

Show video - Female Marines Join Infantry Training

15% of the U.S. military are women.

Last year Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta announced the official repeal of the U.S. Armed Forces' ban on women in combat.

Women will soon be permitted to apply and earn a place among the Navy SEALs & Army Rangers.

Just last month enlisted women began training for Marine infantry.

Some men and women are in favor.

Some men, and some women, are opposed.

With reason and respect, what do you think?

Title slide

We are looking at the Book of Judges in the Old Testament.

It records the history of Israel between around 1350-1050BC.

It is a time of heroes—a new kind of hero for their day called judges.

Today we are going to look at the only woman judge – Deborah.

Deborah is a judge.

She is the nation's political leader.

And she is the nation's military leader.

She also certainly faced the kind of prejudice and challenges that women in these roles face today.

Women are not always portrayed well in the book of Judges or treated well in the time of Judges.

We talked about how Samson had a wife, and a mistress & a harlot.

Yet, he has his faithful mother who the angel announces his birth to.

Last week, Pastor Keith talked about Abimelek's mother who was a kept woman and Jephthah's mother who was a harlot.

Abimelek, the “self-made” leader from Pastor Keith's message is mortally wounded on the head with a large rock thrown by a woman.

Before he dies, he asks his fellow soldier to run him through so he isn't disgraced by being killed by a woman.

At the end of a book, there is a horrific event where a man & his concubine visit a town in Benjamin, and they are taken as guests into the home of one of the townspeople.

Late at night the men of the town come knocking on the door saying give us the man so we can abuse him.

The host tries to protect them, but the man sends out his concubine.

In the morning she is found dead on the threshold of the door.

In his outrage at how they treated her,
 he cuts her into 12 pieces and sends a piece of her body
 to each of the 12 tribes to say, this is how we treat women!

The scene could be right out of the Sopranos.
 It is in this rough, raw, and confronting world that we find
 the only female political leader of Israel in the OT– Deborah.

On top of being a judge, and a national political & military leader,
 Deborah is even a pop star.
 She has her own song recorded in Judges 5.

She is Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Hillary Clinton, & Katy Perry all in 1.

Or if you don't know Katy Perry, she is Carrie Underwood ... ? No?
 Helen Reddy? I am woman?
 Doris Day? Que sera, sera. No.
 She is Amy Grant! Yeah.

Her story is found in Judges 4.
 It begins with the usual ...

Judges 4

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. (I worked on an archeological dig in the northern city site of Hazor for 3 weeks in 1998 ...) Sisera, the commander of his army, was based in Harosheth Haggoyim. (Woodland of the gentiles) 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 (Yes, that's Barak) son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali (That's near either Hawaii or Kenya, depending on which scholar you prefer.) 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."

It's the same pattern.
 The Israelites do evil in the sight of the Lord.

They suffer because of it.

They cry out to him and he sends them a heroic leader, a judge.

Deborah's name means honeybee.

She is a prophetess.

She has a spiritual connection with God.

She speaks for him and teaches his word.

She is the judge of Israel.

She settles disputes under the tree between Ramah and Bethel.

Women are good at that - being problem solvers and peacekeepers.

If they have a spiritual connection with God, especially.

God gives wisdom and insight to those who trust him.

When my brother and I had a conflict,

my dad used the Martin-Incognito method of conflict resolution.

He'd say: "Go punch him good then he'll stop."

My mother was more compassionate and wise.

Deborah hears from God. He wants to deal with this Jabin of Hazor.

She sends for Barak and tells him that God commands him

to take 10K men and go to Mt Tabor and she'll lead Sisera to him.

Sisera is military commander for Jabin king of the Canaanite.

Barak is the general for Israel's army.

How does Barak respond? What does he say?

He tells Deborah: "If you go with me, I will go;
but if you don't go with me, I won't go."

This is not the typical male response.

Typically the male would say, if you go, why do I have to go? I'm good.

But Barak is probably fearful or superstitious.

Deborah says, "Okay, but because this is how you replied,

now the honor for the victory will go to a woman.

I think this part of the story is here to show that Deborah is not a usurper.

She does not inappropriately usurp a social place that is not hers.

She defers.

She only takes the place because another refuses to step up.

Deborah is not a self-made woman, to use Pastor Keith's idea.

She is humble.

She acknowledges God.

She defers to cultural norm.

She is the nation's leader and she still is humble enough

to submit to the authority of another.

In her song in chapter 5 she recounts:

Judges 5:7 They would not fight until I, Deborah, arose, until I arose, a mother in Israel.

This kind of reflects an issue that arises sometimes today.
When men, especially husbands and fathers, fail to lead,
women can struggle with what is right for them to do?
Take the lead?
Is that disrespect?
How can you be submissive and lead?

Deborah is an example of how it can be done with God's blessing.
Deborah is a leader in the public forum.
She is a powerful woman.
She is wise and spiritual.
And she is also humble and respectful.

Maybe, Barak refuses because he wants the prophetess of God to accompany him so she can act as his oracle.
He can ask and get answers from God through her.
But the matter is settled, you have the victory, go!

