

Judges 9-10

Discussion Guide: Judges 9–10

Theme: *The Danger of Self-Made Leadership — When God's People Get the Leaders They Want*

Big Idea

When God's people reject His rule, they often end up with leaders who reflect their own broken desires—leading to destruction. Yet even then, God remains just and merciful.

Opening Icebreaker

- Why do you think people are often drawn to strong, confident leaders—even when their character is questionable?

Discussion Questions + Leader Notes

1. Who is Abimelech, and how does he rise to power in Judges 9:1–6? What stands out?

Leader Notes:

- Son of Gideon (but not a judge raised by God)
- Manipulates relationships, appeals to self-interest
- Murders his brothers (70 sons of Gideon)
- This is leadership built on ambition and violence—not calling

2. What does Abimelech's rise reveal about the people of Shechem?

Leader Notes:

- They fund and support him
- They prefer shared identity over righteousness ("he is our brother")
- People often get the leaders they are willing to tolerate

3. What is the point of Jotham's parable in 9:7–15?

Leader Notes:

- Trees refuse to rule → only the worthless bramble accepts
- Warning: destructive leadership often comes from those eager for power

- Foreshadowing Abimelech's rule

4. What warning does Jotham give in 9:19–20?

Leader Notes:

- If this was done in good faith → rejoice
- If not → destruction will follow
- This is prophetic—it sets up what happens next

5. In 9:22–25, what does it mean that “God sent an evil spirit” between Abimelech and Shechem?

Leader Notes:

- God is sovereign over the breakdown
- He brings justice through division
- This is judgment unfolding, not random chaos

6. How do we see the consequences of Abimelech's leadership play out (9:26–57)?

Leader Notes:

- Betrayal, violence, destruction
- Shechem is destroyed
- Abimelech dies in humiliation (a woman drops a millstone)
- Full-circle justice—his violence returns on him

7. What does Judges 9:56–57 make clear about everything that happened?

Leader Notes:

- God repaid the evil
- This was divine justice
- Nothing was overlooked or forgotten

8. Judges 10:1–5 briefly mentions Tola and Jair. Why do you think this is included?

Leader Notes:

- A contrast: quieter, stabilizing leadership
- Not all leadership is chaotic—but it's short-lived
- Transitional moment

9. In 10:6–9, how is Israel’s sin described? What feels different here?

Leader Notes:

- They serve *many* gods (not just one)
- Full spiritual fragmentation
- The drift is accelerating

10. What is different about God’s response in 10:10–14 compared to earlier cycles?

Leader Notes:

- God initially refuses to deliver
- “Go cry out to the gods you have chosen”
- This is meant to expose the emptiness of idolatry

11. How do the people respond in 10:15–16? What seems more genuine this time?

Leader Notes:

- They confess clearly
- They remove foreign gods
- There is actual repentance, not just desperation

12. What does 10:16 reveal about God’s heart—even after repeated rebellion?

Leader Notes:

- “He became impatient over the misery of Israel”
- God is moved with compassion
- Justice and mercy meet again

Closing Application

- Where are you tempted to follow strength, charisma, or personality over character and godliness?
- Are there areas where you’ve been tolerating compromise—and now seeing the consequences?
- What does real repentance look like in your life right now?

Gospel Connection (Leader Emphasis)

- Abimelech is a picture of broken, self-made leadership

- Israel keeps choosing poorly—and suffering for it

Point to Jesus:

- Jesus is the true King who does not take power—He lays His life down
- He leads not through manipulation or violence, but through sacrifice

A strong line:

“Where Abimelech takes life to gain power, Jesus gives His life to save His people.”

Leader Tip

Don't let this become:

- “Be better leaders”

Instead:

- Expose the heart that wants control, power, and comfort
- Point to the kind of King we actually need