

Lesson 5: Evil Judge Abimelech the 6th Judge

Objectives: Students will...

- 1) Study Judges 9 – Abimelech the 6th Judge made king
- 2) See an example of what happens when men choose a leader, rather than letting God choose
- 3) Learn that we should leave it to God to repay the sins of others and not repay others ourselves

Accommodations: How will I accommodate individual needs of students?

- See Lesson 1 for idea

Supplies:

Teacher Materials (provided in classroom)

- Bible(s)
- Markers/Pencil Crayons
- Pens/Pencils
- Attendance Chart (See Template)
- Stickers for Attendance
- Map of Oppressors and Later Judges – one for class to share
- Judges Charts and Answer Key– (from previous class)
- Jotham Escapes Activity Sheet – one per student

Optional:

- 1 medium size rock
- 1 bowl to hold rock
- Small sponge (heart shaped would be great, but any shape will do)
- Squirt gun filled with water or a small cup of water
- Blank sheet of paper – one for class to share for Name that Answer Clue Game
- Storybook or visuals of this story to show kids (if available)

Snack:

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| - Olives, Figs and/or Grapes | 1-4 pieces for each child |
| - Napkins for snack | one per child |
| - Juice or water and cup | one per child |

Lesson:

1) Introduction to Lesson

5 minutes

As students enter, welcome them and help find a chair to sit at. Thank them for coming. Take attendance (using attendance chart supplied).

Say to students:

Today we are going to continue to study the book of Judges.

What did we study last week? Let students raise their hands and answer. Answers might include: Gideon the 5th Judge – He fought the Midianites with only 300 men and no weapons thanks to God. Afterward the people of his area wanted to make him king but he refused and said only God is king!

Does anyone have any questions from last week? Answer if you are able, if not tell the students you will get an answer and let them know next week and then make sure you do 😊

2) Optional Introduction Activity for Abimelech

5 minutes

*Gather supplies listed above in optional section. Have them ready for when students arrive.

Students will see that, just like Abimelech, there are people with hard hearts. But hopefully just like everyone in class today – we can all have soft hearts and soak up the Word of God and His commands.

Say: **Do you see this hard rock?** (Show rock) **This rock represents the heart of someone with a hard heart – someone like the person we are going to study today – Abimelech the 6th Judge. The water in this squirt gun represents the Word of God.** (Squirt the rock with the squirt gun or pour some water onto the rock from the cup several times.) **The Word of God to someone with a hard heart, will not soak in. It just rolls off – like this rock.**

Do you see this sponge? This sponge represents someone with a soft and open heart. (Show sponge - Squirt the sponge with the squirt gun or pour water on it several times.) **When we explain the Word of God to a person with a soft and open heart, he or she will soak the information in. We need to be a sponge and soak in the Word of God to know His commands and obey them. Just like a sponge is thirsty for water – we should be thirsty for the wisdom of God through His Bible. When we read the story of Abimelech and see what a hard-hearted “stone” he was, let’s remember that soft is better!**

Now, if you have your Bibles let’s find Judges and turn there now. (For students that don’t have Bibles provide one or have them share with the person sitting next to them.)

3) Abimelech the 6th Judge – with Judges Map and Chart

20-25 minutes

Optional: Storybook or visuals of this story to show kids (if available)

*Have map of Judges ready to show class as you read.

Let’s all turn to Judges Chapter 8 and can I get a volunteer to read 8:28-9:4?

Thank the volunteer for reading and then show them the map of Judges – point to Gideon’s area and show what area he judged from, then show Abimelech and the area he ruled from.

Discussion Questions:

How many sons did Gideon have? 70 + Abimelech

Where did Gideon live? Ophrah

Where did Abimelech live and grow up? Shechem with his mom.

What problems do you see with this situation? Gideon had many wives and many children and even had another relationship with a woman in another town by which he had yet another son. Gideon could not have possibly spent quality time with each son and family he had, so in turn, the young men and women he had as children would not have a good relationship with him or their siblings – they didn’t even live in the same towns for some of them!

Say, **“So even though Gideon did well and served Israel he had some faults – one of them we see now was having so many wives, concubines (similar to a wife) and children that they didn’t even all live in the same town or spend time together.**

What did Abimelech ask of his mother's relatives who lived in Shechem? Let Abimelech be leader instead of all of Gideon's 70 other sons.

What did they decide and where did they get the money to pay him? They agreed and gave him money from a false god temple.

Where they following God if they had another temple to a false god? No.

