

ARISE: Five-Day Devo

This year, as you lead your group, you get to encourage women to be strong, do their work and chase joy.

Decide To Rise begins by understanding the truth about how God feels about us. If we don't base our decisions and identity on that truth, we let others dictate how we feel about ourselves. In order to embrace God's plan for us, we must understand the gifts, passions, abilities and experiences we have alongside a right knowledge of God's opinion of us.

Our theme verse in Psalm 139 and the verses we will look at in Judges, show us our value and calling from God's perspective, but we will learn that it is all more about God than it is about us. He is our designer, creator, the planner of our days and the one who goes before us.

Our *Arise* five-day study is designed just for leaders. Study it on your own and then discuss it with your team. Do this first, even before you pick out your favorite graphic, reserve your room for next year, or look through the meeting plans. At the end of your study, you will have a better understanding of what *Decide To Rise* means to you and you will be ready to help others discover what it means for them.

Sharing *Decide To Rise*

This Leader Guide, Group Experience Kit and online resources were designed to fit the unique culture of your group, no matter the age or stage of moms. You determine how to use them best and what each meeting will look like. As you look through this Guide, you'll find links that point you to online resources.

Check out **leaders.mops.org/theme-resources** for all the *Decide To Rise* theme resources:

- A printable Theme Summary and Theme Exegesis (a critical explanation and interpretation of the theme Scripture) designed for leaders.
- *Decide To Rise* promotional video to get your group excited for the upcoming year.
- *Decide To Rise* Video Stories DVD in your Kit (included downloadable version of DVD).
- Meeting plans to help you plan (included in this Leader Guide).

Follow us on **facebook.com/mopsleaders** to ask questions and share what you're learning.

Stroll through **leaders.mops.org/ideas-center** to find or share unique ideas.

Visit **pinterest.org/mops_intl** and look for our leader boards.



DAY I: Fearfully and Wonderfully Made



As moms, we understand that moment of marvel when we see our child for the first time – whether through birth or adoption. There is nothing like that moment. We understand the idea of things being *wonderfully made* because we've held them in our arms and looked them in the face. The wonder which fills us when we look in the face of our child is the same thing God feels when he looks at each of us.

*I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful, I know that full well.*

Psalm 139:14

God took great thought and care into putting the human body together. It is an amazing combination of intricately intertwined systems. Our eyes can distinguish up to 1 million color surfaces and take in more information than the largest telescope known to man. Our lungs have a surface area the size of a tennis court. Just three months into pregnancy, an unborn child already has fingerprints, which will never change throughout his life. In one day, the human heart pumps blood that travels a total of 12,000 miles. Your body cells are regenerating themselves every single day, which means you have an entirely new set of taste buds every 10 days, new nails every 6 to 10 months and new bones every 10 years. God formed us as he wants us to be. There are choices we make in our lives that alter that design, but our basic formation was created and blessed by God.

Do you know it full well?

While this verse describes our unique and remarkable bodies and gives an indication of our value from God's perspective, this Psalm is more about God than about us. We were made by a God whose acts inspire fear and wonder and should draw us into worship of the creator. We may not understand anything else about God, but we know his works are wonderful.

Keep reading in Psalm 139. Verse 15 says *you were woven together* (NIV), *intricately wrought* (KJV) which translates as "embroidered." If you've ever embroidered anything, you know it takes time, focus and attention to detail. God embroidered you. But he did more than just design and form you – verse 16 says he planned your days. He planned tasks for you to perform (Read Ephesians 2:10; Philippians 2:12-13). He plans the very best for you (Read Romans 12:2). God feels so strongly about you that he intricately plans your life. ***Do you know it full well?***

If we don't base our decisions and identity on the truth of how God feels about us, we let others dictate how we feel about ourselves and may make decisions outside of his plan. Warren Wiersbe says, "Wrong ideas about God will ultimately lead to wrong ideas about who we are and what we should do, and this leads to a wrong life on the wrong path toward the wrong destiny." The right knowledge of God's opinion of us is the key to understanding our gifts, passions, abilities and seeing our experiences in the light of God's plan.

