

Leader's Guide



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LITTLE STRENGTH, BIG GOD Leader's Guide

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Leader's Guide for Little Strength, Big God

Thank you for your interest in facilitating a *Little Strength, Big God* group. Whether you've led hundreds of groups, or this is your first time leading a group, I want you to enjoy the experience. With that in mind, I've included general information on leading groups as well as specific tips for this study. If you've used my other leader's guides, the general information is basically the same. The invitation and the last section is geared specifically for this book.

When I led my first group, after graduating from college, I was only one-half a step ahead of them. Actually, at least one of them was a step ahead of me. But they were gracious and something wonderful happened. I discovered a love for helping others understand and apply the Bible, and leading Bible studies provided fun accountability that help me learn and grow.

One of the joys of discipling women is experiencing the Holy Spirit's help as He brings to mind spiritual insights you didn't even know you had. Trust Him to lead you. As you do, your faith will grow.

Getting Started

Have you noticed how having a trusted companion makes a good time better and bad stuff not as bad? Even Jesus sent the disciples out in pairs. Consider partnering with a friend.

It helps to have someone to pray with and bounce ideas off of. This person can step in if you're ill and help bring the discussion back on course if someone takes it on a tangent. They may serve as the host so you can focus on the lesson. I've led many groups without one, but a trusted partner makes it more fun. This can also become a mentoring opportunity.

I recommend praying for whom to invite to your study before you start. One woman prayed for which neighbors to invite to her house for a study. Seven names came to mind. She sent each one a hand-written invitation. Over the course of the study all seven gave their lives to Christ!

If you don't have peace about inviting someone after you pray about it, don't. God knows the right timing for them and chemistry for your group. Pray for His protection and leading over your group. Ask God to bring you people whose hearts are ready to receive His word and bear fruit (2 Tim. 2:2). If you are going to do the work of leading a group, don't you want it to be a fruitful venture (Matt. 13:1–23)?

List names of those you want to invite. Set the dates to begin and end. You may want to kick-off your study with a coffee or dessert, especially if this is a totally new group of people. Some add a wrap-up or sharing session at the end. If you do, include these additions in your schedule.

I allot one and a half to two hours for our meetings, but I realize some people don't have that much time. See Suggested Schedules below. You can adjust the study to fit your time by

discussing only a few of each day's questions or have less people answer each question. Or you can divide the chapters and take more weeks to complete the book.

Little Strength, Big God takes eight weeks if you cover one chapter each week. **However, if your** discussion time is brief or your group enjoys in depth discussions, you can easily divide some weeks into smaller chunks.

For example, Week 2 on Moses includes more biblical reading. You could divide that discussion into two weeks. Week 6 you could discuss Jephthah one week and Samuel the next. This would allow more time on Hannah who is only glossed over. Week 7, on Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, covers some amazing stories. You could discuss Days 1–3 one week and Days 4 and 5 the following. In Week 8, you could discuss Days 1–2 one week and Days 3-the Afterword the following.

Depending on how you discuss these weeks, your study could run from eight to twelve weeks not including an introduction meeting if you add one.

- Send your invitations. You can use email, social media, mail, and phone. People still appreciate personal contact. If you're meeting at your church with plenty of room, you may want to ask your contacts to invite their friends. Just keep in mind that if the group gets too big you may need to divide it to protect the discussion.
- Get nametags for the first few meetings if your group members don't know each other.
- Create a roster to capture contact information such as email addresses, phone numbers, and an emergency contact.

Fragrances take my breath away and cause me to cough or give me headaches. Therefore, I ask people to keep our meetings fragrance-free. This includes putting away scented candles and room plug-ins. Your group may have other needs you need to address. A hearing-impaired friend who reads lips told me she can't participate in group prayer when people bow their heads and hide their mouths.

On the next page you'll find a sample invitation. Later in this guide is an invitation that you can personalize and copy and paste into an email or print.

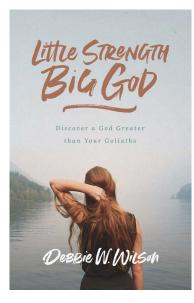
Invitation

Adjust this to suit your group. Click here for a short trailer to introduce the study.

You're Invited!

What: Little Strength, Big God Group

Loss and intimidation are not new to God's people. What if you had to choose between-



- Drowning your baby or letting your worst enemy raise him?

- Bowing before an idol or being thrown into a fiery furnace?
- Compromising your convictions or being tossed to the lions?

The believers who faced these decisions felt their limitations. Yet they found strength in the Lord. You can too. The men and women highlighted in the last half of Hebrews 11 will help you experience the transforming power of a God greater than your Goliaths. Learn more at <u>debbieWwilson.com/LittleStrengthBigGod</u>.

When: For example: *Monday evenings from 6:30–8:30* **Where:**

Facilitated or hosted by:

Kick-off Date: *Month, Day, Year* Study runs through: *Month, Day*

To Sign Up: Contact name, email, phone

Cost: (of book if you supply it or tell where they can get a book. "Available at local bookstores or find links to various online bookstores at <u>debbieWwilson.com/LittleStrengthBigGod.</u>" Some local bookstores and online sellers provide a bulk rate. Sometimes I can help with bulk orders. Contact me at <u>debbie@debbieWwilson.com</u>)

(Optional: Please help us make this a fragrance-free setting.)

Suggested Schedules

2-Hour Meetings

- 8 minutes greet and open in prayer.
- ~ 17 minutes per day to discuss questions (x 5 days).
- 25–27 minutes for sharing prayer requests/updates and prayer time.

90-Minute Meetings

- 5 minutes greet and open in prayer.
- ~ 15 minutes per day to discuss questions (x 5 days).
- 10 minutes to exchange prayer cards and have someone close in prayer.

60-Minute Meetings

- 3-minute greeting and open in prayer.
- ~ 10 minutes per day to discuss questions (x 5 days).
- 7 minutes to exchange prayer cards and have someone close in prayer.

These are general time flows. Depending on your group, discussion may take more or less time. Some days will take more or less time to cover than others. You don't have to go through every question. Hopefully they've covered them all at home.

