

Series: Wax Museum Saviors

Scripture and Background Information for May 22-28.

To prepare for your group discussion each week, group members should use the **Community Group Discussion Guide** to complete the **GOD'S WORDS** and **MY WORDS** columns using the scripture below.

This week we continue our series *Wax Museum Saviors*. With the help of the book of Judges, we want to look at what type of leaders we choose and follow; or the type of leaders we tend to be. The book presents a mirror in front of us, showing us where Israel's aspiration led and where ours does too. The book of Judges invites us to look at our hearts to question whom we want to trust to lead our life. Today, we talk about "**Abimelek**."

Background for Judges 9:7-18:

The book of Judges comes right after the events of the book of Joshua. We see God's faithfulness in the midst of Israel's disobedience and God's power to deliver them through His strength not their own. Gideon's story is a reminder of that truth. After Gideon's time as judge, he had seventy sons. One of the sons, Abimelek, orchestrated a plot to have all of his other brothers murdered so that he alone could rule. It was a brutal plan that reflected the common phrase from the book, "everyone did what was right in their own eyes."

One of Abimelek's brothers manages to escape from the plot and in v.7 he calls down to both Abimelek and those who helped implement his plan with a parable. The parable is the first one in the Bible and illustrates how poorly we are at picking those to lead us. We often tie our hopes and dreams to the wrong individuals and things. It was an indictment for that generation and a warning to our own.

Insights and questions to engage with the text:

1. Jotham's parable highlights how poorly we can be to pick others to follow or things to look to for our hope or purpose. What might be some reasons we struggle so much to do so?
2. When you think of the different trees, what might each of them symbolize? What are ways you have looked to find those things in places or people other than the Lord?
3. The text doesn't necessarily tell us how to avoid making the same mistakes that the people of this generation made when they chose Abimelek to be their ruler. For us, what are ways to avoid those mistakes? Can you think of examples either in Scripture or your experience?

Note: Gideon's seventy sons came from a plurality of marriages. Polygamy is something that falls short of God's design and plan for marriage (Genesis 2) and is often described in Scripture but never prescribed. Almost every time we see it the authors are quick to point out the consequences of such actions.

Remember the two books that will help you wrestle with difficult portions of the book: Paul Copan's "Is God a Moral Monster?: Making Sense of the Old Testament God" and the appendix of Timothy Keller's "Judges For You: For Reading, For Feeding, For Leading."