

When God Says Go

*And what more shall I say?
I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak...*

Hebrews 11:32

The next two heroes that we come to in Hebrews 11 may be less familiar to you and me. They aren't really stories that you'll find in the children's picture Bibles on your kids' shelves, but the writer of Hebrews commends them for their faith. Gideon's and Barak's stories both start the same way – with the Israelites again doing evil in the eyes of the Lord (Judges 4:1, 6:1). It's a fairly common occurrence in the Old Testament, actually. The Lord gives the Israelites chance after chance after chance to follow His law, but they keep messing it up – by worshipping other gods and disobeying direct commandments from God.

During Barak's time in the spotlight, Deborah, a prophetess, is leading Israel. The Lord had handed the Israelites over to the Canaanites because of their wickedness, and after twenty years of oppression, they cried out to the Lord for help.

Read Judges 4:6-4:10

If the Israelites had learned anything over the years, it should have been this: when God says that He will do something, He will do it. God said He would bring the people out of slavery in Egypt, and He did, by parting the Red Sea. He said He would give the Israelites the Promised Land, and He bulldozed the way for them, even tearing down the walls of Jericho and giving them victory over all of those in their way. God even spells it out for Barak through the words Deborah speaks: “The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you [...] I [the Lord] will lure Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into your hands.” (Judges 4:6-7, NIV)

Just like some of the other heroes we have studied in Hebrews 11, Barak doesn't respond with confidence that God will keep His promise, but with uncertainty. “I won't go if you won't come with me,” he tells Deborah. I think we'd all like to think we would just go when God said to go – unlike Barak. Honestly, I think our more common reactions are not unlike Barak –

asking if we are the right one for the job, debating whether or not we really understood God's leading, or just grudgingly going along, kicking and screaming the whole way.

Can you think of times in your life where you have responded in a manner similar to Barak? Why might we make excuses and try to bargain with God rather than just obeying?

When Barak responded to Deborah in uncertainty, God didn't kick him to the curb. He did tell him that someone else (a woman!) would get the credit for the victory since he wouldn't go without Deborah, but He still used Barak to bring about His purposes.

Read Judges 4:11-24

Perhaps you see now why this story isn't in many children's books: it's a pretty gory and brutal. But that's not what Hebrews 11 focuses on. It focuses on Barak's faith. You see, even though he may have had some doubts and misgivings, he still had the faith to go when God said to go, and that's what he is commended for – even if just in passing – in Hebrews.

After forty years of peace, another mighty warrior comes on the scene: Gideon. His story may be slightly more familiar to you, but just like Moses and Barak, Gideon needed proof that God was going to do what He said.

Read Judges 6:1-40

When the angel of the Lord appears to Gideon, he made excuses, similar to Moses. "I'm not good enough," he claimed. The Lord gave him a sign, confirming Gideon's call and displaying His presence through fire, as He did for Moses. Gideon then destroyed the altar of Baal, earning himself a new name. Oh, but, he did it secretly. So much for bold obedience.

Then, Not once, but twice Gideon asked for proof that God was really with Him. First he asked that a fleece that he placed on the ground would be covered with dew but the ground would be dry if God *really* was with him. And God did it. Then he asked that the fleece be dry

and the ground be covered with dew. And God did it. Apparently, these two signs were enough for Gideon because he finally did what God had told him to do.

But if Gideon tested God, now God tested Gideon. God didn't want anyone to think that the army had delivered His people, so He kept having Gideon send people AWAY from the army! Gideon's forces were reduced from 32,000 men to 300 soldiers so that the glory from the victory would go to God alone, not to men.

Read Judges 7:19-22

Gideon's faith compelled him to go when God called him, and to follow His directions, even when they may not have made much sense. But just like Moses and Barack, Gideon wasn't without his doubts.

Look back at the first chapter of this study, where we defined faith. How does doubt fit into that definition? If you need a reminder, here's our definition: Faith is a firm conviction, producing a full acknowledgement of God's revelation or truth, a personal surrender to Him, and a conduct inspired by such surrender.

Remember the palm tree illustration? The palm tree is anchored to the ground, as we are rooted in Christ, even when the doubts come and the winds blow and the storms rage, the tree still stands. Gideon and Barack both had doubts, but their faith was rooted in Christ, the Rock. And even though the winds raged, they remained firm in their faith.

What doubts and fears are threatening to blow you over today? What has God called you to that seems impossible? Perhaps it is physically moving to a new place – country, city, or school district – or perhaps you feel as Moses and Gideon did, as if they were not good enough for that which God was calling them to. When you find yourself in these places of uncertainty, remember that you are rooted in Christ.