Introduction Class

Have nametags and a sign-up sheet ready to capture emails and contact information. I'd have these at the first discussion class too. Ask if you can share their emails with the group if you plan to share/update prayer requests this way.

Set-up

Your set-up will depend on the size of your group and available facilities. If the size works, I find people enjoy gathering around a table. Gathering in a circle or living room works too. Try to avoid "cold" spots where someone is separated from the rest of the group.

Suggested Format for Introduction Class

- Hand out nametags as they arrive.
- Collect contact information as they come in.
- Hand out the books if you ordered them.

- Welcome everyone and introduce yourself and cohost if you have one.
- Open in prayer. Thank God for those who have come and ask Him to bless your time together.
- You may want to tell how you came to know Christ or how you came to value the Bible. If you have people in your group new to Bible study this lets them know the difference God's Word has meant to you and why you are excited to study it with them.

*If you have people who doubt the Bible, let them know that this study will look at what the Bible says about the people and topics you'll cover. If they have questions about the trustworthiness of the Bible itself, you can refer them to other books like Josh McDowell's *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*. Don't be intimidated by such questions. We all start somewhere. Welcome them but don't let them take the group off topic. It's ok if they decide this is not the right study for them. But it's not ok for them to sabotage the group.

- Read through the "Table of Contents" to introduce the topics you'll be covering.
- Take turns having each person introduce herself. They may share something about themselves like a favorite food, hobby, pet, or movie. Keep it light so those who don't like to speak in a group or know much about the Bible will feel comfortable.
- The Introduction section introduces the study and explains the five-day layout of each chapter. Encourage them to pick a time of day and keep their daily date with Jesus. Suggest they use day six to review their lesson and highlight anything they want to share or discuss further. This is a good time to encourage the quieter ones to mark the questions they want to share with the group and remind the more talkative ones that you want everyone to have an opportunity to share. Let them know that pauses are welcome. Some people need time to collect their thoughts.
- Remind members to begin their lesson by asking God to speak to them. They decide what to share in the group, so encourage them to be honest in their answers and let God minister to them.
- End your meeting by taking prayer requests. Here are some suggestions on how you can do this:
 - Break into groups of 2–5.
 - Individuals share with the whole group.
 - Pass out 3x5 cards. Have each one write a request. Collect them and redistribute them or have them pass their card to the person beside them. You can either pray during your time together or they can take the requests home and pray for the person whose card they received.
 - Have everyone turn in a prayer request to a designated prayer leader who will email the requests out to the group.
- Close in conversational prayer or have one person close for the group. Conversational prayer is a dialogue between the individuals in the group and God. Different ones take

turns bringing one or more individual's needs to the Father. Others may want to add their prayers for that person. It may include pauses to allow God to shape our prayers. It should also include praises and thanksgiving. God already knows our needs, so this isn't going down a list to make sure He heard. It's lifting one another up in faith.

Facilitating

Bible study is about relationships. Allow the women to greet each other, but also try to begin on time. For shorter meeting times, you may want to encourage connecting outside the group. If you have a chatty group, consider offering a fellowship time before or after the class time. That way those who need to leave on time won't miss class time.

Each week open in prayer or ask a group member to pray for your time. A friend suggested including the spiritual aim you have for that day's lesson in your prayer. Ask God to speak to each person. Thank Jesus for being your teacher. He will not only speak to your group: He'll show you how to lead your group.

Going Through the Questions

Little Strength, Big God has eight chapters, divided into five daily lessons. At the end of this guide, I offer some specific ideas for each chapter. If you plan to cover one chapter per week, encourage your group to do one lesson per day. This leaves day six to review the week's lesson and highlight questions you want to ask at your group meeting. Star the ones you want to be sure to cover. Consider the needs of your group. What points do they need emphasized at this time?

Some people find it helpful to write the aim of the lesson across the top of the page to help them stay on topic. To help the group make it through the lesson in a timely fashion, some like to mark how many people they want to answer each question and how much time they want to spend on each question. For example, beside a question they may put "P-2; T-3" meaning two people will give short answers that should take up around 3 minutes. For another question, they may put "P-3; T-6."

Another friend will use colored highlighters. Questions she can go through quickly she marks in yellow. Those she wants to spend more time on, she marks in pink. I tend to star the questions I want to spend more time on. I have an idea how far I want to be in the lesson at the halfway point and ³/₄ point of our discussion time.

You might circle questions that are easy for anyone to answer. That way you know you can call on people if no one speaks up. These are ideas to help you so you don't spend most of your time on day one and then rush through the rest of the week's lessons.

You can combine some questions for the group discussion. During the discussion, sometimes participants will pull answers from other questions. If you read a question and realize it has been answered, you might say, "Jen already answered this for us. Does anyone have an additional thought?" Or "Since we've already covered this let's skip to question 6."

When a question has a list of verses, you may find it helpful to have the group members take turns reading the Scripture bullets. The one who reads doesn't have to answer. Anyone can answer, but each one gets a turn reading. Let them know they can say "pass," if they aren't up for reading.

Give positive feedback to those who answer. The enemy wants people to feel foolish and not come back or participate. Your response goes a long way to silencing their inner critic.

As you wrap-up each day, ask them if they want to offer any final thoughts from the reading or from that day's topic.

If your group only has a brief time to cover the lesson, ask the group to come prepared to share one takeaway from each day. When you meet, summarize the main point for each day and then ask the group members to share the point they want to remember from that day's lesson.

Trouble Shooting

Ask the group to keep personal sharing confidential and edifying.

Discussions should respect family members who aren't present. If someone tends to veer into personal struggles, you may want to meet with this person outside the group and pray with her. As facilitators we must balance the needs of the individual with the group's needs.

If someone asks a question you don't know how to answer, ask if anyone in the group has thoughts on it. If no one has a good answer, say, "That's a good question. Let me think about it and get back with you."

Whenever possible direct them to the relevant Scriptures in the lesson or additional ones that address the issue raised. Remember, the Holy Spirit reminds us of what we've learned and provides the right words at the right time (Matt. 10:19; Jn. 14:26).

Teach your group to take their questions to the Holy Spirit and discover what the Word says. We don't have to have all the answers. We want people to become thinkers who bring their questions to God.

