

## LIFEGROUP NOTES: JUDGES 9-12

*As ever, please use (or discard!) these ideas as is most suitable for your group. Don't feel you have to use everything.*

**Sermon Summary:** The past can cast a long shadow. The stories of Abimelech and Jephthah illustrate how hurts from the past can fatally cloud our judgement and lead to disaster. Both sought acceptance with others through being "a success"; the result was that each in his own way paid an appalling price. The gospel of Christ offers a different way of dealing with the past: the forgiving love of God by which we are accepted as His precious children without having to prove ourselves. The salvation brought by our Lord Jesus Christ includes salvation from ourselves.

### FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Why did Abimelech feel an outsider among Gideon's (= Jerub-Baal's) sons (see 8:29-31), and how did he react (9:1-5)? Abimelech never mentions God; consider the significance of this. Yet for all Abimelech's pretensions, who is really in control (see 9:23-24,56-57)? It may seem to us at times that evil people rule the world, but the Scriptures remind us that God never loses control of events. When do you need to remember this in your own life?
2. What heartaches did Jephthah carry with him from childhood into his adult life (11:1-10)? How did his longing to find acceptance through success cloud his judgement (11:30-31)? What was the terrible consequence (11:34-39)? Consider how the wish to be accepted by others and/or to succeed has affected your own life. What price have you been prepared to pay? How might you draw encouragement from knowing that in spite of his failings, Jephthah is still included among the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11 (He 11:32)?
3. Which shadows from your past affect you most today, and in what way? Consider why they are so powerful, and how the gospel answers your needs at those points. *"He took my sins and my sorrow, and made them His very own ..."* – what difference does this make to you? And what difference does it make to know you are now a child of God (1Jn 3:1)? What practical steps can you take towards freedom and wholeness? How can we help one another on the journey?
4. Consider any lessons we might learn *as a church* from the stories of Abimelech and Jephthah. Although God has blessed CBC with a rich history, are there any ways in which our past has an adverse effect on our church life today? Try to identify these, and to suggest practical remedies. And what about *as a Lifegroup*?

### Responding in Prayer

- As you look at your own life, and that of CBC and your Lifegroup, in the light of this study, what are you going to pray for now?

*Eddie Larkman, October 2017*