

## Power Hour Lesson Summary for June 18, 2017

### "Jephthah"

**Lesson Text:** Judges 11:4-11, 29-31

**Background Scripture:** Judges 11

**Devotional Reading:** Acts 15:6-21

### Judges 11:4-11, 29-31 (NIV)

<sup>4</sup> Some time later, when the Ammonites were fighting against Israel, <sup>5</sup> the elders of Gilead went to get Jephthah from the land of Tob. <sup>6</sup> "Come," they said, "be our commander, so we can fight the Ammonites."

<sup>7</sup> Jephthah said to them, "Didn't you hate me and drive me from my father's house? Why do you come to me now, when you're in trouble?"

<sup>8</sup> The elders of Gilead said to him, "Nevertheless, we are turning to you now; come with us to fight the Ammonites, and you will be head over all of us who live in Gilead."

<sup>9</sup> Jephthah answered, "Suppose you take me back to fight the Ammonites and the Lord gives them to me—will I really be your head?"

<sup>10</sup> The elders of Gilead replied, "The Lord is our witness; we will certainly do as you say." <sup>11</sup> So Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and commander over them. And he repeated all his words before the Lord in Mizpah.

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<sup>29</sup> Then the Spirit of the Lord came on Jephthah. He crossed Gilead and Manasseh, passed through Mizpah of Gilead, and from there he advanced against the Ammonites. <sup>30</sup> And Jephthah made a vow to the Lord: "If you give the Ammonites into my hands, <sup>31</sup> whatever comes out of the door of my house to meet me when I return in triumph from the Ammonites will be the Lord's, and I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering."

### TODAY'S LESSON AIMS

**Learning Fact:** To summarize the conditions of the agreements made between Jephthah and the elders of Gilead.

**Biblical Principle:** To compare and contrast the vow of the elders of Gilead with the vow of Jephthah.

**Daily Application:** To consider that God can use us no matter our background and despite our bad choices.

## INTRODUCTION

### Imperfect Leaders

Who are the greatest leaders you can name? Chances are, even though those on your list accomplished great things, some parts of their lives were far from virtuous.

Abraham Lincoln is known as the Great Emancipator. Nevertheless, he once wrote, “If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it.” Mahatma Gandhi led India to independence. Yet, he opposed the adoption of modern technology that would have helped his nation become more prosperous, freeing them from decades of poverty. Henry Ford was a pioneer in automotive engineering. But Ford also sponsored a weekly newspaper that published anti-Semitic views. Steve Jobs was undoubtedly a tech genius responsible for many innovations that changed the way we receive, store, and interact with information. But he was known for eccentricities such as odd diets and a refusal to bathe!

It is obvious that no human leader is perfect. Even the most popular and most effective leaders have flaws. Today we will look at a judge in Israel who was used by God in spite of the man’s huge imperfections.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

**Time:** 1087 B.C.

**Place:** Mizpeh

The land of Israel was undisturbed for 40 years after Gideon defeated the Midianites (Judges 8:28). That is the last period of peace mentioned in the book of Judges.

Peace came to an end after Gideon died when Abimelech, one of Gideon’s 70 sons, attempted to kill all of his brothers (Judges 9). He had a three-year reign, but it was more as a ruler of a city-state, not as a ruler over all Israel.

At the conclusion of a rebellion, Abimelech captured a nearby city where people had taken refuge in a fortified tower. But he ventured too close to the tower and died after being hit in the head by a millstone (Judges 9:50-55; compare 2 Samuel 11:21).

The judges Tola and Jair came next, with their services lasting 23 and 22 years, respectively (Judges 10:1-3). It is generally concluded that the two men were judges at about the same time, but in different parts of Israel.

The axiom “The only thing learned from history is that no one learns from history” was verified in Israel time after time. Israel’s sin-cycle repeated itself anew as the Israelites again embraced idolatry (Judges 10:6). Consequently, the Lord sold them into the hands of the Ammonites and the Philistines for 18

years (10:7, 8). This is estimated as having been on both sides of 1100 B.C. When the Israelites cried out for deliverance, the Lord challenged them to cry out to the gods that they had chosen (10:14). The people eventually repented and appealed to God again (10:15, 16).

The Ammonites had come from the east and oppressed the Israelites on both sides of the Jordan River (Judges 10:7-9). The people had repented, but they needed someone to organize them and lead in the effort to expel the Ammonites. That man was Jephthah, and he is the delivering judge in this lesson.

The opening verses of Judges 11 provide background information about Jephthah himself. His father, Gilead, had sons by his wife, but Jephthah had a different mother. This factor caused his brothers to drive him from home. Jephthah went north to the land of Tob. He had the ability to lead, and soon other men came to him. They are called “scoundrels” in Judges 11:3, which may speak to their being of low character. It is usually assumed that Jephthah’s guerilla force raided nearby areas, even in Ammon itself.

### **What Do You Think?**

- How should we deal with people who come to us only because they need our help?
- In what circumstances, if any, should past mistreatment be considered in making decisions?

### **POINTS TO PONDER**

1. God can use anyone, no matter their background. (Judges 11:1-5).
2. People who have had disagreements can unite to defeat a common foe (the enemy of God). (vs. 6-11).
3. Even people who are chosen by God to be in leadership roles can make mistakes and make ungodly, unwise decisions. Therefore, we should always pray for our leaders. (vs. 29-31).

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **On the Lookout for Leadership**

There is no such thing as the perfect leader. And if the elders of Gilead were looking for one, they certainly did not find him in Jephthah! Yet God used that man for His purposes in His time.

God gives us guidance when it comes to looking for church leaders and leadership values (See 1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:6-9). Yet, there is no such thing as a perfect church leader. The solution is to look for diamonds in the rough, potential leaders who are open to mentoring. Paul trained Timothy and Titus for years to assume leadership roles. Tomorrow’s leaders need today’s training.

### **PRAYER**

We ask heavenly Father, that You help us find, train, and follow leaders who will accomplish Your will among us. We pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

### **THOUGHT TO REMEMBER**

The God who makes a lump of coal into a diamond can create faithful leaders from imperfect people.

### **ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON**

Next week’s lesson is “**Samson**,” where we list factors and conditions intended to shape Samson’s spiritual development. Study Judges 13:1-7, 24, 25.