

BARAK

~~WOMEN SHOULD PRAY, NOT LEAD~~

JUDGES 4 AND 5

MISTAKE MADE:

Barak wants Deborah to 'hold his hand' signifying that God's presence was not enough.

LESSON LEARNED:

God's presence is our greatest guarantee. Despite an imperfect environment, two faithful and courageous women were used by God to bring an end to a season of evil Canaanite rule.

FREEDOM FOUND:

Living by faith is the basis for seeing the enemy defeated and people set free.

1. Read Judges 4:1-3. Keep in mind the general flow of the book of Judges and how the people have been behaving up to this point. What bad advice would you say God's people followed?
2. Read Judges 4:8-9. In the relationship between Deborah and Barak this appears to be the key moment. What difference do these verses make to the story? How do you interpret what Deborah says to Barak in verse 9?
3. Deborah is described as a 'prophetess' and a 'judge.' While the male priests carried out their duties in a designated place (the Tabernacle was at Bethel during this time), Deborah was found sitting under a tree in a remote location. Her ministry can be seen as a sad indictment against the formal religious leadership of the day and, in light of Judges 5:6-8, the civil leaders as well. At the very least, this shows that even in a staunchly patriarchal culture God called and gifted a woman to a prominent position that had spiritual and political significance. Of the thirteen judges named in the book, only one was a woman. Some point out that this makes Deborah the exception not the rule. Others point out that the exception is rather exceptional in a patriarchal society. How do we make sense of this?
4. God clearly revealed Himself to a particular culture, in a particular time. We must take seriously such revelation, recognizing that not every aspect of its historical setting applies to us today. With that in mind, discuss how you determine between historical truths, which apply only to the original context, from eternal truths valid for all churches and all believers of all ages? What lessons have you learned through this process?
5. Read Galatians 3:26-28, 2 Corinthians 3:17-18, and 4:16-18. These passages seem to talk about an eternal reality that both history and our current experience do not yet reflect. Considering the plight of women in India and Afghanistan right now, what message can the church give to women across the world? When it comes to gender issues, what lessons does the church need to address?
6. There are ways in which Barak does not respond in a totally faithful way in Judges 4. As we look around the church today, there are ways in which 'male leaders' have not responded faithfully either. In what ways do you think the failure of male leaders in the church makes it harder for female leaders in the church?