



The Adventure—Jephthah
Hebrews 11:32-34; Judges 10:6-17; 11:1-40;
Proverbs 28:13; Matthew 5:33-37

October 8, 2023

DAILY DEVOTION

Find a rhythm in God's word this week! Follow this 5 day plan on your own or with your group!

<https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/2956-heroes-faith-video-devotions-your-time-of-grace>

INSPIRATION

"Past is Prologue."

This famous line from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* reflects the tendency of our past actions, experiences, and motivations to influence, and even govern, our future. However, as we see from Shakespeare's plays, including *The Tempest*, our "fate" comes down to our personal decisions.

The relevance of Shakespeare's point is evident in a national news report this week. Two young men were arrested in the act of stealing property of Washington state farmer Sam Krautscheid. Sam was attacked but subdued the men until the sheriff arrived. While Sam advocated for jail time, he directed his victim impact statement to the young men. "God has bigger plans for you than the path you are on now," he wrote in the statement. "I encourage you to take your lives back. Take the time to reflect and get the help you need while in jail. The resources are available, the choice is yours. Distance yourselves from bad friends and family members. Ask God for his mercy on your prior behavior. The devil wants us to be riddled with shame and guilt. The devil wins by telling you that you are only as good as your past and have no hope. God's mercy is undeniable. God will forgive you for your sins and welcome you with open arms if you change your hearts." <https://www.foxnews.com/us/would-be-burglars-armed-billy-club-pick-wrong-farmer-rob-i-will-shoot>

Your past does not have to be your future. God changes things. God can *improve* things.

ICE BREAKER

1. Why do you think this farmer told the young men they are better than their past? What motivated him to act for someone who hurt him?
 2. Have you ever thought you are only as good as your past? Or have you taken your life back by surrendering to God's undeniable mercy?
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DEEP DIVE

Read this out loud

An excerpt from the message this week:



“This is a little concerning. God is not happy. He goes down the list, we have done this before, multiple times. Did I not rescue you and then you turn your back on me? Then you get in trouble, and you cry out and I rescue you because you are mine. And then you go back to worshipping the idols again and again and again and it is the same story with you people. I’m done. Let your gods that you seem to love to much save you.

This is such a horrifying thought, that God would have enough. “You want it, you got it. I cannot protect you from yourself, your way of life. You desire to do life without me. It pains me to say this, but you are on your own.”

Read Judges 10:6-17 and Proverbs 28:13 and then answer the following questions:

3. Explain the circumstances of the Israelites during this time. Why were the lives of the Israelites in such turmoil?
4. As reflected in Judges 10:11-14, when we reject God he will allow us to live as we please. Is that good news or bad news? Explain.
5. What actions did the Israelites take in verses 15-16 to demonstrate their true repentance? Based on this passage and Proverbs 28:13, what are we promised when we repent?

Read this out loud

An excerpt from the message this week:

“Are there things that are holding you back from a life of adventure? Your past is a mess. It might not even be your fault, but you are embarrassed, ashamed, hurt. Don’t let your past stop you from living a life of faith.

One of the things that I love about this story is that when he was asked, he decided to be used by God. He did not make excuses. When you are asked by God, is the first thing you think of an excuse?”

Read Judges 11:1-40 and Matthew 5:33-37 and then answer the following questions:

6. Jephthah was treated poorly by his family and exiled from Israel, based on circumstances beyond his control. In modern language, some may call him a rebel, a gang member or even a war lord (Judges 11:3). Explain how God used this unlikely character to save the nation of Israel.
7. In Judges 11:11, Jephthah “repeated all his words before the Lord.” In other words, he prayed. Compare and contrast Jephthah’s life and accomplishments before committing to God’s will and after committing to God’s will.
8. In Judges 11:29-31, Jephthah made an ill-advised (a/k/a really dumb) vow to God. Many scholars teach that the fate of Jephthah’s daughter was a life of being unmarried and dedicated to God, similar to a nun. This teaching is consistent with Jephthah’s vow that his daughter “will be the Lord’s” (v. 31), the daughter’s mourning of her unmarried status, God’s previous prohibition against human



sacrifices, and other Bible passages in which God always provided a substitute (including through Christ). However, what does this passage teach us about rash (a/k/a really dumb) promises to God? Explain Jesus' teaching on this point in Matthew 5:33-37.

Additional Study

If you have time during your Small Group or you want to study more about the message topic, read and consider the following passages:

- Proverbs 28:13
- 2 Chronicles 7:14
- Genesis 50:20
- Ecclesiastes 5:4-5
- Numbers 30:2
- Psalm 15:1-5

NEXT STEPS

9. Jephthah rose above his past and his hurts, and accepted the call to save the very people who mistreated him. Past was not prologue in Jephthah's life. Write down how Jephthah can be an example to you in terms of:
 - Getting past your past, and whether it defines you
 - God's use of underserving but faithful people
 - God's ability to give you a new future, with adventure
 - The benefits of prayer
 - Shedding burdens by forgiving others
10. Consider Jephthah's commitment to his vow, and Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:33-37 that Christians should keep their promises. Why is keeping promises so important to your example of Christ?

PRAYER

1. Lord, I know you are able to not only heal my hurts, but also use my hurts for good. Please be by my side and help me to do your will.
2. God, I struggle with forgiveness. Help me realize forgiveness is not justifying or excusing my hurt, but a way to shed the burdens and the anger I carry.

SERVE YOUR COMMUNITY

Establish a regular rhythm of serving together! Below are some service opportunities.



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- BENSON – Local Mission Partner is ABIDE. Contact Campus Pastor for more information.
 - MILLARD - Local Mission Partner is Heartland Hope. Contact Campus Pastor for more information.
 - FREMONT - Local Mission Partner is LifeHouse. Contact Campus Pastor for more information.
 - OMAHA - Local Mission Partner is Open Door Mission. Contact Campus Pastor for more information.
 - Or get to know your community! Seek out service opportunities in your area.