

## 106

JUDGES 5:1-23

## SONGS OF VICTORY

**opening** ILLUSTRATION

Likely, many youth leaders are familiar with the “jock jams” and anthems of victory that are commonly played at stadiums, gyms, or other athletic events. Consider a song from your own past that comes to mind when you imagine a particular event. (For example, if you regularly went to your high school basketball games, you might remember the song they typically played when warming up. Or, you may remember the song your football team’s pep band played after scoring a touchdown.) Find the song, listen to it to make sure you’re not forgetting some inappropriate phrases, and be ready to share it with the class. Open by telling the story from your own life and why this song comes to mind. If other adults are present, invite them to tell of similar songs that were sung or played regularly. Explain that, in today’s passage, the Israelites were to learn a new song that reminded them of God’s hand in their victory.

**context**

We can imagine Deborah, God’s judge for a time, being an inspirational, spiritual leader. But she also broke into a song of praise after the Lord gave the Israelites victory over their enemies. She wasn’t the only worshipping leader: many others in the Old Testament sang to God in response to His favor. In Deuteronomy 32, Moses sang a song with Joshua, telling of God’s faithfulness, and he instructed the Israelites to learn it. In 2 Samuel 22, we see David sing praise to God “on the day the Lord rescued him from the grasp of all his enemies and from the grasp of Saul” (v. 1). In Revelation 15:3, we see Moses’s servant and the “song of the Lamb” being sung in heaven!

**expository** OUTLINE

**JUDGES 5:1-5** *We praise God because He gives us the victory.* Picture Deborah and Barak, fresh from the battle: likely dirty, exhausted, and disheveled, but with smiles from ear to ear. “On that day” (v. 1), the day of their victory over Jabin and Sisera, Deborah and Barak sang a song. Maybe it was a duet, or maybe they each sang it. But here were the leaders, with different roles, giving all the praise and glory to God. They celebrated God “when the leaders lead” (v. 2), pointing to the lack of leadership that had marked Israel for generations. They also praised God “when the people volunteer,” (v. 2), acknowledging the many who came to fight for the Lord and Barak. In verse 3, Deborah assured kings and princes that she would certainly sing praise to God; she was sold out to Him. God Himself was on their side, as evidenced by the figurative language used in verses 4-5.

**JUDGES 5:6-14** *When God gives us the victory, others see it.* According to verses 6-7, Israel had been a pretty terrible place until Deborah came to power. The people of Israel had turned to idolatry, and no Israelite army could stand up against their enemies. But when God’s judges took leadership, everything changed. In fact, Deborah invited the people “who ride on white donkeys” (v. 10)—the wealthy or the noble travelers passing through—to praise God because they would see the impact this victory had made. These passersby couldn’t help but also praise the Lord, hearing the “villagers” and the “singers” (v. 11) talking about Him. These nobles would also talk to the survivors of the battle, giving testimony to the Lord’s power. In verse 14, Deborah recognizes the tribes of those who were brave enough to come help fight.

**JUDGES 5:15-23** *All God’s people are called to join Him.* We hear a different tone in Deborah’s words in these verses; there were obviously some tribes who did not find it necessary to join in the fight. She chastises the people of the tribe of Reuben in verses 15-16 for “searching of heart,” pointing to their lack of courage. She also notes that Gilead, Dan, and Asher were absent. What a statement to their lack of faith; they chose to sit at home while God’s other followers were risking everything. Not only does that speak to their hearts, but they also missed out on the blessing of seeing God be mighty! The language in verses 20-22 reveals that God’s power over all things was evident: the stars themselves seemed to be fighting, and the river running through Israel swept away their enemies. When we choose not to join God in what He’s doing, we miss seeing His faithfulness and power.

## group DISCUSSION

The following are suggested discussion questions on each section of verses. They can be used for leading a small group session, or in sermon deliveries that include discussion.

### ASK A STUDENT TO READ JUDGES 5:1-5.

**.01** Who are some leaders in your life, both adults and students? How can we praise God for good leadership?

**.02** Why do you think singing was so important to Deborah? Do you think it's this important for us today?

### ASK A STUDENT TO READ JUDGES 5:6-14.

**.03** How would you summarize Israel in verses 6-7? How does remembering that something was terribly bad make a victory even sweeter?

**.04** Deborah wanted to make sure everyone—even people passing through—knew that God was mighty. When was the last time you told someone what God has done in your life?

### ASK A STUDENT TO READ JUDGES 5:15-23.

**.05** Imagine Deborah singing a song of praise, then calling out those tribes that stayed away from the battle. Why do you think she did this?

**.06** What are some things God is doing in your church, school, community, and beyond? How are you participating in that?

## session CONNECTION

In both of this week's passages, we see the invitation to follow. The words of Jesus in Mark 8:31-9:1 invite people to follow Him. First, He rebukes Peter for insisting that God's plan was not to happen. Next, He explained that following Him required people to deny themselves and live sacrificially for Him. He then invited those listening to believe they would see God's power with their own eyes. Deborah, likewise, invited listeners to follow her lead in worshipping God after His triumph over Jabin and the commander of his army, Sisera. First, she invited the kings and princes to listen and pay attention. She invited nobles to praise God and tell of His righteous acts. Finally, she even invited her own soul to "march on . . . in strength" (v. 21), following the pattern of praise and glory.

## application

Just as you considered some victory-themed songs from your past in the opening illustration, also consider some spiritual songs that have marked your walk of faith. You may want to remember the first song you learned that pointed to Jesus, a song regularly sung by your church, or a song you particularly loved from a church camp or worship rally. Explain that songs carry significance throughout our lives, just as you and other adults remember the songs of victory from the opening illustration. Say, "But we are also called to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs," (see Eph. 5:19) "and those also shape and mark our lives." Share the songs of faith that are memorable to you and invite any others to share songs that are significant to them. Challenge students to make private worship and praise a daily routine, just as they should be participating in corporate worship.

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