)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- *Circle the word in 4:2 that shows the result of evil described in 4:1.
- *Box the word in 4:3 that shows the cause of Israel's cry for help.
- *Underline the words showing the actions of Deborah in Judges 4:4-6.
- *Circle the word "I" in Judges 4:7. Draw a line to who this is as found in 4:6.
- *Draw a line between the word "hands" found in 4:7 and 4:9.
- *Double underline the active subject of Judges 4:15a.
- *Circle the word in 4:15b and 17 that stands in strong contrast to "chariot."
- *Box the phrase in 4:17 that shows the reason why Sisera went to Jael's tent.
- *Underline the words in 4:22 that show immediacy.
- *Circle the acting subject of 4:23.
- *Box the acting subject of 4:24.
- Draw a line between the similar words found in 4:2 and 4:24.

day **2** **EXPLORE** – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Describe the circumstances of Israel's oppression as described in Judges 4:1-3.
2. Describe all that Deborah did for the Israelites of her day (Judges 4:4-10).
3. How did Deborah understand her role in the nation of Israel (see Judges 5:6-9)?
4. Why did Barak refuse to go into battle if Deborah did not go with him?
5. What was so wrong with taking Deborah? Why would Barak lose honor for wanting such a godly person along for the trip?
6. Read Judges 5:19-23. What does Deborah's song add to the description of battle with Sisera (Judges 4:14-16)?
7. How is Judges 4:18-22 a fulfillment of Deborah's prophecy in Judges 4:9?
8. Why would Jael be motivated to kill Sisera?
9. Like Ehud, Jael is duplicitous and cunning in her the treatment of her oppressor. She is praised for this (Judges 5:24-27). How can she be honored for her deceit?
10. Talk about conclusions you draw from the contrast of the women and men found in Judges 4 and 5?

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

In the book of Judges, two judges stand out as exemplary from the others. The majority of the judges of Israel exhibit, along with their strengths, glaring weaknesses. The first judge, Othniel, displays faith and courage, leading the people to victory over oppression and idolatry. He did no wrong and was thought to be the ideal judge that all others should emulate. No weaknesses are disclosed about Israel's first judge. The only other Hebrew judge with such a sterling reputation is Deborah.

Deborah is first introduced as a prophetess. No other judge in the book had this type of connection with God. Her role of bringing messages from God to the people is unique in the book. Most of the other judges are told by God, through an angel, to go and do. Deborah is used by God to deliver this call to action to others. Deborah is the messenger from God to his people, Barak specifically. She calls upon Barak and delivers the command of God to this man to rise up and deliver the people of God from the oppression of the Canaanites. Twice she reminds Barak of God's call. She tells him how many men to assemble and the exact day to strike.

One would expect at this time that the priests of Israel would be messengers from God to His people. Edersheim laments the silence of the priesthood: "One of the most painful circumstances in the history of the Judges is the utter silence which all this time seems to envelop Shiloh and its sanctuary. No help comes from the priesthood till quite the close of this period. Far away in Mount Ephraim God raised up a woman on whom He had poured this spirit of prophecy. It is the first time in this history that we read of the prophetic gift. The sacred text conveys, that she exercised it in strict accordance with the Divine law, for it is significantly added in connection with it, that "she judged Israel at that time" (Alfred Edersheim, *Old Testament Bible History*, 123).

Deborah's leadership of "judging" involved deciding cases of dispute for the people, much in the likeness of judges described in the Mosaic law (Exodus 22, Deuteronomy 16, 19, 25). It is assumed that other deliverers in the book of Judges fulfilled this function for the people as well, but only Deborah is described specifically as carrying out this function. Deborah's unique role as a prophetess undoubtedly aided her success as a judge.

Perhaps most amazing are Deborah's literary achievements. Obviously she had a mastery of Mosaic law and its application to personal disputes. Her success as a judge had people coming from all of Israel to hear her wisdom and submit to her jurisprudence. No doubt Deborah was well-read and able to speak God's law into the lives of others. Beyond legal matters, Deborah also showcased her mastery of literary artistry. Judges chapter four is a chronicling of Deborah's work among her people, narrated by the author of Judges. Judges chapter five is unique to the book, as poetry composed by Deborah herself. No other judge writes anything of consequence in the book of Judges. Samson issues a few riddles, but Deborah writes masterful and epic poetry. As the only judge writing her own account, Deborah composition displays a level of education, artistry and sophistication that rivals Moses, David and Solomon. "This is evidenced by the song she composed following Barak's victory over Sisera. The song is a brilliant piece of work written under the inspiration of God. With fine dramatic sense, Deborah sets forth within it a series of separate scenes. The language is powerful and full of meaning. Robert H. Pfeiffer calls it 'the finest masterpiece of Hebrew poetry' and states that it 'deserves a place amongst the best songs of victory ever written' (Leon Wood, *The Prophets of Israel*, 146). Others consider this piece to be the earliest example of Hebrew poetry beyond the time of Moses.