Let's read Judges 9:5-21 – can I get some volunteers to read 4 verses each? Show visuals as you read of the 4 different plants Jotham talks about.

Discussion Questions:

After Abimelech killed his 69 half-brothers, what did the men of Shechem do in verse 6? Made him king.

What had Gideon said to the people of Israel when they offered to make him king in Judges 8:22-23? He said the Lord only is king and shall rule over the people.

So who made Abimelech king – God or the men of Shechem? The men

Who has chosen all the judges previous to this? God

What does Jotham say to Abimelech after he escapes? He curses him and the men of Shechem saying if they chose in truth and sincerity fine, but if not they all deserve punishment for not only allowing Abimelech to be leader but rewarding him with the title of king after he had just killed 69 innocent men.

What plants does Jotham mention? Olive and fig trees, vine and thorn bush.

***If you are doing snacks** – you may want to give them their snack now to help them remember the 4 plants – Olive and Figs for the trees and grapes for the vine and nothing for the thorn bush.

Jotham starts off with the biggest tree and works his way down in size and stature to the thorn bush. Who was the thorn bush supposed to be? Abimelech.

What is Jotham saying about the men of Shechem and how they chose Abimelech? He is saying two things 1) Men should not choose leaders – they should pray to God and allow Him to choose who should lead. 2) Godly men will not be interested in being king when asked by men because they are too busy doing good deeds. But if God asks them to serve – they are willing too. That means that when men search for a king – the only ones that are interested are those who do not fear or know God and want the glory for themselves. Which means they will be like a thorn bush – their power will be like thorns that hurt everyone around them because they are not serving God.

4) Jotham Escapes Activity Sheet

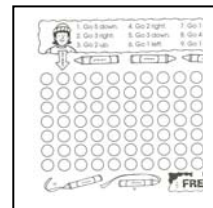
15-20 minutes

Say, "Today we learned that Abimelech was evil and killed his brothers before being made king by the people of Shechem in Israel. All died except Jotham, the youngest. He escaped and from the mountain told Abimelech a fable about four plants. I am going to read the directions on the sheet I am going to hand out to you now.

Hand out sheet with pencil crayons and read instructions. Ask an older student to help a younger student follow the directions if needed; read each step for them as they come to it.

When done, ask each student to draw the four different plants that Jotham talked about during his fable. And ask them what tree/plant they think they are. ***You can show the visuals provided so they see what each tree looks like.

Ask students if they have any questions before moving on. Answer the ones you can and tell them you will find out any question you cannot answer right now and get back to them next time.



5) Finish the story of Abimelech

10-15 minutes

Have the Judges Charts from last class ready for students to fill in and then ask students to get their Bibles and turn to **Judges 9:22-57**

Have volunteers read 4 verses each from the Scripture while you show the remaining pictures of the events of Abimelech.

Say: **Abimelech is usually counted as the sixth judge, but his poor character and bad deeds did not make him worthy of the title. The Bible does not state that he “judged” Israel but reigned....**

Discussion Questions:

How long did Abimelech reign before trouble happened between him and the men of Shechem –

See verse 22? 3 years

What happened to Abimelech? He fought against his own people and after the people had escaped into a tower that Abimelech tried to burn down – a woman dropped a millstone (which is a large stone used to grind the grain) and killed him.

Who repaid the men of Shechem and Abimelech for their sins? God

Did Jotham repay them back? No

What does that teach us? Leave it to God to repay – we don’t need to get back at people. God will take care of it if it needs to be done.

Turn to **Romans 12:19** and read it aloud.

Romans 12:19

¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord.

So the New Testament states also that we should not take revenge (or get back at someone) for ourselves but leave it to God.

Hand out one **Judges Chart** to each child along with pencils and erasers and pencil crayons for young students. Use the ones that you saved from last week handing out new ones to any student who was not present last time.

Tell the students, **“We just read about the sixth judge – what was his name? Abimelech. If you look on the chart – he is the sixth one to be listed. There is also some other information on the chart we need to fill in each time we study a judge. Fill in his name under the number 6 and then can anyone remember how long Abimelech ruled? 3 years (Judges 9:22)**

So beside the word Length of Rule, what are we going to write there? 3 years.

Let younger students listen but color the picture for Abimelech – tell them it is a tower with a tree to represent Abimelech and his brother Jotham and the men of Shechem.

Older students do the following:

What is a fact we can write about Abimelech? Let students answer. See answer key for ideas.