Romans 14 talks about accepting different opinions concerning disputable matters. It is okay to have different opinions on how to apply some areas if they don't conflict with what God has revealed in Scripture.

Keep the tone respectful and loving. If someone starts speaking critically of a particular faith, failure, or anything else, bring the discussion back on track. Be sensitive to the various backgrounds and experiences your group may represent.

If someone doesn't believe what the Bible says, you don't have to defend the Bible. Just use it to make it clear that this is what the Bible says on a topic. If they choose to disregard the Bible, that is their issue. Our job is to teach what it says. Let the Holy Spirit convince them (2 Tim. 2:24–26). You might remind them that how we view the Bible reflects our view of God. If God is God,

then He can preserve His wisdom for us. He is eternal, wise, and relevant.

If someone takes you off the subject, you might say, "That is an interesting topic. Maybe we can look at that another time. With our time constraints let's try to finish today's topic."

You may want to follow-up privately with the one who asked the question and pray with them when appropriate. If someone seems to dominate the discussion, say, "Let's hear from someone who hasn't shared yet."

Occasionally, a topic touches a sensitive area in a participant's life. Those who've suffered abuse or witnessed loss may have difficulty believing God can bring good from those situations. We don't know how God will fulfill His promises. Our role is to bring our group back to His character and what He has pledged.

We won't be able to answer every question. There aren't answers on this side of heaven for some questions. For Job it was enough to remember who God is. God sees; God cares; and God will use everything that touches us for the good of those who love Him. He never said everything is good. He promised to use it for our good (Romans 8:28).

Sometimes the best thing we can do is to stop and pray for the one who shared a tender concern. You can pray, ask a volunteer to pray, or let the group take turns praying. One night a woman shared how her grandchild lives in an abusive home. We stopped and prayed for her. She didn't need an answer from us. She needed our love and God's comfort and wisdom.

One leader told me she had a group member who prayed long prayers during group prayer. No one else wanted to pray after her. Someone suggested she ask this woman to be the one to close in prayer and let others pray first. If you face such a problem, you might also need to speak to her in private. Tell her one of the purposes of group prayer is to help others overcome their discomfort of praying in a group and you need her help to make this happen. Ask her to please hold back until some others have a chance to pray.

Benefits for the Study Leader

- 1. Leading a group offers positive incentive to spend more time in the Bible. Weekly meetings provide a deadline to make sure we're prepared. Otherwise, time can slip by without us scheduling time to dig deeper. This works for leaders and attendees.
- We experience the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
 When I first began leading a group I was thrilled when in response to someone's question or need, the Holy Spirit brought Scriptures to mind I didn't know I knew.
- **3.** We obey Jesus' command. Jesus told Peter to feed His lambs and sheep (Jn. 21:15–17) and commanded us to make disciples (Matt. 28:19–20).

7 Leadership Tips

1. Serve from the Right Motivation

Three times in one conversation, Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him. After each, "Yes, Lord," Jesus told him to feed His lambs, tend His sheep, and feed His sheep (Jn. 21:15–17). This passage reminds us that love for Jesus is the proper motivation for service and the sheep belong to Jesus, not to us. We must treat them as He would. When sheep bite or are difficult, love for the Good Shepherd will keep us going.

2. Leave Room for Others' Insights

When I first started teaching, I shared too much. I soon learned not everyone cared about my word studies and research. People remember what they discover and contribute. Leave room for others' questions and insights. My study expands my understanding and provides material to draw from as needed. But it is not necessary to share it all.

Have you noticed the restraint Jesus showed in His teaching? He left room for people to be curious and seek more understanding. Everyone profits from the group's contributions. A young believer's insights shows how Jesus is alive and the Holy Spirit is at work as much as a seasoned saint's.

3. Keep the Group on Topic

I polled my group on what makes a Bible study group work well and what doesn't. Several said they liked a leader who allowed people to share but brought the discussion back on topic if a comment took them down an alley. As leaders, we have a responsibility to shepherd our groups and not let anyone hijack the discussions. If this is an ongoing problem, you might ask the group or the one who tends to go on tangents to help you keep the group on track and on time.

4. Shepherd the Flock

John 10 points out the difference between a shepherd and a hired hand. It reminds us sheep and shepherds aren't the only ones in a sheep pen. A robber is one who overtly steals the spiritual life of the group. The robber may try to steer the discussion off point or interfere with the learning and sharing by arguing. A thief shows more stealth and may sap your energy and the group's vitality in more subtle ways such as neediness, monopolizing, or being a know-it-all. This squelches sharing and learning.

Hired hands seek leadership for what they get out of it. A leadership position may provide a sense of power or self-worth. They forsake the needs of the flock when protecting the flock threatens their comfort or security.

In contrast, a shepherd guides and protects the Lord's flock from wolves, robbers, and thieves. Unlike the hired hand, the shepherd faces conflict or opposition to protect the

sheep. Thomas recognized the Good Shepherd by His scars (Jn. 20:27).Paul carried on his body the scars of a shepherd (Gal. 6:17).

As under-shepherds of the Good Shepherd, God has charged us to watch over His flock. We must make every effort to guard and protect it from those who would steal, kill, and destroy His work in the life of the group. Sometimes that means teaching people to cast their cares on the Lord, because He cares for them (1 Pet. 5:7).

If you suspect a robber or thief, ask God to examine your own heart to be sure it's not your personal issue (Matt. 7:3–5). But if someone keeps disrupting the group, don't be afraid to address it. That is part of a shepherd's role.

5. Keep the Goal in Mind

Paul wrote, "But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions" (1 Tim. 1:5–7 NASB).

Paul also said, "knowledge puffs up while love builds up" (1 Cor. 8:1 NIV). Regarding the Bible, A. W. Tozer said, "I did not go through the Book. The Book went through me."

As we serve out of love for Jesus, we lead our group members into a deeper love for Him. We must keep that goal in mind. We aren't there just to impart information. We want people to experience *transformation* from knowing and loving the Lord.

6. Pray

Pray for your group members and ask God to speak to them when they work on their lessons and to protect them from distractions. At the end of your discussions, record your group's prayer requests for the week. Pray for one another together in conversational prayer. And pray for their requests as God leads throughout the week.

