

ABIMELECH AND JEPHTHAH

Judges 9–11

Lesson Memory Verse: Isaiah 53:3 – “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; **He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.**” (Grades 1 & 2 memorize the part printed in **bold**.)

Lesson Aim: God will use unwanted people and give them great victories if they will obey Him.

Lesson Plan: Use the KEY – HE – SEE – WE – Be plan (explained in the Introductory Notes)

KEY (for Attention): How many of you have seen a car that was smashed by an accident? Do you know what they do with a car that has been wrecked in an accident? If it is in a very bad accident and cannot be driven anymore, they send it to the junk yard. Why does the junk man want a car that no one else wants? Yes, he sells the good parts from the wrecked car to people who need them to fix up their cars. Also, he sells the rest of the car to a company who will melt it to use the metal in that car for something else made of metal...maybe another car. Junk men want cars that no one else wants because they can use them to get money for themselves. God, on the other hand, wants unwanted people because He loves them and wants to fix them so they are useful again. He also wants people to see what wonderful things He can do to repair people when they turn their lives over to Him. Do you ever feel unwanted? Well, God loves you and wants you. He will make you useful, if you will obey Him.

HE (for Authority): Our memory verse for today tells about Someone, Whom the world did not want, but God wanted Him to do something important for us; God did use Him because He obeyed Him. Let me read the whole verse and see if you can tell me of whom this verse is speaking. (Read Isaiah 53:3.) Who is this Person? Yes, it is Jesus.

He was “despised,” which means Jesus was hated. We did not “esteem” Him, which means we did not honor Him. That is how God sees our hearts until we receive Jesus as our Savior. God knows that we hate Jesus and do not honor Him. We may feel that we do not hate Jesus, but God tells us the truth. As we get older, the hatred for Jesus grows and becomes more evident. We do not want to read the Bible or go to church to hear about Him. We begin to use His name in swearing. We laugh at people who love Jesus and think they are too religious. We do not honor Him for dying on the cross to pay the penalty of our sins and save us from Hell. But God the Father wanted His Son to do this for us, because there was no other way to save us from going to Hell. Jesus was willing to obey His Father and become unwanted by the people that He created; He was willing to be hated so He could provide salvation for all who would receive as their Savior. God wanted His Son to die for us, because He loves us and wants us to live with Him forever. Do you want to live with God?

SEE (for Apperception) and WE (for Application): Tell the story of both Abimelech and Jephthah or only of Jephthah if you do not have time for both men. Use the following outline to help you remember the different parts of the story. Do not feel that you must use the whole lesson to do a good job. Teach that which will be understood and needed by your class. Use only those applications that meet your class' needs. **Be sure to read the story from the Bible many times before you teach it.**

I. Pride of Abimelech (9:1-57)

- A. Abimelech, a son of Gideon, thought he should be king, so he persuaded the city of Shechem to give him money so he could hire men to kill his brothers; then they could not become king (9:1-5).
- B. Shechem made Abimelech king (9:6).
- C. Jotham gave a prophecy against Abimelech and against Shechem (9:7-21).
- D. After three years Shechem and Abimelech did not like each other anymore (9:22-29).
- E. Abimelech destroyed Shechem (9:30-49).
- F. A woman in Thebez killed Abimelech with a millstone (9:50-57).

WE: We must watch out for pride in our lives (Prov 16:18). It is sin and will make us do wicked deeds. Pride will make our best friends eventually come to hate us. Pride will destroy us.

G. God could not use Abimelech because he hated and killed his brothers.

WE: We must not hate anyone, because hatred is murder in God's eyes and He will not use murderers.

II. Prophecy of Jotham (9:5-21)

A. Jotham was not wanted by the leaders in Shechem (9:5). Abimelech did not want him. Instead he wanted to kill him. The city leaders did not want him because he came from the wrong family.

WE: We may not be wanted by anyone, but God wants us and He wants to save us.

B. God wanted Jotham (9:7-21). God wanted Jotham because he would obey Him. God used him to deliver a prophecy against Abimelech and Shechem for killing innocent men.

WE: God will use us if we will obey Him.

III. Power of Jephthah (11:1-33)

A. Jephthah was unwanted by his brothers and they put him out of their home (11:1-3).

WE: We may find that our own family does not want us or love us as they should; God wants you and loves you very much. He will be better to you than family, if you will accept His love.

B. When trouble came, Jephthah's brothers and the leaders of Gilead changed their minds and wanted him back to help them fight the Ammonites. Jephthah humbly returned to help them (11:4-11). **He had the power to forgive.**

WE: We need to forgive those who mistreated us and be willing to help them, if they are sorry and ask for our help. We must not be haughty and ignore them, but we must be humble and help them. God gives us the power to forgive.

C. Jephthah reasoned with the king of Ammon to show to him that he had no cause for war, but he would not listen (11:12-28). **He had the power to control himself wisely.**

WE: If we try to reason with our enemy before we fight with him, we may not have to fight. It is always best to try to live peaceably with all men (Rom. 12:18). God gives us the power of self-control.

D. Jephthah received power from God because He wanted this unwanted man to succeed in his fight against the Ammonites and so he did (11:29-33). **He had the power to conquer his enemies.**

WE: We must have the Spirit of God filling our lives whenever we work for God. He will make it possible for us to conquer our enemies. This power comes from Jesus Christ (2 Cor 2:14; Phil 4:13) and from the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18; Gal. 5:16, 22, 23; Zech. 4:6). God gives us the power of victory.

BE (for Action): In this story, who thought he was really important, but was not? (Abimelech) Who was not very important, but God wanted him and used him to give a prophecy? (Jotham) Who was not wanted by his brothers until they had a big problem? (Jephthah) Can you name the three kinds of power that Jephthah got from God? (It is the power of forgiveness; the power of self-control; and the power of victory). I am sure that you want to be used by God like Jephthah. You can have the power that He gave to Jephthah, if you are humble and let God have His way in your life. If you want God's power, you ask God to take control of your life. Do it now and see how God will change your life and use you. (Have children pray out loud or silently, whichever you prefer.)