

**Judges: Achieving God's Purposes Together**  
**Sermon 7-22-18**  
**By Pastor Curtis Dehmey**

**Judges 4:1-5:2**

<sup>4</sup>The Israelites again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, after Ehud died. <sup>2</sup>So the LORD sold them into the hand of King Jabin of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor; the commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-ha-goiim. <sup>3</sup>Then the Israelites cried out to the LORD for help; for he had nine hundred chariots of iron, and had oppressed the Israelites cruelly twenty years.

<sup>4</sup>At that time Deborah, a prophetess, wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel. <sup>5</sup>She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the Israelites came up to her for judgment. <sup>6</sup>She sent and summoned Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, "The LORD, the God of Israel, commands you, 'Go, take position at Mount Tabor, bringing ten thousand from the tribe of Naphtali and the tribe of Zebulun. <sup>7</sup>I will draw out Sisera, the general of Jabin's army, to meet you by the Wadi Kishon with his chariots and his troops; and I will give him into your hand.'" <sup>8</sup>Barak said to her, "If you will go with me, I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go." <sup>9</sup>And she said, "I will surely go with you; nevertheless, the road on which you are going will not lead to your glory, for the LORD will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman." Then Deborah got up and went with Barak to Kedesh.

<sup>10</sup>Barak summoned Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; and ten thousand warriors went up behind him; and Deborah went up with him. <sup>11</sup>Now Heber the Kenite had separated from the other Kenites, that is, the descendants of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, and had encamped as far away as Elon-bezaananim, which is near Kedesh. <sup>12</sup>When Sisera was told that Barak son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor, <sup>13</sup>Sisera called out all his chariots, nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the troops who were with him, from Harosheth-ha-goiim to the Wadi Kishon. <sup>14</sup>Then Deborah said to Barak, "Up! For this is the day on which the LORD has given Sisera into your hand. The LORD is indeed going out before you." So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand warriors following him. <sup>15</sup>And the LORD threw Sisera and all his chariots and all his army into a panic before Barak; Sisera got down from his chariot and fled away on foot, <sup>16</sup>while Barak pursued the chariots and the army to Harosheth-ha-goiim. All the army of Sisera fell by the sword; no one was left.

<sup>17</sup>Now Sisera had fled away on foot to the tent of Jael wife of Heber the Kenite; for there was peace between King Jabin of Hazor and the clan of Heber the

Kenite. <sup>18</sup>Jael came out to meet Sisera, and said to him, “Turn aside, my lord, turn aside to me; have no fear.” So he turned aside to her into the tent, and she covered him with a rug. <sup>19</sup>Then he said to her, “Please give me a little water to drink; for I am thirsty.” So she opened a skin of milk and gave him a drink and covered him. <sup>20</sup>He said to her, “Stand at the entrance of the tent, and if anybody comes and asks you, ‘Is anyone here?’ say, ‘No.’” <sup>21</sup>But Jael wife of Heber took a tent peg, and took a hammer in her hand, and went softly to him and drove the peg into his temple, until it went down into the ground—he was lying fast asleep from weariness—and he died. <sup>22</sup>Then, as Barak came in pursuit of Sisera, Jael went out to meet him, and said to him, “Come, and I will show you the man whom you are seeking.” So he went into her tent; and there was Sisera lying dead, with the tent peg in his temple. <sup>23</sup>So on that day God subdued King Jabin of Canaan before the Israelites. <sup>24</sup>Then the hand of the Israelites bore harder and harder on King Jabin of Canaan, until they destroyed King Jabin of Canaan.

5Then Deborah and Barak son of Abinoam sang on that day, saying:<sup>2</sup>“When locks are long in Israel, when the people offer themselves willingly— bless the LORD!