**Barak shows that heroism is not about manliness,
but can be about trusting and obeying the Lord.**

Judges 4

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, and pitched his tent by the great tree in Zaanannim near Kedesh.

Deborah goes with Barak and they have 10,000 men.
And we meet another man named Heber.
Heber is a Kenites.
Kenites are known for iron working.
Heber was Moses' nephew or great nephew,
but he's pitched his tent by the great tree near Kadesh.
That's a pagan, Canaanite worship place.
... Heber has wandered from the true God.
He's not serving the true God.
Remember him.

Judges 4

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.

Why would a general get down from his chariot & flee on foot?

Probably because a storm has come & turned the battle field ... to mud.

God goes ahead of the Israelites and turns the power, the advantage, of the enemy into a liability.

He turns the armies power to nothing!

Who here knows that if you obey God,

**He will do what he says he will do to bless you,
even if he has to turn your enemies’ strengths into their
undoing!**

Deborah says, “This is the day! Go! Has not the Lord gone ahead of you!”
And she’s right.

**That’s encouragement.
That’s good encouragement.**

That’s not what happened w/ Samson & Delilah a couple weeks ago
where we saw a woman nag a man to the point of death.

Deborah is a different kind of woman - an encourager.

Check this out.

**Deborah is not the warrior,
but she sees that Israel needs a warrior and she gets one.
And she encourages that warrior well.**

You might not be the one to do the fightin.

But you might make a huge difference by helping another win
the fight with timely inspiration!!

Deborah saves Israel from within by problem solving & peacemaking.
Deborah saves Israel from without by encouraging Barak.

Judges 4

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.

Deborah had told Barak,

“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.”

We thought that meant Deborah.

But it’s not. It’s who? Jael.

Jael is like a maverick heroine.

She’s not one of the official heroes, she takes it on herself.

If Deborah is Wonder Woman, then Jael is like Bat Girl.

She’s not officially affiliated as a hero, but she is the hero!

Sisera, the enemy makes it to her tent.

She is courageous and shrewd.

She allows him into her tent.

He asks for water. She gives him better than that, milk.

She covers him.

Did she know what she was doing all along?

We can’t know.

But she is an Israelite.

Her husband, Heber, Moses’ nephew, has pitched his tent near the great tree here, where he can sell his iron to the king of Hazor.

But Jael, apparently, is still loyal to the Lord.

So... she is strong.

She takes a tent spike ... and when Sisera’s fast asleep,
she drives it through one temple and out the other.

That's a scene right out of Walking Dead.
She drives a spike through his head.

So, what can we do with that?
What is the moral of that story?
Is it "sleep with one eye open gentlemen?"

Maybe it's supposed to be this ...

Even though her husband has strayed from the Lord, Jael fights to turn her family back to a faithful relationship with God.

She turns her family back to the Lord's side.

Jael does not fight her husband to do this.

But, Jael defends her house.

And, Jael is no Martha Stewart,
but she uses a regular household item to do the right thing.

She serves God, she restores faithfulness to God in her house,
with what she has – a regular household item.

It's almost practical.

You can use these tent spikes for so many things around the house.

You can tie your goats to them.

You can use them for a festive holiday centerpiece.

Or you can defeat an intruding enemy general with them.

It's a good thing.

What in your house could you use to eliminate the unfaithfulness?

What practical everyday item could be a weapon in your hand?

What way does your household need a hero?

Finally,

Sisera had actually literally said to her,

"If any man comes to the tent and asks 'is there a man in there,'
say, 'no one.'"

That is irony.

It didn't take a man to bring you down Sisera. Not one.

A woman did the job just fine.

It is no coincidence that the stories of these two female heroes
are woven together here.

God was and still is saying something about gender, about women,
in a man's world.

I think it's this:

A woman can be a hero in the public square and/or in her home.

A woman can be a Deborah and/or a woman can be a Jael.

A woman can be a hero in the public square and/or in her home.

A woman can make a difference leading her country and leading her home.
A woman can serve God at work and at home.

This is a man's world.
But in the kingdom of God ...

Galatians 3:28

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

In Christ there is equality.

There are differences, but there is equal value and social status.

Can women serve in the infantry?

Seems like Deborah and Jael would combine to show
that God is not opposed to it based only on gender.

Let them be heroes.

They can be and are heroes.

More important than their gender, God blessed these women because
of their virtues.

These can apply to all of us.

- Deborah had a close spiritual connection with God.
Do you want to be successful like Deborah? Seek that with God.
- Deborah was a wise peacemaker and problem solver.
She was a leader, but not a tyrant.
- Deborah was respectful and deferentially submissive.
How can you submit to others and give respect?
- Deborah was an encourager and an influencer for God.
How can you help and inspire others to serve and obey God?
- All these made Deborah the kind of leader and hero God could use.
- Jael was courageous and shrewd in defending her home.
- Jael defended her home from the world's pull and invasion.
- Jael did this with what she had – a practical, household object.

Jesus ...

This is a man's world

This is a man's world.

But it wouldn't be nothing, nothing without a woman or a girl.