

Word notes Sunday 23/11/08 Tony Hodge
Judges 9: Abimelech – Truth & Integrity

Summary

Yet again Israel fall away from their called relationship with the Lord, but this time things go a bit differently to the play of events in the other cases.

Abimelech – Gideon's son by a slave-girl/concubine - returns to his mother's people and convinces them to make him king. They fund a coup in which all but one of Gideon's 70 other sons are killed and Abimelech is crowned.

His half-brother Jotham, the youngest of all Gideon's sons, escapes and calls out from a rocky crag telling a short story – like a fable – in which he describes what their treachery will bring.

Abimelech seeks out all real and perceived enemies, destroying them by fire but is killed by an unknown woman dropping a millstone on his head from atop a tower to which he is laying siege.

The historical account may not be very inspiring but the story Jotham tells highlights a characteristic of God's people that had been lost: Truth and Integrity.

At this week's Plumblin Leaders' Conference Lawrence Singlehurst spoke of two things the church needs to be able to make inroads into today's society: Authenticity and Connectivity. Being Authentic Christians entails knowing The Truth and living up to the call on our lives (Integrity), to be Connected we must be out amongst the people building relationships on personal and collective levels.

Jotham's story enabled him to get his message across in a brief manner (he probably needed to vacate the situation rapidly!) and connect with his audience on a deeper level. Today stories continue to have an impact on all our lives and can communicate at a deep level without being too complicated or technical because they use recognisable themes.

Application - Choose one of the following two exercises:

INTEGRITY – Discuss:

- a. How bringing together truth and integrity in our lives enables us to be 'authentic' in our Christian walk.
- b. How can a lack of authenticity damage the spread of the gospel?
- c. What does it mean in your daily life, what might need to change or in what areas can you grow?
- d. Break down into pairs/threes and pray for each other for the areas where each can grow and be authentic and effective.

STORIES

The Bible uses stories, so can we.

- a. Give each person a copy of the attached page and ask them to fill in the spaces – emphasise this is for their own personal use only. **Give about 10 minutes to this step before going on to the next.**
- b. Now ask them to fold up the paper so it can't be read but to sum up in one word **which they can share** what the last year or two has been like for them.
- c. Break up, into pairs or groups of three, each is to share their word and explain why they chose it in about 1-2 minutes and then they should pray for each other in connection with the things shared.

Witness:

Nov/Dec Task: Be thinking about the Christmas season – probably the best time to mention the 'J' word (Jesus of course!). What will the cell do to open up their celebration of Christ's birth to un-churched people?

The Christmas Celebration meeting is on Sun 21st Dec at 5pm – start thinking of who you can invite, maybe hand out invites at a party or other Christmas related activity the cell holds.

We are sending a Christmas card and CD to the houses on Studlands – and need help delivering them on a Wednesday evening in December. Tell your Cell and ask if they would like to help then please speak to Jan.

My Story

Father God is perfectly interested in you, He has a plan for you in this place and this time. You are making a real-life story with Him, a unique tale that is ultimately about relationship between you and Him.

Be quiet, sit, relax. Write in this box the points that come to mind about your story so far. For example, the good of your life, the bad of your life, relationships that have worked or those that have not.....

Have you discovered God's voice in these situations? What has he said to you? Are there situations where you are still wondering why God ever allowed you to enter them? Write a few thoughts in this box.

Only two people know your full story. Your judgements, your fears, your loves, your joys, what makes you laugh and what makes your heart feel lifted...those people are you and God. It's probably true to say God knows your story even more because we easily forget so much of our past. The back cover of a book gives a summary of the story enclosed in it. What would your summary be on the back of the story of your life so far, write brief notes here focussing on what you've learned about God and what He has shown you.