Deborah is an amazing example of a gifted and motivated servant of God. In stark contrast to her fellow judges, she carries no idolatrous baggage. She is not hounded by pestering fears. She makes no foolish vows, has no moral lapses and in general is described as an ideal judge. If she has any liability to speak of, it is only her gender. Yet with even this cultural limitation, Deborah works with grace and humility. She is described as the wife of Lappidoth. She is not a rabid, solitary, wandering, mountain soothsayer. She is a wife and perhaps a mother, describing herself as such (Judges 5:7). She also works with those who fight and lead (Judges 4:14-15; 5, 9, 12), encouraging them to "take captive your captives." (5:12). She is not Israel's deliverer like other judges, but identifies and summons Barak to be the warring leader of God's people. She celebrates the victory and success of others without demanding

recognition for herself.

In contrast to Barak, Deborah follows God without hesitation or required stipulation. When Deborah delivers God's command to Barak (4:6-7), Barak is reluctant to lead the charge by himself. He emphatically states, "If you go with me, I will go; but if you don't go with me, I won't go." (4:8). This conditional obedience is immediately challenged by the prophetic authority of Deborah. She agrees to go, but prophetically judges Barak and foretells the diminished honor Barak will receive: a woman would claim the crowning jewel of victory over Sisera. This was a punishment and an embarrassment for Barak. He who hesitates or stipulates terms with God may potentially miss out on God's blessings.

Deborah and Jael stand as the true heroes of Judges 4 and 5. It is unlikely that in a patriarchal world, women would be considered of

consequence and strategic value. But both Deborah and Jael were prepared and ready to act when given the opportunity by God. Rather than being reluctant to act or bitter because of their state in relation to men, Deborah and Jael served and acted without hesitation or condition. Deborah's opening line in her masterful poem states it best, "When the princes in Israel take the lead, when the people willingly offer themselves—praise the Lord!" (Judges 5:2). Be prepared and be willing to act upon opportunities that God gives you to serve Him. These opportunities may be formal appointments (Deborah and Barak) or they may be momentary flashes of opportunity (Jael). Hesitation or bargaining with God may mean He will find more willing servants. Don't forfeit his blessings with a reluctant or conditional faith.

The Message of the Passage

God will prevail! Follow hard after Him. If you hesitate or place conditions upon God, He may use someone else and honor that person's faith instead of your own lack of faith.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

• **Journal your answers to the following *living* questions:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

4:2 **Canaan** "The leading king of the day was again named Jabin, ruler of Hazor, as in the earlier time of Joshua (cf. Joshua 11:1). The Canaanites did not have a central kingdom, but existed as city-states, even as at the time of Joshua's conquest . . . It was this new Jabin, then who now took the lead in fighting against Israel. Because Hazor was in the far north of the land, even nine miles north of the Sea of Galilee, this retaliation clearly took place mainly in the north, the region of Galilee" (Woods, 184).

4:3 **iron chariots** "Especially difficult for infantry, these 'iron chariots' were a technology that Israel did not possess, and they therefore pose a great intimidation to them. Contrary to what is commonly stated, ancient chariots were not like modern tanks. They were not used to break through enemy lines. Instead they were used for pursuit and slaughter of the fleeing enemy. They were primarily a killing platform. Against a fleeing enemy on an open plain they were very effective" (K. Lawson Younger, *NIV Application Commentary: Judges and Ruth*, 139).

4:4 **Deborah** Name literally means "Bee." Just like the industrious and diligent gathering insect of nature, Deborah busily serves God. She is described as a prophetess, a wife and a leader or judge. "Apparently God saw fit to communicate revelation to her, in respect to information needed for the time and it may be that this fact was what led to her becoming also a judge. Somehow she achieved this position, and as a result people came to look to her for counsel and guidance. It may be that the two capacities worked together, as God would reveal information to her to use in this activity of giving advice" (Woods, 185).

