

## Jephthah and Ephraim

**12** The Ephraimite forces were called out, and they crossed over to Zaphon. They said to Jephthah, “Why did you go to fight the Ammonites without calling us to go with you? We’re going to burn down your house over your head.” Jephthah answered, “I and my people were engaged in a great struggle with the Ammonites, and although I called, you didn’t save me out of their hands.

<sup>3</sup> When I saw that you wouldn’t help, I took my life in my hands and crossed over to fight the Ammonites, and the Lord gave me the victory over them. Now why have you come up today to fight me?” <sup>4</sup> Jephthah then called together the men of Gilead and fought against Ephraim. The Gileadites struck them down because the Ephraimites had said, “You Gileadites are renegades from Ephraim and Manasseh.”

<sup>5</sup> The Gileadites captured the fords of the Jordan leading to Ephraim, and whenever a survivor of Ephraim said, “Let me cross over,” the men of Gilead asked him, “Are you an Ephraimite?” If he replied, “No,” <sup>6</sup> they said, “All right, say ‘Shibboleth.’” If he said, “Sibboleth,” because he could not pronounce the word correctly, they seized him and killed him at the fords of the Jordan. Forty-two thousand Ephraimites were killed at that time.

<sup>7</sup> Jephthah led Israel six years. Then Jephthah the Gileadite died and was buried in a town in Gilead. <sup>8</sup> After him, Ibzan of Bethlehem led Israel. <sup>9</sup> He had thirty sons and thirty daughters. He gave his daughters away in marriage to those outside his clan, and for his sons he brought in thirty young women as wives from outside his clan. Ibzan led Israel seven years.

<sup>10</sup> Then Ibzan died and was buried in Bethlehem. <sup>11</sup> After him, Elon the Zebulunite led Israel ten years. <sup>12</sup> Then Elon died and was buried in Aijalon in the land of Zebulun. <sup>13</sup> After him, Abdon son of Hillel, from Pirathon, led Israel.

<sup>14</sup> He had forty sons and thirty grandsons, who rode on seventy donkeys. He led Israel eight years. <sup>15</sup> Then Abdon son of Hillel died and was buried at Pirathon in Ephraim, in the hill country of the Amalekites.

We will use five tools on our expedition that are built around five questions

What questions were provoked within you?

Did anything confuse you?

Did anything move you emotionally?

Did God instruct you to do something?

Did you gain any insight into God’s character?

**1.** How does the disagreement between Jephthah and the Ephraimites apply to the misunderstandings we see in our own communities today?

- 2.** How might the conflict between the Ephraimites and the Gileadites have been avoided with better communication?
- 3.** What does the Shibboleth incident tell you about the consequences of division and war?
- 4.** Compare the leadership styles of Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon. What strengths and weaknesses do you see?
- 5.** How does the Shibboleth incident relate to our modern-day identity and discrimination issues?
- 6.** How can we apply the lessons from Judges 12 to promote unity within our community?
- 7.** What does the response of Jephthah to the Ephraimites' accusation teach us about reacting to criticism or accusations?
- 8.** What can the leaders' different durations of rule teach us about the impermanence of human leadership?
- 9.** How would you have mediated the conflict between the Ephraimites and Jephthah to prevent war?
- 10.** In what ways do you see the themes of misunderstanding, conflict, and judgment playing out in today's society?
- 11.** How does God's silence throughout this chapter affect your interpretation of the events?
- 12.** Considering the Shibboleth incident, how can language serve as both a unifier and a divider in society?
- 13.** How do the transitions of leadership in Judges 12 reflect on the nature of leadership today?
- 14.** How does this chapter inform your understanding of God's view on internal conflict among His people?
- 15.** What are some practical ways to avoid misunderstanding and promote peace in your relationships based on the lessons from this chapter?
- 16.** How does the lack of divine intervention in this chapter inform our understanding of free will?
- 17.** Given the same circumstances as the Gileadites, would you have handled the situation with the Ephraimites differently?
- 18.** How does Judges 12 serve as a warning or reminder for our own societies and nations?
- 19.** As a believer, how can you actively work towards preventing divisions like those seen between the Ephraimites and Gileadites?