7. Nurture Yourself in the Lord

A seminary professor once said we can't take someone farther than we've gone. Jesus said, "It is enough for students to be like their teachers, and servants like their masters" (Matt. 10:25 NIV). He also said, "A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him" (Matt. 12:35 NIV).

In other words, who you are matters more than how much you know. Even the learned Apostle Paul wrote, "My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power" (1 Cor. 2:4–5).

The best preparation for leadership is to be a person of integrity who walks with the Lord. In 1 Timothy 3:1–13, when Paul gave the qualifications for overseers and Christian leaders, he focused on character—not knowledge or position.

We represent Jesus to our groups. Jesus described Himself as gentle and humble in heart. Those who learned from Him found rest for their souls (Matt. 11:29; Ephes. 4:2).

If we want our group members to be open, we must be transparent. If we want them to apply what they learn, then we must live what we know. Like the Apostle Paul, we want to be able to say, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1).

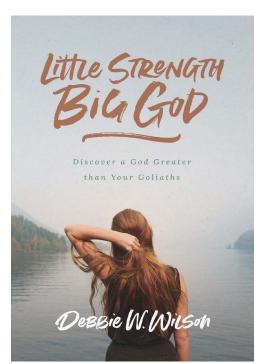
It is easy to be busy in ministry activity and overlook our own need to stay connected to the Vine. Jesus said, "apart from me you can do nothing" (Jn. 15:5). Our labor will bear no lasting fruit if done in human strength. As we rely on Jesus in our everyday lives, His life will flow through us into the lives of those in our groups.

Schedule daily time with Jesus and ask Him to teach you personally. Connecting with Him as you do your study is more important than polishing a presentation. If we are breathing in what our Lord has for us, we'll minister to people in and out of our groups. God uses ordinary people to astound the learned. May the source of our power be the same as that of the disciples, "When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13).

Leading a group puts us in a place to lean on God. Even though we prepare, success is not determined by our preparation, knowledge, or social skills. To adapt a phrase from Dr. Bill Bright, success in teaching is simply sharing Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results to God.

May the Lord grant you great joy in this endeavor with Him.

The following pages offer an invitation template and suggestions for facilitating each chapter.



Study runs through: To Sign Up Contact: Cost:

Go to <u>https://debbiewwilson.com/little-strength-big-god/</u> for a trailer and a game to introduce the book and links to some online booksellers.

You're Invited!

What: Little Strength, Big God Bible Study

Loss and intimidation are not new to God's people. What if you had to choose between—

- Drowning your baby or letting your worst enemy raise him?
- Bowing before an idol or being thrown into a fiery furnace?
- Compromising your convictions or being tossed to the lions?

The believers who faced these decisions felt their limitations. Yet they found strength in the Lord. You can too. The men and women highlighted in the last half of Hebrews 11 will help you experience the transforming power of a God greater than your Goliaths.

When:

Where:

Facilitated or hosted by:

Kick-off Date:

Suggestions for Facilitating Chapters

Below are some ideas for introducing each chapter and transitions into each day's questions. If you only have a short time to discuss the book you might use the following format:

- Turn to Day One. What did you get from Day One's reading?
- What impressed you from today's Scriptures?
- What stood out to you from this day's questions?
- What is your biggest takeaway?

Repeat for each day.

Don't feel like you must know the answer to every group member's question or be able to perfectly handle every situation. Guide them back to the relevant Scriptures if the discussion and/ or answers are going off track.

Introduction: How to Get the Most Out of this Book

Introduce the layout (p. 16–18). Each chapter is divided into five daily segments. If you've decided to divide some weeks into two parts, tell them so they can plan for that.

Week 2 on Moses has more Bible reading. If your group members have limited time to read, remind them they can listen to the longer passages on Days 3–5 on a Bible app while driving or getting dressed. Or they can read the passages noted in the questions and read the full context later.

Tell the group their insights and presence enrich everyone. Being part of a grace-filled group offers many benefits. Experiencing acceptance from group members when we disappoint ourselves helps us feel forgiven. Having others care when we hurt helps us feel comforted. And we grow when others help us see our blind spots.

Week 1: The Midwives and Jochebed—Strength to Resist Intimidation

You can introduce each day's discussion (also in the following weeks) with what you highlighted from that day's reading.

Day 1: Fear the Lord—or Fear the Worst

Receiving intimidating threats unnerves the best of us. Having someone in power wield their position or charm to get us to comply with their demands makes us evaluate our beliefs. We weigh our options against the fall-out. Will our faith support us through such testing?

The Hebrews living under Pharaoh and his cruel taskmasters felt this pressure daily. Let's look at two young midwives who found the strength to resist the most powerful ruler of their time and

where we can find strength to face intimidation.

Ask for volunteers to read the Scripture Reading (or call on someone who likes to read). Go through the questions and ask what they want to highlight from the reading.

Question 1. "Meditation is a combination of reviewing, repeating, reflecting, thinking, analyzing, feeling, and even enjoying."¹ In your discussion, consider the physical, emotional, and mental strain the Hebrews lived under.

Question 4. Unjust leaders can be found in families, churches, political, educational, and medical fields. Ask the group to suggest scenarios and practical ideas to use to help them make the right decision when feeling threatened. For example, a gal said that when she's considering the efficacy and approval of a drug under her watch at work, she asks herself, "Would I do this to my children?"

Transition: Actions speak louder than arguments. When we make it our aim to please God over ourselves or anyone else, our choices become clear, and we find strength to follow God.

Day 2: Fear of God Overcomes Fear of Unjust Leaders

In dangerous situations it's natural to feel afraid. The Bible offers an unusual way to address our fears. Replace fear of people with a proper fear of God.

Have someone read the Scripture Reading. Go through the questions and end by asking what they want to highlight from the day's reading.

Thoughts on the questions:

Questions 2–3. You may want to bring up the difference an eternal perspective makes for believers. Believers have the promise of an eternal reward.

Question 3 b. Only God has the power to control our eternity. Remembering that He is Lord over our eternity helps us not fear anyone or anything else.

Transition: Focusing on our fears paralyzes us. Focusing on God reminds us who's in charge and strengthens us.