Under the green heading it says oppressor – that means the group of people that were fighting the Israelites to take over their territory. In Judges 6 – who were the oppressors? Midianites (see verse 1). But after Gideon came to be judge – there was not another oppression before Abimelech came to power so we can leave the oppressor chart blank.

Under years of oppression we will also leave it blank.

Any questions before moving on? Ask students to help clean up before going to the next activity.

6) Optional: Name that Answer Clue Game

10 minutes

Form two teams – make sure younger and older students are placed together so that the younger ones can receive help from the older students.

Tell the teams that you are going to name a topic. You will then ask Team 1 how many clues they think they need to guess the answer. For example say, “**The topic is the book of Judges. How many clues do you need to guess the answer?**” A representative from Team 1 will talk to his or her group and tell you how many clues they need from 1-6. Team 2 then gets a chance to try and answer in fewer clues by making a lower bid. Ask them if they think they can.

Have the teams bid until one of the teams decides it can't go any lower. That teams will get to try and name the answer!

Read aloud the number of clues underneath the answer without saying what the answer is (See list below) that the lowest team bid. If the team can guess the answer, it scores a point. (Have a sheet of paper to write down each team and how many points they collect) If the answer isn't right, the other team has a chance to answer and may ask for one more clue.

In the next round, start the bidding with Team 2. Continue until you've gone through all your answers and topics. The team that scores the highest wins!

Answers:

Gideon

Clues

1. Lived at Ophrah
2. Judge
3. Led an army to victory
4. Fought the Midianites
5. Had 70 sons
6. Used a torch and pottery

Judges

Clues

1. Found in Judges
2. There were 13
3. Some were good, some not
4. One was a woman
5. Most were chosen by God
6. Military leaders

Deborah

Clues

1. Prophesized
2. Judge
3. Sang a song
4. Worked with Barak
5. Helped fight the Canaanites
6. The only woman

Israelites

1. Rebelled against God
2. Worshiped idols
3. Cried out to God
4. Were oppressed
5. Had 12 tribes
6. People of God

Abimelech

1. Was number 6
2. Judge
3. Evil
4. Called a king
5. Fought with Shechem
6. Was killed by a millstone

Ehud

1. Gave 80 years of rest
2. Called by God
3. Fought the Moabites
4. Used a dagger
5. One of the first judges
6. Left-handed

7) Optional – Snack: Olives, Figs and/or Grapes

Hand out snack to each child along with a glass of water or juice. Explain that: **Today we read of Jotham's fable about the trees that wanted a king and how after going through four different trees/plants, they finally crowned the thorn bush who turned out to be Abimelech. Let's think**

of the trees and what tree we should strive to be as we eat our snack. How many of you can name the four types of plants Jotham mentioned from the Bible? Provide a napkin for children to clean their hands.

Discuss any questions while snacking. See if students can remember any of the names of the judges while snacking or see how many books of history they can name. Also, see if they can name the trees that were mentioned and use the fruit you provided as clues.

8) Optional – Songs

5 minutes

Have children sing songs with you. An example:

Judges – *to the tune of the Alphabet song or the ABC....song*

Name the Judges who went to war

Othniel, Ehud and Shamgar

Deborah, Gideon, and Abimelech

Tola, Jair and Jephthah

Ibzan, Elon and Abdon

The last Judge was Samson

9) Close in prayer

*If desired, ask the children if they have any prayer requests and write them down to help you remember. Then ask all children to bow their heads and fold their hands to pray.

Dear God, help us as we study Your perfect Word in the Old Testament to understand it, use it and see the examples of faithful people that followed You. Help us to remember that Your commands are important and need to be followed to live a life that is pleasing to You. Help us all too always love You with our whole heart, mind, strength and soul!

Help us this week as we go from our church family – we pray that you will be with us and our families, help us share the good news of Your love to every one we meet and help us to remember to pray and study the Bible every day.

Thank you for the book of Judges that shows us that we still need to be faithful, even if everyone else around us is not. Help us to see that we should pray for our leaders or else we might end up with a bad one like Abimelech.

Thank you for taking care of us and allowing us to not worry about what people do to us but to know that you will take care of evil people on our behalf.

We pray for those who could not be here today. We pray you will bring them back safely next week.

Thank you God for Your love, thank you for Your Son Jesus, thank you for caring for us and providing such a beautiful world for us to live in, and thank you for giving us Your Word – the Bible so we can know how to live and learn what pleases You. In Jesus precious name, Amen.

Thank you for serving Christ in this way!