## Message:

I’m about to share a story about Steve Jobs, the founder of Apple. This story is found on [scoro.com](http://scoro.com) by Merily Leis and titled “7 Stories That Prove the Importance of Teamwork.” Here it goes, “In 1986, shortly after he was forced out of Apple, Steve Jobs bought a small computer manufacturer named (drumroll) Pixar. In 2000, he relocated the company to an abandoned Del Monte canning factory. The original plan called for three buildings, with separate offices for computer scientists, animators, and the Pixar executives. Jobs immediately scrapped it. Instead of three buildings, there was going to be a single vast space, with an atrium at its centre. [Ed Catmull, president and co-founder of Pixar said,] ‘The philosophy behind this design is that it’s good to put the most important function at the heart of the building. Well, what’s our most important function? It’s the interaction of our employees. That’s why Steve put a big empty space there. He wanted to create an open area for people to always be talking to each other.’ But for Jobs, it was not just about creating a space: he needed to make people go there. The primary challenge for Pixar, as he saw it, was getting its different cultures to work together and collaborate. John Lasseter, the chief creative officer at Pixar, describes the equation this way: ‘Technology inspires art, and art challenges the technology.’ Jobs saw the separated offices as a design problem. He began with shifting the mailboxes to the atrium. He then moved the meeting rooms, the cafeteria, the coffee bar, and the gift shop to the centre of the building. Brad Bird,

the director of 'The Incredibles' and 'Ratatouille,' said, 'The atrium initially might seem like a waste of space. But Steve realised that when people run into each other when they make eye contact, things happen.' Even if it came at the expense of convenience, the emphasis on consilience has always been a defining trait of Steve Jobs. Jobs insisted that the best creations occurred when people from disparate fields were connected, especially in an age of intellectual fragmentation." Considered one of the greatest leaders and innovators of our time, Steve Jobs seemed to understand that when very different people with different gifts and talents find synergy with one another great things happen.

When I look at our passage today, we have quite the cast of characters. Deborah, a woman, is named prophetess and judge over Israel. But she doesn't function like previous or future judges. In the book of Judges she is actually quite unique compared to the rest of the Judges. Not just because she's a woman, but because she doesn't function like a tribal warrior chieftain. Unlike the other judges, she acts more like we would expect of a "judge" in our modern-day court system. <sup>5</sup>"She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the Israelites came up to her for judgment." So she settles disputes among the people. Deborah was brought to this leadership role because as we see in verses 1-3, "The Israelites again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, after Ehud died. <sup>2</sup>So the LORD sold them into the hand of King Jabin of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor; the commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-ha-goiim. <sup>3</sup>Then the Israelites cried out to the LORD for help; for he had nine hundred chariots of iron, and had oppressed the Israelites cruelly twenty years." So the Israelites "cried out," they complained, and Deborah was raised to leadership. But then in verse 6, the text shifts towards actions of war. She was raised to leadership to deliver the Israelites, but she doesn't lead the charge on the battlefield. <sup>6</sup>"She sent and summoned Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, "The LORD, the God of Israel, commands you, 'Go, take position at Mount Tabor, bringing ten thousand from the tribe of Naphtali and the tribe of Zebulun. <sup>7</sup>I will draw out Sisera, the general of Jabin's army, to meet you by the Wadi Kishon with his chariots and his troops; and I will give him into your hand.'" Since, typically, a "judge" functions as a tribal warrior-chieftain, it begs the question, "If Deborah is not the one leading the fight on the battlefield, then is she really the judge or leader?" Even more interesting is how Barak responds, <sup>8</sup>"Barak said to her, 'If you will go with me, I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go.' <sup>9</sup>And she said, 'I will surely go with you; nevertheless, the road on which you are going will not lead to your glory, for the LORD will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.'" Barak doesn't seem interested in stealing the show by challenging Deborah's leadership. In fact, he doesn't want to go into battle without her presence. In the most positive sense, it

seems that Deborah possesses the gift of leadership, but she's not a warrior. She can't wield a sword with great skill. And Barak is not a leader, but a talented warrior. Do you see how they compliment one another?

Now, there are a few significant side notes that contribute to the weight of this story. One, you'll see throughout this passage that it is noted that King Jabin has IRON chariots. Why is the mention of "iron" important? Because this signifies a transitional moment in history. King Jabin had already moved into the Iron Age from the Bronze Age. He had the resources for this better weaponry. The Israelites were feeble and did not compare in their armor and weaponry. With greater technology, King Jabin oppresses the Israelite people. So they are the "David" in this "David and Goliath" story way before the story of "David and Goliath." The other significant detail is the mention of Heber the Kenite. As in verse 11, "<sup>11</sup>Now Heber the Kenite had separated from the other Kenites, that is, the descendants of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, and had encamped as far away as Elon-bezaananim, which is near Kedesh." The Kenites were never part of Israel, but had a relationship with Israel through Moses. Why did Heber separate from the Kenites? Well...the educated guess, from scholars, is that Heber was a skilled iron smith. So he made iron materials for King Jabin as a tradesman. In this situation, he is caught in the middle. Does he keep business going with King Jabin? Or does he uphold a historic relationship the Kenites have had with Israel? Symbolically, being placed near Kedesh, the meeting ground of the battle, places Heber in a neutral or ambiguous position.