Day 3: Fear of God Makes a Fearless Mother

Pharaoh commanded all the people to throw the male babies into the Nile. Did that command give Jochebed the idea of where to hide her baby? How long could she sustain this?

Summarize the Scripture Reading or ask someone to read it. Go through the questions and ask what they want to highlight from the day's reading.

¹ *The Quest Bible New International Version* (Grand Rapids: The Zondervan Corporation, 1994), 839

Day 4: Fear of God Unleashes Supernatural Provision

We like the feeling of control—even if it's an illusion. It's unnerving to know we can't control our circumstances or protect our loved ones. Relinquishing our concerns to the One who rules the universe brings peace when nothing else can.

Go through the questions and ask if they want to share anything from that day's reading.

Thoughts on the questions:

If you are short on time, skip question one or combine it with question 4.

Day 5: Released and Ready

Jochebed hid her baby for three months and then made a small ark for him. She did all she could and left her young daughter to watch him. When Pharaoh's daughter discovered him, Miriam must have feared she would obey her father's decree. The compassion in the princess's face and voice prompted Miriam to offer a quick solution that gave the princess an easy way to rescue Moses.

Did the princess see desperation in the little girl's eyes? By accepting her offer she could delay telling her father. She may have been the one person who could get away with saving Moses without fear of serious repercussions.

Go through Day 5's questions and reading.

Close with how you've decided to take prayer requests.

Reminder: Next week's lesson on Moses has more Bible reading. If you are discussing it in one session and group members have limited time to read, remind them they can listen to the longer passages on a Bible app. (Those with tight schedules can read only the passages noted in the questions and save the full context for later. Better to read some of it than none of it!)

Week 2: Moses—Strength to Obey God's Call

The life of Moses takes up a good portion of the Old Testament. We'll touch the points Hebrews 11 highlights.

Day 1: Called to a Greater Kingdom

Jonathan Cahn says for God's children, "there are only two realities . . . blessings . . . and blessings in disguises."² Many of God's blessings certainly came disguised as aggravations and trouble for those in our study. That should give us hope and encouragement. Moses shows us how to find strength to endure hardship by focusing on our promised eternal rewards.

² Jonathan Cahn, *The Book of Mysteries* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House Book Group, 2018), 231.

Have someone read Hebrews 11:24–26 from the day's Scripture Readings and go through questions 1 and 2.

On question 3 read the remaining verses found in the Scripture Reading.

Finish the questions and share highlights from the reading. You might use something that spoke to you to wrap up the day before moving to Day 2.

Day 2: Called to Do God's Will God's Way

Success is God's kingdom means trusting His timetable and staying in step with Him. God created us to partner with Him. He doesn't give us an assignment and let us lose. He walks with us. We learn to trust His will and His way as we walk together.

Read Day Two's Scripture Reading and go through the questions. Have people share their takeaways from this day's reading and study.

On question 3, someone noted Moses's 40-year wait produced an eternal weight of glory. What a good reminder that God's instruction to "be still" matters as much as the one that says, "Go."

Day 3: Called to Trust God

Before Moses could face Pharaoh, he needed to stop focusing on "Who am I?" and see the great I AM. Moses's faulty start forty years earlier hadn't disqualified him. But he needed wilderness and humility training. Focusing on himself—strengths or weaknesses—led to failure. Like Moses, we must focus on the great I AM and not be caught up with "Who am I?". Instead of reading all the Scripture reading at once I suggest you:

Question 1. Summarize Exod. 2:11–19 Question 2: Have someone read Exod. 3:1–10. Question 5: Have someone read Exod. 3:11; 4:1, 10–20. Question 6: Read or summarize Exod. 4:13–17.

Ask what stood out in the reading.

Day 4: Called to Keep the Passover

In the last plague on Egypt and the Passover celebration, Pharaoh's hard heart and cruelty depict the bondage and high-cost sin brings to every person born since Adam and Eve. The only way out is death. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

The Passover lamb died in place of Israel's firstborns. Those who didn't apply the lamb's blood suffered the loss of their firstborns. Thousands of years before Jesus took our place on the cross, God established the Passover so His people would recognize Jesus as their Passover Lamb who saves us from the cruel power of sin.

Discussion Tips: If you are discussing the chapter on Moses in one session (versus taking two weeks on it), to save time for discussion, begin the questions by reading Heb. 11:28 (included in the Scripture Reading). Then read only the Scripture highlighted in each question. If you opted to discuss the final two chapters as a separate lesson, read all the Scriptures you feel would enhance your discussion.

If someone questions the fairness of this judgement on Egypt, remind them that Jonah declared a one sentence judgment on Nineveh, the wicked capital city of ancient Assyria, and everyone from king to the cows repented in sackcloth and fasting (Jonah 3:5–10). Rebellion against God is serious. More time and more signs obviously wouldn't have softened Pharaoh's heart.

If someone asks why God hardened Pharaoh's heart, remind them of the 400 years of mistreatment Israel suffered under Egyptian rule. The rulers of Egypt hardened their own hearts long before God hardened this Pharaoh's heart. Remember, his father decreed that all the baby boys be killed and afflicted the Hebrews in hardship. Romans 1:28 reminds us that sometimes God's judgment is to give people their own choices.

If anyone is struggling with assurance of salvation, this is a time to connect the Hebrews' applying the lamb's blood with our trusting the Lamb of God's blood to cover our sins.

Day 5: Caught between the Devil and the Red Sea

The parting of the Red Sea is one of the most famous scenes in the Bible. How thrilling to see that God, not Pharaoh, orchestrated every step for His glory and the good of His people.

If you are discussing the chapter on Moses in one session, read only Hebrews 11:27, 29 in the Scripture Reading. Because of the length of the other reading, read only the Scriptures noted in the questions you discuss.

Close with how you've decided to take prayer requests.

Week 3: Joshua and Rahab—Strength to Follow God's Lead

Opening: Forty years separate Hebrews 11:29 from 11:30 or the time between when "the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land" and when the walls of Jericho fell. Because Hebrews 11 highlights faith, it skipped the forty years Israel spent wandering in unbelief in the wilderness.