Repeat Psalm 139:14 during the week. Read it, whisper it, say it out loud to yourself and to your children. Each time you do, emphasize this phrase: ***I know that full well.***

Today write your own psalm. It doesn't have to rhyme or have a meter or cadence to it. Just write a message to God. Worship him for how he created you.

My Psalm

DAY II: Deborah



Judges 4 and 5 recounts a violent time in Israel's history. In the 13th century B.C., the nation of Israel was in crisis. They were a people who were freed from captivity in Egypt, wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, claimed the Promised Land, and then found themselves without a centralized government for a long period of time. This resulted in a total breakdown of order. There is a pattern in Judges that goes like this: spiritual corruption, foreign oppression, pleas for deliverance, and a judge who brings peace for awhile. Judges 4:1 summarizes the spiritual condition of the people: *"Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD ..."*

Israel had lost its spiritual moorings and chaos ensued. Scripture says that the nation was oppressed and life in the village ceased. There was no vitality; an entire nation was in the fetal position. They had lost their will to fight and were cowering in the corner. It was during this time that Deborah was called and stepped forward to judge her people.

Read Judges 4 and 5. The two chapters recount the same events - one as a story (chapter 4) and one as a poem, "The Song of Deborah." (chapter 5) As you read, you'll learn that Deborah was a woman who heard and obeyed God.

In order to end Israel's oppression, Deborah summoned the warrior, Barak, and commanded him to gather a force of 10,000 Israelite soldiers to confront Sisera, their oppressor's general. But Barak was stuck. Fear got the best of him and he just couldn't bring himself to do what God (through Deborah) was telling him to do. But Barak didn't just run from God, he asked for help. He said to Deborah: *"If you go with me, I will go; but if you don't go with me, I won't go."* (Judges 4:8)

In her poem, Deborah describes it this way:

*In the days of Shamgar son of Anath,
in the days of Jael, the highways were abandoned;
travelers took to winding paths.
Villagers in Israel would not fight;
they held back until I, Deborah, arose,
until I arose, a mother in Israel. (Judges 5:6-7)*

Everyone hung back, until Deborah rose up.

Deborah agrees to accompany Barak because of his doubt and hesitation; prophesying God *"will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman."* (Judges 4:9b) Deborah and Barak, together with their army, climb Mount Tabor and then charge down the side against the Canaanite forces, defeating Sisera's force of iron chariots. Before he heads down the mountain, Deborah says to him: *"Go! This is the day the LORD has given Sisera into your hands. Has not the LORD gone ahead of you?"* (Judges 4:14a)

Deborah pushed Barak to do what God had called him to do, knowing that God had already gone ahead of him to prepare for it to be done.



HOW DO YOU SEE ISRAEL IN YOURSELF?



HOW DO YOU SEE DEBORAH IN YOURSELF?



HOW DO YOU SEE BARAK IN YOURSELF?



WHAT SISERA DO YOU NEED TO CONFRONT?



HOW IS GOD CALLING YOU TO ARISE AS A MOTHER?



HOW IS GOD CALLING YOU TO ARISE AS A LEADER?



DAY III: Be Strong



At the height of suffering, Judges 4:4-5 says at that time a woman was judge in Israel. The judge played a vital role in the community: directing the judicial disputes and governing the tribe of Israel.

The fact that Deborah was a strong *woman* is an integral part of the story. Scripture describes Deborah as a mother to Israel – she served as a counselor in the days before war, she was willing to say things that made people uncomfortable, and made decisions that required courage.

Near the end of Judges 4, we meet another woman, Yael. Stop for a minute and read Judges 4:17-24.