In verses 12-15, Deborah, sends the Israelites into battle with Barak leading fight. The battle is won, but Sisera flees. Notice that in verse 15, "...the LORD threw Sisera and all his chariots and all his army into a panic before Barak..." So it wasn't Barak's skill or intimidation as a warrior that threw King Jabin's army into panic, it was the Lord. Even though King Jabin's army had the advanced technology, God gave the battle to the Israelites by throwing Jabin's army into panic. As Sisera flees from the battle after seeing his army decimated, Heber the Kenite becomes significant. While a neutral party at first, Jael, Heber's wife, is forced to choose a side for Heber. She pacifies Sisera. He asks for water, she gives him milk to put him asleep. The words of Deborah come true, "...for the LORD will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman." We are lead to believe that Sisera will die by Deborah's hand, but in fact it is by Heber's wife, Jael. And of course, this becomes the "turning of the tide" between King Jabin and the Israelites. The Israelites then conquer King Jabin and all his land.

As we reflect on this passage, I feel it is my duty to uphold a controversial theological position among some Christians. If you don't think there is any evidence in the Bible, especially from the Old Testament, of female leadership and even, God ordained female leadership, you are turning a blind eye from Deborah as

judge and leader over Israel. She doesn't lead like the male leaders of the Old Testament. She doesn't even lead like the other judges. But she does lead the people to freedom and victory through the calling and blessing of the Lord.

Deborah's leadership is unique. All the other judges you will see, are warrior leaders who lead the Israelite people to victory over their enemies. Deborah, instead of being the battle warrior, commissions Barak to lead the battle. And Barak doesn't show any signs of usurping her leadership as he asks for her presence and blessing. Deborah seems to understand her skills and gifts as a leader. She is no warrior. She is a leader that can settle disputes, but she is no warrior. In the eyes of some, that might make her less of a leader. But with Barak by her side, it appears that her leadership with Barak works just fine. Barak is a warrior, but he is no politician or administrator. He can do just fine leading a battle, but he doesn't make for a good leader of a nation. You see, Deborah and Barak compliment one another. They are not the same people. They have respect for one another and understand their own limitations and strengths. How many leaders try to be all things to all people? They try to compensate in every way for the skills that they lack. It would be like me trying to play the guitar and piano and lead you all in singing. Maybe I could learn and do it sufficiently and adequately, but it would be nothing like Kathy's leadership and that of the other singers. God has anointed Kathy and the praise team with talent that I could never dream of having. Likewise, Barak possesses the talent of warrior that Deborah could never possess. She might be able to adequately protect herself, but Barak has the true talent.

Now, you might think, well...let's just throw people of different talents on a team together and have them work together. They would work together in unison for the glory of God. Well...hear this from [scoro.com](http://scoro.com) about Google, "In the last decade, Google has spent millions of dollars on measuring nearly every aspect of its employees' lives – from which traits the best managers share to how often particular people eat together. The tech giant was determined to find out how to compile 'the perfect team'. The company's executives worked hard on finding the perfect mix of individuals necessary to form a stellar team. They believed that building good teams meant combining the best people. But it wasn't that simple. In 2012 Google ran a project known as Project Aristotle. It took several years and included interviews with hundreds of employees. They analysed data about the people on more than 100 active teams at the company. "We looked at 180 teams from all over the company. We had lots of data, but there was nothing showing that a mix of specific personality types or skills or backgrounds made any difference. The 'who' part of the equation didn't seem to matter" said Abeer Dubey, a manager in Google's People Analytics division. Google's intense data collection led to the same conclusions that good managers have always known: In the best



teams, members show sensitivity, and most importantly, listen to one another. Matt Sakaguchi, a midlevel manager at Google, was keen to put Project Aristotle's findings into practice. He took his team off-site to open up about his cancer diagnosis. Although initially silent, his colleagues then began sharing their own personal stories. At the heart of Sakaguchi's strategy, and Google's findings is the concept of 'psychological safety' – a shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking. Google now describes psychological safety as the most important factor in building a successful team.