Day 1: Preparing for Victory

Joshua had helplessly tried to stop Israel's rebellious refusal to enter the Promised Land. Forty years passed, Moses died, and Joshua received the baton to lead Israel. Imagine the apprehension he felt remembering the past and facing fortified Jericho. Let's look at how God addressed his fears and how to apply those instructions to our lives.

Ask someone to read Day One's Scripture Readings and proceed through the questions.

Day 2: Active Faith

Today, we meet Rahab. Rahab came from a pagan background and had never met a follower of Yahweh. She had little knowledge of the one true God, but we'll see how she exercised the understanding she had. She reminds us faith isn't about how much we know but about what we do with what we know. Her bold faith secured her a place in four books of the Bible and in Jesus's family tree.

Have the group turn to Joshua 2. Summarize or read pertinent parts. For example, summarize verses 1–7 and read verses 8–14. Proceed through the questions giving the group opportunity to comment on the reading. Ask if anyone organized their story or if they've used their faith story to introduce someone to Christ.

Day 3: Do-Over

Most of us wish we could redo certain scenes in our lives with the growth and maturity we've gained. God graciously gave Israel a chance for a do-over. He took them through many of the same actions He'd taken Israel through under Moses. But this time they would be associated with victory, not the shame of fear and rebellion.

This day shows we must prepare our hearts before God before we face our enemy.

Question 1 reminds us to follow God's lead and keep our focus on Him.

Question 2 reminds us to keep a pure heart before God so that nothing hinders our vision and communication with Him.

Question 6: God's exalting Joshua showed Israel they could trust Joshua because God was with him just as He'd been with Moses.

Question 7: God's miracle gave Jericho one more chance to repent (they, along with all the earth, saw the Lord was mighty) and Israel another reason to revere Him instead of fearing their enemy.

Question 8: Sometimes God takes us into circumstances that touch old wounds and failures so we can have a victorious do-over. Consecrating themselves, being circumcised, and keeping the Passover didn't seem to relate to fighting a fierce enemy. But because victory comes from the Lord, before Israel could defeat their enemy they needed to get radically right with God.

Go through the questions and read the related Scriptures as needed. Remind your group that God has provided a sure way deal with regret. Encourage your group to use Today's Strength Builder to keep clean accounts and therefore open channels of communication with the Lord.

Day 4: Who's in Charge?

Joshua, no doubt, wondered how he was going to conquer sealed Jericho. The appearance of the Captain of the Lord's Armies must have brought great relief. God had not left Joshua to figure

this out. He had a plan. Joshua only had to follow it.

Have the group turn to the Scriptures. Go through the questions, reading or summarizing the pertinent Scriptures.

Question 1: The captain made it clear He served God not any human side. No matter what group, nation, or family we're part of, we serve God first. If a group departs from God, we stick with God.

Question 2: God is holy and so are His missions. When we follow God, we walk on holy ground.

Day 5: Faith Is Not in a Hurry—Trusting God's Timing

Have the group turn to Joshua 6. Summarize or read the passage from the Scripture Reading. Then proceed through the questions.

Question 4 warns against making wrong comparisons. We don't compare ourselves with our enemies. We look at our enemy in comparison with God. If we opt out of God's plan, we miss out. But God's plan will succeed without us.

Close with how you've decided to take prayer requests.

Week 4: Gideon—Strength for Shaky Faith

Consider how to apply these stories from the book of Judges with our culture and its departure from God.

Opening: Gideon is famous for his fleeces. This week we saw those fleeces showed weakness, not strength. But using them strengthened Gideon's faith.

Day 1: Discovering the Root of the Problem

Before we look at Gideon, let's look at what caused Israel's problems.

Summarize the day's Scripture passage or have someone read it. Then go through the questions. Ask for anything they want to share from the reading.

Question 5: Who or what do we blame for our problems? (The economy, political power in office, pandemic, or family member etc.)

Question 6 is personal. You can skip it or ask something like, "Have you seen how pain in one area can be rooted in a different area? What do you think of the statement, 'national deliverance begins with personal repentance." If appropriate, use this question when you take prayer requests for your group and nation.

Day 2: Drawing Out What God Put In

Have you ever considered that God sees potential in you that you can't? Let's see how Gideon's view of himself lined up with God's.

Have someone read the day's Scripture passage. Then go through the questions. Ask for what they want to share from the reading.

Question 5: Gideon found peace in the Lord even with impending battle.

Day 3: First Things First

You may introduce this section in your own words or use something like the last paragraph before the questions to introduce this day's discussion.

"Before God uses us to further his kingdom, he may call us to smash our idols. Doing so is the first step to supernatural power and strength. Most of us don't display carved idols in our homes. What are our idols? An idol is anything that usurps God's rightful place in our lives. Be it a substance, relationship, habit, or job. We identify idols by how precious they are to us and the control they exert over us." Let's see how God led Gideon in this.

Have someone read or summarize today's Scripture passage. Proceed through the questions.

Questions 1 and 2 are good questions to relate to our personal and/or national and cultural challenges.

Day 4: From Weakness Made Strong

Lightning struck the branch a woodpecker was pecking. "Wow," said the woodpecker. "Look what I did!"

It seems woodpeckers aren't the only ones susceptible to pride. God had to protect Gideon and Israel from taking credit of what God was about to do.

Have someone read the Hebrews Scripture under Scripture Reading and summarize Judges 7. Proceed through the questions. When you get to the reading you might ask, "How have you experienced God in your weakness?

Day 5: God's Weapons: Foolish or Effective

We become strong as we walk with God through our struggles. When we're tempted to retreat, spiritual weapons and God's strength help us defeat our fear and foes.

Summarized first part of Scripture chapter and read Judges 8:24, 28, 33–35. Proceed through the questions reading the appropriate Scriptures as needed.

Question 2: You might share how you overcame something that intimidated you by wading or jumping in. For example, learning to pray or share your thoughts in a group setting. Encourage the group to begin to take steps of faith into uncomfortable places God leads.

Question 3b: Suggest some weaknesses they can apply this to. For example, health, finances, people pleasing tendency, or having to have the last word.

Close with how you've decided to take prayer requests.

