

## “Bad Judge: Abimelech”

Series: *.beyond*

(Part 3 of 5)

**Discussion Starter:** If you were standing in front of a judge in a court of law, what character traits would you expect the judge to exhibit?

**Explore:** Read James 3:13-18.

The book of James is one of the most practical books of the New Testament. In Chapter Two, the half-brother of Jesus encourages us to be wise in our actions.

1. According to James what are some earmarks of a person who is full of wisdom and understanding (vs. 13)?
2. What two behaviors indicate a lack of wisdom in a person’s life (vs. 14-16)? What is the end result of letting those two behaviors rule behavior patterns?
3. In what specific ways will the “wisdom that comes from heaven” be seen in a person’s life (vs. 17-18)?
4. When applied, what will heavenly wisdom produce in a person’s life (vs. 18)?

**Reflect:** Review the LG and discuss the questions below.

1. Being a parent, group facilitator, team captain, or project manager is both rewarding and challenging. List the benefits, as well as, responsibilities which accompany leadership positions.
2. Gideon was one of the greatest judges to rule Israel, yet his son Abimelech chose a different path. Review the lesson and discuss how each point contributed to his downfall.
3. What is the difference between ambition and selfish ambition? When are you most likely to put selfishness aside in order to consider the interests of others? When are you most likely to be selfish and ignore others?
4. One lesson we can grab from the story of Abimelech is that God is in control. Is there something going on in your life today that has you worried or concerned? How can we pray for you?
5. Jesus set the example for us when it comes to relating to people. Thinking about your relationships, who do you need to show humility to this week?

**Live:**

As a group: Sub-group into smaller groups (guys and gals). Ego can get in the way of others seeing Christ in us. What is one area your ego needs to come down a notch or two? How can we help one another keep our egos in-check?

On your own: Read through the story of Abimelech this week (Judges 9). What lesson(s) do you need to apply to your own life? What areas may be keeping you from God’s best? How will you be mindful of others this week?

## Listening Guide Notes

### Bad Judge Abimelech...

1. He led others astray.

<sup>[1]</sup> “Abimelech son of Jerub-Baal went to his mother’s brothers in Shechem and said to them and to all his mother’s clan, <sup>[2]</sup> ‘Ask all the citizens of Shechem, ‘Which is better for you: to have all seventy of Jerub-Baal’s sons rule over you, or just one man?’ Remember, I am your flesh and blood.’”

–Judges 9:1-2 (NIV)

2. He surrounded himself with bad friends.

<sup>[3]</sup> “When the brothers repeated all this to the citizens of Shechem, they were inclined to follow Abimelech, for they said, ‘Well, after all, he is our brother.’”

<sup>[4]</sup> They gave him seventy shekels of silver from the temple of Baal-Berith, and Abimelech used it to hire reckless adventurers, who became his followers.”

–Judges 9:3-4 (NIV)

3. He had a big ego.

<sup>[50]</sup> “Next Abimelech went to Thebez and besieged it and captured it. <sup>[51]</sup> Inside the city, however, was a strong tower, to which all the men and women—all the people of the city—fled. They locked themselves in and climbed up on the tower roof. <sup>[52]</sup> Abimelech went to the tower and stormed it. But as he approached the entrance to the tower to set it on fire, <sup>[53]</sup> a woman dropped an upper millstone on his head and cracked his skull. <sup>[54]</sup> Hurriedly he called to his armor-bearer, ‘Draw your sword and kill me, so that they can’t say, ‘A woman killed him.’” So his servant ran him through, and he died <sup>[55]</sup> When the Israelites saw that Abimelech was dead, they went home.” –Judges 9:50-55 (NIV)

### Lessons from the bad example of Abimelech...

1. If it’s about ego it won’t end well.

<sup>[3]</sup> “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. <sup>[4]</sup> Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.” –Philippians 2:3-4 (NIV)

## 2. God will fulfill his purposes.

<sup>[15]</sup> “It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. <sup>[16]</sup> The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. <sup>[17]</sup> The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. <sup>[18]</sup> But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice.”

–**Philippians 1:15-18 (NIV)**

## 3. We already have a King.

<sup>[5]</sup> “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: <sup>[6]</sup> Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, <sup>[7]</sup> but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. <sup>[8]</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! <sup>[9]</sup> Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, <sup>[10]</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>[11]</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” –**Philippians 2:5-11 (NIV)**