Google ended up highlighting what leaders in the business world have known for a while: the best teams are mindful that all members should contribute to the conversation equally, and respect one another's emotions. It has less to do with who is in a team, and more with how the members interact with one another." So, teamwork, isn't just a matter of throwing a bunch of multi-talented individuals together and expecting them to be great. Do you remember the Eagles "dream team" from a few years ago? They got a bunch of talented players on their team via trade or free agency and they flopped that year. The "dream team" wasn't much of a dream. I would take Google's research a step further, especially when we're talking about the church and the Kingdom of God. It comes back to the basics in Matthew 22:37-40, "<sup>37</sup>He said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' <sup>38</sup>This is the greatest and first commandment. <sup>39</sup>And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' <sup>40</sup>On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." If we love God with all our heart, soul and mind, and every member of the team does this, we will be one with Christ. We will be of one mind. And because we are one with Christ, we will be one with each other. We will love our neighbor. Synergy will take place between different gifts and talents because we love each other because we first love Christ. And what we do together, we do for the glory of God.

One of the things that I love about our passage is it's haphazard nature. Deborah and Barak know that they are working together. What they don't know is that Jael will also help them. It seems that God works in others even when we are unaware of God working. In a sense, Deborah, Barak and Jael work together for this victory, but they don't know, entirely, that they are working together. This is the sovereign nature of God. God is doing things in our midst and around us that we are totally unaware of. But He works these things together for His purposes. He works these things together for His glory. And when I think about that, it strengthens my trust in the Lord. Doesn't it give you confidence in our God that He works all things together for His good even when we don't know anything about what He's doing? We might be nervous at times. We might get anxious when we don't know what's next. We might become afraid when we can't see or

know how God is going to work things together. But I believe we can trust that our God is good and that He will work things together for His grand purposes. That we can have faith and trust in our Lord Jesus Christ. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.” Proverbs 3:5-6.

Part of the reason God brings Jael into the story is so that God can be the one who is glorified. So the victory isn't because of Deborah's leadership skills. The victory isn't because of Barak's warrior skills. The victory isn't because Jael is an expert assassin. The victory is because of the orchestration of a sovereign God who knows all things and works them for His good. So the glory doesn't go to Deborah, Barak or Jael, but to the only one who deserves the glory, God.

Many of you know the passages of Romans 12:4-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:4-12. Romans 12, “<sup>4</sup>For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, <sup>5</sup>so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. <sup>6</sup>We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; <sup>7</sup>ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; <sup>8</sup>the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.” And 1 Corinthians 12:4-12 is similar to it, “<sup>4</sup>Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; <sup>5</sup>and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; <sup>6</sup>and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. <sup>7</sup>To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. <sup>8</sup>To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, <sup>9</sup>to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, <sup>10</sup>to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. <sup>11</sup>All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses. <sup>12</sup>For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.” It's tempting at times to want the talent and gifts of the other. It's tempting to be envious. It may be tempting for Barak to want Deborah's position. And it may be tempting for Deborah to try to exercise warrior skills that are above her talent. But if we work within the talents, gifts and skills that God has given to each of us, great things can be done for the Kingdom of God. We have different gifts, but we are one with Christ.

What I believe God is calling us to today through our passage is to know the gifts and talents that God has given each of us. Know what they are and have confidence that these are gifts from God. But also know that God has called you to use those gifts for His purpose. No matter your age or talent. God wants to use

what He's given you for His glory. God wants to see the people of God, the body of Christ, come together under one banner, mutually loving and caring for one another to build the Kingdom of God on earth. God has bestowed such great gifts to each of us, it would be a waste to hide them. It would be a waste of our time and talent to try to exercise gifts that we do not possess. God has called each of us to work together for His good. When the people of God can recognize their identity in Christ, obey the commandments, recognize their God given gifts, the potential for the Kingdom of God is endless. But, it's not for our glory, but for the glory of God. What talents are you hiding from the body of Christ? What gifts are you trying to exercise that you don't possess? Where can your weakness be met by another's strength in the body of Christ? And where can your strength meet the need of another's weakness? When we work together for the Kingdom of God, a beautiful and wonderful synergy takes place. Joy, hope and promise bursts forth when the people of God work together for the Kingdom of God. May God be glorified as we work together to achieve God's purposes. Amen.