Week 5: Deborah and Barak—Strength from Teamwork

Opening: God created us to live life with Him. Healthy believers never lose their dependence on Jesus. God wants the pleasure of your company and hopes you'll want the pleasure of His. Jesus modeled this. While on earth He did nothing by Himself. He did everything with His father. Let's see what we can learn about partnering with God.

Day 1: Partnering with God

Ask a volunteer to read Deuteronomy 9:4–6. Read the other verses with the rest of the questions as needed.

Question 1: The two reasons given are because of the wickedness of the nations inhabiting the area and His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God keeps His promise, despite Israel's unrighteousness.

Question 2: God's delay was His protection. The wicked served His purpose by protecting Israel from being overrun by wild beasts. God sees the big picture. We can trust His timetable and delays in our lives too.

Day 2: Pairing Faith with Action

Sometimes we measure our faith by how confident we feel. But the Bible measures faith by action. "Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead" (James 2:17 NIV). Genuine faith changes how we live and how we respond to God and life's challenges.

Ask a volunteer to read the day's Scripture Reading (Judges 4:1–19; 5:7) and proceed through the questions. Invite the group to share what they gleaned from the reading.

Day 3: Experiencing a Big God

Opportunities to experience a big God often come dressed as battles.

Have someone read Scripture Reading. Go through the questions. Invite the group to share what they gleaned from the reading.

Question 3: Barak reinforces that faith is demonstrated by what we do, not by how we feel. To attack a trained army with a bunch of volunteers who weren't adequately armed demonstrated real faith.

Question 4: This question highlights how God partners with us. From the previous reading we know God told Deborah what to do and she summoned Barak. The Lord

drew out Sisera as He'd promised. Deborah told Barak when to attack. Together with the volunteers she and Barak attacked Sisera. The Lord went before them and subdued the enemy. Israel's army pressed harder and harder until they had destroyed Jabin the king of Canaan.

Day 4: Deborah and Jael: Joining the Right Team

Summarize or highlight the parts of the opening you want to bring out. Have someone read Judges 5:6–9, 24–27. Go through the questions.

Question 2: Deborah had carried a burden for her nation as she witnessed its oppression. She'd probably prayed for it. But she waited on God before she acted. Only He could defeat this enemy.

Day 5: God Uses the Weak

God didn't think less of Barak because he asked Deborah to accompany him into battle. He obeyed God and led an army of volunteers against armored warriors. Gideon and Barak needed reassurance. God commends their faith that led them to obey Him.

Go through the questions reading the appropriate Scriptures as needed. Ask for takeaways from the week.

Question 1: The verses should include Judges 5:6. Reference Judges 5:2 (NIV) hints that before Deborah arose Israel lacked leadership. Her courage inspired others to step up. "When the princes in Israel take the lead, when the people willingly offer themselves— praise the Lord!" Israel enjoyed forty years of peace after this (Judges 5:31).

Close with how you've decided to take prayer requests.

Week 6: Jephthah and Samuel—Strength from Dedication

This chapter can be discussed as one lesson or two. Days 1–3 could be one discussion and Days 4 and 5 another. If you choose to take two weeks on it, you'll have time to go into Hannah's story more than the questions cover.

Opening: "God chose things ... that are powerless to shame those who are powerful" (1 Cor. 1:27 NLT). Jephthah and Samuel are two leaders from Hebrews 11 that were dedicated to God but overlooked by the people who should have valued them.

Day 1: This Song's for You

Has a tune ever stuck in your mind? Israel was stuck in the repeated cycle of rebelling against God and crying for Him to save them. Israel's history shows the consequences of forsaking God and where to turn when we fall.

Review Judges 10:6–18 or have a volunteer read it. Then proceed through the questions. Connect Israel's bondage and suffering with their choice to rebel against God.

Question 3: We have a new purpose, to live for righteousness, and the power of the Holy Spirit to fulfill that new aim.

Questions 7: No one must stay stuck in sin. Just as every act of disobedience makes it easier to sin and harder to obey God, every act of obedience strengthens our spiritual core and makes it easier to obey God.

Obeying sinful desires always leads to oppression and misery. But, as we dedicate ourselves to God, the Holy Spirit supplies the power to break the cycle of sin in our lives.

Day 2: Dedicated to Truth

God used the bullying of Jephthah's brothers to equip him for a later role in God's story. When battle came to Israel, the half brothers who'd previously rejected him, sought his help.

Either take turns reading the various verses found in the Scripture Reading before you begin the questions or refer to them as you discuss the questions. Summarize or have volunteers take turns reading from Judges 11.

Question 5: People use false guilt to manipulate us. It's important that we know the truth and not be sucked in by lies and half-truths.

Winning our personal battles begins with knowing and speaking God's truth. God wants us to fully possess all He's provided.

Day 3: Be Careful What You Promise

Sadly, people of faith aren't exempt from misunderstanding God and His ways. Day 3's introduction covers two possible ways Jephthah fulfilled his vow.

You can bring points from the introduction to segue into today's questions. Pick up the story by reading Judges 11:34–40.

Question 3: If someone asks, the NIV version of 2 Kings 20:18 uses the word *eunuchs* whereas some translations use *officials*. *Strongs* defines the Hebrew word *sārîs* as *official*, *eunuch*.³ Ancient kings sometimes castrated their officials to protect their haram and crush any aggression or ambition for the throne (Is. 39:7).

Question 2: You might ask or bring up someone you know whose singleness allowed them to whole-heartedly invest in God's kingdom.

God wants us to think before we speak. He takes vows seriously. If we err with our words, we must own our mistake and honor God in how we deal with it. God is bigger than our blunders. Ask if anyone wants to comment on the topic of oaths.

³ https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/h5631/nasb20/wlc/0–1/

Day 4: Samuel—Dedicated to God

Ask for comments on Hannah's story and use her story to introduce Samuel. Read or summarize the Scripture Reading. Go through the questions. Discuss why it is important to faithfully deliver God's message, as Samuel did, and leave the results with God.

Question 2: Eli had been warned before Samuel's warning. His passivity reveals much about the state of his faith. Throughout Scripture, God responded graciously to those who repented or showed sorrow for their sin. Remember wicked Nineveh's humility after Jonah announced judgment? God even showed mercy to wicked King Ahab and Cain when they asked.

