

## Lesson 6: Does God ever tell people to go and fight?

Today we are going to be reading about the story of **St Joan of Arc**. She is one of the most famous Christian saints. A **saint** is someone who the Catholic Church has decided lived an extraordinary life and who was very special in the eyes of God. Many Christians see saints as examples of how to live their lives – at the end of the reading we will ask if Joan of Arc sets a good example to Christians today.

### Biography

**Occupation:** Military Leader

**Born:** 1412 in Domremy, France

**Died:** May 30, 1431 Rouen, France

**Best known for:** Leading the French against the English in the Hundred Years War at a young age



### Where did Joan of Arc grow up?

Joan of Arc grew up in a small town in France. Her father, Jacques, was a farmer who also worked as an official for the town. Joan worked on the farm and learned how to sew from her mother, Isabelle. Joan was also very religious.

### Visions from God

When Joan was around twelve years old she had a vision. She saw Michael the Archangel. He told her that she was to lead the French in a battle against the English. After she drove the English out she was to take the king to be crowned at Rheims.

Joan continued to have visions and hear voices over the next several years. She said they were beautiful and wonderful visions from God. When Joan turned sixteen she decided it was time to listen to her visions and take action.

### Journey to King Charles VII

Joan was just a peasant farm girl. How was she going to get together an army to defeat the English? She decided she would ask King Charles of France for an army. She first went to the local town and asked the commander of the garrison, Count Baudricourt, to take her to see the king. He just laughed at her. However, Joan did not give up. She continued to ask for his help and gained the support of some local leaders. Soon he agreed to provide her with an escort to the royal court in the city of Chinon.

Joan met with the king. At first the king was suspicious. Should he put this young girl in charge of his army? Was she a messenger from God or was she just crazy? Eventually, the king figured he had nothing to lose. He let Joan accompany a convoy of soldiers and supplies to the city of Orleans that was under siege from the English Army.

While Joan waited on the king, she practiced for battle. She became a proficient fighter and an expert horse rider. She was ready when the king said she could fight.

## Siege of Orleans

News of Joan's visions from God reached Orleans before she did. The French people began to hope that God was going to save them from the English. When Joan arrived, the people greeted her with cheering and celebrations.

Joan had to wait for the rest of the French army to arrive. Once they were there, she launched an attack against the English. Joan led the attack and during one of the battles was wounded by an arrow. Joan didn't stop fighting. She stayed with the troops inspiring them to fight even harder. Eventually Joan and the French Army repelled the English troops and caused them to retreat from Orleans. She had won a victory for the French but many English and French troops had died in the process.

## King Charles is Crowned

After winning the Battle of Orleans, Joan had only achieved part of what the visions had told her to do. She also needed to lead Charles to the city of Rheims to be crowned king. Joan and her army cleared the way to Rheims, gaining followers as she went. Soon they had made it to Rheims and Charles was crowned King of France.

## Captured

Joan heard that the city of Compienne was under attack by the Burgundians. She took a small force to help defend the city. With her force under attack outside the city, the drawbridge was raised and she was trapped. Joan was captured and later sold to the English.

The English held Joan as prisoner and gave her a trial to prove that she was a religious heretic (someone who disagrees with the rules of a religion). They questioned her over the course of several days trying to find something that she had done that deserved death. They could not find anything wrong with her except that she had dressed as a man. They said that was enough to deserve death and announced her guilty.



Joan was burned alive at the stake. She asked for a cross before she died, and an English soldier gave her a small wooden cross. Witnesses said she forgave her accusers and asked them to pray for her. She was only nineteen years old when she died.

On the next page take a look at the painting of Joan of Arc.

How does it make her seem important and strong?

Is it how women are normally seen in paintings?





**Reasons for yes**

**Reasons for no**

**Is Joan of Arc a good role  
model for Christians today?**