After Barak and the army charge down the mountain toward the Canaanite forces, defeating Sisera's force of iron chariots, Sisera flees on foot and is lured into the tent of a woman named Yael. She lulls him to sleep with milk, then drives a tent peg through his temple. It's an odd plot twist that seems a bit gruesome, but it fulfills the prophecy that a woman will defeat Sisera (and Yael certainly did that!).

While the fact that Deborah and Yael are strong women is key to the story of Israel, this is not a story about women. This is a story about God and whether or not we trust him. Barak was afraid and his fear got the best of him. Fear stalled both the nation of Israel and Barak. Deborah wasn't afraid. She was so confident that God had gone before them and would go before them again that gave her the courage to say to Barak, "What are you waiting for? Get going!"

Where in your life do you feel weak?

Are there some risky or uncomfortable things you need to say or do?

Where is your weakness stalling you?

Regardless of your answers to the questions above, there's good news! We have access to the same source of strength and confidence that Deborah had access to: God. Therefore, we can trust that God has a good future planned for us and we are capable of great things, just like Deborah. Be bold and have courage. God is with you.

DAY IV: Do Your Work



Deborah was many things: judge, counselor, mediator, leader, prophetess and song writer.

In Judges, we see Barak was reluctant (like Moses, Gideon, Samuel - and most of us!). He did have good reason to be insecure on Mount Tabor – there were a LOT of chariots. But as they stood there, we learn something interesting about Deborah. She doesn't go down to the battle. She doesn't pursue the chariots or Sisera as he fled from the battle. Deborah isn't a commander. Her role was to prophesy and counsel the people. She knew the work she was called to do.

What has God called you to do?

What has God NOT called you to do?

Deborah was faithful in the big moments, but they were precipitated by years of being faithful in the small, everyday moments while she sat under the palm tree and listened to the people and to God. The accumulation of many small, obedient decisions translates into the really big, significant decisions.

Write 5 to 10 seemingly small and insignificant acts of obedience you can commit to in order to prepare for God's bold call on your life.

Would you say your response to God's calling is bold (like Deborah) or hesitant (like Barak)?

Deborah led from a place of reliance on God and people looked to her for guidance because of her faithfulness. While we don't have the same calling as Deborah, God wants the same attitude of faithfulness, determination and grit that Deborah shows.

What areas of your life and leadership need a little more grit and perseverance?

Call a friend, mentor or fellow leader and share your answers. Let her help you take action.

DAY V: Chase Joy



Judges recounts how the nation of Israel forgot about God (as does much of the Old Testament). The Israelites spiraled out of control, ending with the last verse in Judges 21:25, *In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit.*

In Judges 5, “The Song of Deborah,” Barak and Deborah recount God’s faithfulness and the victory he provided. In the midst of battle, in a time when people seemed to forget about God, they took some time to remember.

Sometimes we lose sight of who we are and why we are here. We have lost our joy because we are doing as we see fit – instead of treating delight as a discipline. We have become stalled because we are scared and have forgotten that God is with us and has already promised a victory. True joy is not predicated on external circumstances – it’s an inside job, a simple but continuous act of remembrance. It’s one of the best ways we can chase joy.

When we chase joy, we can fight the things that derail our parenting and our leadership: negativity, discouragement and fear. Actively seeking out joy is how we fight our tendency to complain, accuse or be offended.

What if joy isn’t something that falls upon us like a sunny day, but something that we have to actively chase? Joy isn’t soft and fluffy. Joy is a weapon, a decision, a force.

When have you allowed negativity or discouragement to overtake you? What was the result?

How could chasing joy impact the outcome?

AS WE WRAP UP OUR STUDY THIS WEEK, LET’S REMEMBER:

Who are you? (Here’s a starter: *I am fearfully and wonderfully made. I know that full well.*)

Why are you here? (Not just here at MOPS, although that’s part of it. For what purpose were you created?)

Go back to Day I and the psalm you wrote. Read through it again and add words specifically recounting the faithfulness of God in your life.