Day 5: Dedicated to Faithfulness

Samuel was faithful, but his sons were not. The people used this as an opportunity to reject God's leadership and Samuel. Samuel obeyed God and did his best to help King Saul serve successfully. But Saul was about building his kingdom, not God's. Read or summarize the Scripture Reading. Go through the questions.

Instead of indulging in self-pity, both Samuel and Jephthah dedicated themselves to doing their best for God in their respective situations.

Close with how you've decided to take prayer requests.

Week 7: Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—Strength from Conviction

This lesson could also be divided into two discussions. The biblical chapters have lots of great material to draw out. If you choose to divide it, you may want to discuss Day 1–3 in one discussion and Days 4 and 5 in the other.

Opening: Remind the group of the setting and how these young men ended up in Babylon as explained in the opening and Daniel 1.

Day 1: You Can Lead a Boy to Babylon, but You Can't Make Him Drink the Wine

Read the Hebrews 11:32–34 in the Scripture Reading. If you've already explained the setting in the opening, then read Daniel 1:8–21. Or describe the ten-day test and read verses 15–21. Question 1: Notice God's involvement in verses 2, 9, and 17. Go through the questions and takeaways from the reading.

After all these youths lost and with all they couldn't control, protecting their diets may have seemed insignificant. Yet honoring God in this way garnered His special favor and spiritually strengthened the four.

Day 2: Conviction Produces Stability

Tests reveal where our faith is strong and where we need work. Go through the questions. Note how Daniel showed kindness and considered the welfare of the officer over him when he asked for a test. Invite them to share from the reading.

Day 3: When Convictions Come under Fire

If you are discussing this chapter lesson in one week, sum up the Scripture reading for this day. If you're taking two weeks, have volunteers read it.

Go through the lesson and ask for comments from the reading.

Day 4: Live by Faith; Lead by Example

Daniel in the lions' den is a well-loved story of courage and divine rescue. Read the Hebrews verse under Scripture Reading and proceed through the questions. If you are taking two weeks on this chapter, read Daniel 6.

Day 5: "Even If" Convictions

Use the discussion of this day to personalize and apply the lessons gleaned from these biblical champions. Question 5 provides an opportunity to discuss how keeping an eternal perspective puts our momentary trials in proper context.

Close with how you've decided to take prayer requests.

Week 8: David and You—Strength in the Lord and His Armor

This chapter can be divided into two discussions if you prefer. For example, discuss Days 1 and 2 one week and 3 through 5 and the Afterword the next.

Opening: God used David's everyday job of tending sheep to equip him for bigger battles. God also uses our routine experiences to train us to trust in His faithfulness.

Day 1: How to Kill a Giant

If you are discussing the whole lesson in one discussion time, sum up 1 Samuel 17. If you've chosen to divide it into two discussions, ask for a couple of volunteers to read the chapter. Go through the questions. Use question 6 to help them apply this story to their personal challenges.

Day 2: Strength from Discernment

One of the most important battles we all fight is the battle in our minds. The devil wants us to passively accept every thought. If we accept his thoughts as ours, he can control our actions and outlook. Screening our thoughts saves us from unnecessary pain and regret.

From Day 2's intro reading, discuss how Satan plants thoughts to manipulate us and the importance of capturing renegade thoughts before they take root.

Continue through the questions and take comments from the day's reading. If time is short, go to the questions and bring out the biblical facts as needed. If you are taking two weeks on this lesson or have a longer discussion time, read the Scripture reading and discuss and apply the DARTS chart. Here is a <u>link to a podcast</u> where I discuss DARTS for those who want to listen. *https://bit.ly/44T2khz*

Day 3: Strong Armor for Weak Warriors

Today's lesson begins an overview of our spiritual armor. Question 1, some translations describe God's power as "mighty." Ephesians 1:19–20, quoted at the end of this day's reading, adds to the description of God's power.

Day 4: Buckle Up with Truth

Continue looking at our spiritual armor. You may declare the truths listed in question 1 together, have one person read them, or go around your group with each one reading one aloud. Point out that it's worth the time to study the scriptures connected with anything on the list that causes us pause.

Sometimes wounds from our past or wrong teachings cause us to question the Lord's character or what He says about us. Ask if anyone looked up any extra scriptures or have other insights to share on the belt of truth. Thoughts that accuse the Lord of being different than He is must be arrested.

Question 2: 1 Corinthians 10:13 says our temptations are common. The devil wants us to think we're the only one who deals with our struggle. Suggest some common temptations. For example, feeling unlovable, condemned, fearful, it's up to me, alone, and no one understands. Voices from our past, old wounds, and bad doctrine contribute to these strongholds.

Question 3: Remind them the thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy. Recognizing the deeds of the flesh protects us from being deceived into participating in them. Indulging in them is siding with the thief.

From the reading, remind them that God wants to deliver us from our fears and struggles. Ask Him to reveal the root and bring healing. (My book *Give Yourself a Break* goes into more detail on renewing your mind and spiritual battles.)

Day 5: Armor Up—the Days Are Evil.

These questions are more personal and it's all right if people don't want to share. Just make sure they understand the concepts and address anyone's concerns about their personal salvation.

Question 1: Refer to Romans 5:1 in the Scripture Reading. We have peace with God because of what Jesus has done for us, not because we have lived a good life. Peace with God has to do with our salvation. Peace with God should lead to the peace of God as we walk with Him.

Afterword: Stronger Than Death

Ask for comments and takeaways from the Afterword and lesson.

Close with how you've decided to take prayer requests.

Thank you for leading a *Little Strength*, *Big God* group.

I hope these biblical champions challenged and inspired you and your group. If you enjoyed the book, please let others know about this resource. Here are some suggestions.

- 1. Post a review on Amazon, Goodreads, or your favorite online book seller.
- 2. Post a picture of your book or a selfie holding the book or a favorite quote or personal takeaway from the book on your **social media** platforms.
- 3. Word of mouth—Share the book with your friends, book club, and Bible study group.

Thanks again for reading *Little Strength, Big God*. May these stories continue to inspire and encourage you.