4:6 **sent for** "Barak ('lightning'), the son of Abinoam of Kedesh Naphtali, is introduced (note that Deborah 'sends' for him and then 'commands' him). Clearly she is the one who is taking the initiative, not Barak. From the introduction of Deborah in 4:4 on, the narrator surprises the reader with numerous twists in the plot. Deborah is not what we would expect. The fact that she holds a position of authority and takes the initiative in relation to the prospective male hero is surprising. Moreover, Deborah stands as God's envoy, the means by which God issues his call to Barak" (Younger, 141).

4:6 **Mount Tabor** "Mount Tabor as the junction of the tribal portions of Issachar, Naphtali and Zebulun, was chosen as a rallying-point. It was a conical shaped mountain rising a little over 1,300 feet from the north-eastern corner of the Esdraelon valley, and was such a prominently landmark that any confusion on the part of the assembling Israelites would be avoided" (Arthur E Cundall, *Judges and Ruth*, TOTC, 84).

4:9 **course** Barak's reluctance to go without Deborah is considered by Deborah to be negative. Barak's self-imposed condition upon his obedience is disliked by God and His messenger Deborah. "Whatever his motivation may have been, he put a condition on obeying God. The will of God was clear. He even had God's promise of victory. Nevertheless he refused to obey unless Deborah accompanied him. Barak would defeat the Canaanites, but a woman would get the credit for defeating the commander, Sisera. This was Barak's punishment for putting a condition on his obedience to God (v. 9). Barak probably assumed that the prediction in verse 9 referred to Deborah, but, as things turned out, Jael the Kenite received the glory that might have been his. Even though Barak had faith (Heb. 11:32), his faith was not as strong as it should have been" (Thomas Constable, "Notes on Judges," 2015 ed., 36, www.soniclight.com).

4:15 **routed** The ten thousand Israelites, lightly armed and highly mobile, poured down into the valley and joined battle with a chariot force which was unable to maneuver on the softened ground. Escape with the possibility of fighting under better conditions on another day, was the only wise course so Sisera attempted to fall back on his base camp" (Cundall, 87).

4:17 **Jael** "The ironic juxtaposition of the victor and the vanquished in the same tent of Jael is significant. The woman has in effect conquered them both: Sisera, by depriving him of his life, and Barak, by depriving him of the honor that should have been his as the chosen deliverer. Interestingly, the true identity of the 'woman' [4:9] is delayed as long as possible so that the irony is nicely turned against the reader. The result of this delay is to enhance the impact, when it comes, of the revelation that Yahweh's choice fell not merely on a woman nor even on an Israelite prophetess (as we are led to expect), but on Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite" (Younger, 145). Jael also emulates Ehud with the use of subterfuge and "close and personal" lethal force.

4:19 **skin of milk** "The skins of animals were frequently used to store liquids, particularly milk, which could then be easily churned to produce curds. That this was the drink offered to Sisera is shown in the second half of 5:25 where 'butter (AV, RV) is better rendered as 'curds' (RSV). Known generally as yoghurt, it is commonly given by modern-day Arabs to those who are tired and it is usually the only sustenance when one of their number is ill" (Cundall, 89).

Family Time

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." (Galatians 6:9) As a mom, I find great encouragement from that verse. Sometimes I can't see the fruit of my discipleship in my children. And when it seems my parenting is fruitless, it makes me weary. At those times, I have to remember that the One who loves my children more than I do is at work in them and He has promised He will carry on that work until it's completion (Philippians 1:6). On this week leading up to Mother's Day, I hope you know how valuable you are! The good work you are doing will reap a harvest at the appointed time. You need not wonder if it's worth it to find the energy to read yet another bedtime story - it is. When we question the value of going the extra mile for our kids, we can rest in the power of the message we are sending as we model God's command to love someone else more than we love ourselves. With every hug, every gentle pat, every encouraging word, you are making a difference that no one else can. You are shaping the minds and hearts of future leaders, inventors, dreamers and decision-makers. As a church we celebrate you this week and thank God for your ministry in your family.

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Read Judges 4:1-16

1. Were the Israelites obeying God at this time?
2. What was Deborah's job?
3. What message did give to Barak?

What Do You Think

1. Why do you think Barak wouldn't go to battle without Deborah?
2. What are some character traits Deborah had?

What R U Going To Do

Just like Deborah, your mom is a wise and brave woman! Find a way this week to celebrate her. Make her a card, offer to do the dishes, watch your little brother or sister while she works in the garden...be creative and think of another way!

MEMORY TIME

Post the kid-friendly Core Competency and the Memory Verse throughout the house.

Core Comp

Identity in Christ - I believe I am special because I am a child of God.

Memory Verse

Colossians 3:17 - *And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.

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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.