

# The Hand That Shakes a Community

Overcoming Pride and Division through Humility

English-Speaking Small Group • Judges 12:1–6

## Bible Passage

Judges 12:1–6

## Sermon Summary

After Jephthah defeated the Ammonites, the Ephraimites confronted him for not calling them to join the battle. The dispute escalated into a civil war that claimed 42,000 lives. As the tribe that had received the firstborn blessing from Jacob, Ephraim had developed a sense of spiritual entitlement. In their pride, they refused to recognise the authority God had given Jephthah. That pride surfaced in a threat—"We will burn your house down over you"—and in the baseless insult that the people of Gilead were fugitives. Their words struck at Jephthah's deepest wound: he had once been driven out by his own family. They became the spark that plunged the whole community into war. This story shows how pride can keep us from accepting those whom God raises up, and how words that cross the line can reopen deep wounds and drive relationships and communities into divisions that are difficult to heal.

## Discussion

### 1. Icebreakers

1. Briefly share a time when you felt left out after discovering that a gathering or decision had gone ahead without you.
2. The Ephraimites did not help Jephthah during the battle, yet after his victory they demanded to know why he had not called them. What stands out to you about their response?

### 2. Exploring the Passage

1. Read Judges 12:1 and 12:4. What exactly did the Ephraimites say to Jephthah and to the people of Gilead?
2. The sermon described Ephraim's complaint not simply as a clash of personalities, but as spiritual pride that "challenged God's decision". Why is this episode more than a personal disagreement?
3. In Gideon's time, one humble response—"Aren't the gleanings of Ephraim's grapes better than the full grape harvest of Abiezer?"—settled a similar complaint without bloodshed. In Jephthah's time, the conflict led to war. As you consider how a few

words can shape a community's future, what situation from your own relationships comes to mind?

4. The Ephraimites threatened to burn down Jephthah's house and called the people of Gilead "fugitives", touching the deepest wound of a man who had once been driven away by his family. If someone brought up the most painful part of your past without checking the facts, would you be more likely to keep it to yourself or confront them? Share honestly.

### 3. Going Deeper

1. The preacher confessed, "I thought I was Jephthah, the one who had been wronged, but looking back, I was more like Ephraim." Have there been times when you felt unsettled by seeing someone else raised up, or judged someone before checking the facts?

### 4. Life Application

1. This week, if you hear an unconfirmed story about someone or feel tempted to pass it on, pause before speaking and ask yourself, "Do I know this is true?"
2. If you feel uneasy when someone else steps into a role or place you once held, do not simply bury the feeling. Try saying aloud, "God is at work in raising this person up too."

### Related Bible Passages

1. Judges 8:2–3 — When faced with a similar complaint, Gideon humbled himself and honoured Ephraim, defusing the conflict without bloodshed.
2. Genesis 48:13–14 — Jacob placed his right hand on Ephraim, the younger son, and gave him the firstborn blessing. This moment helped shape Ephraim's sense of status.
3. James 3:5–6 — These verses show how a small tongue can set an entire community ablaze.
4. James 4:6 — The warning that God opposes the proud speaks directly to the danger of spiritual pride.

### Helpful Background

Ephraim was Joseph's second son, but when Jacob blessed the boys, he crossed his hands and gave Ephraim the blessing of the firstborn. Joshua, who led Israel during the conquest of Canaan, also came from the tribe of Ephraim. Over time, these experiences reinforced the tribe's belief that it should hold a central place among the twelve tribes of Israel.

### This Week's Practice

1. At a family meal this week, if someone begins talking about another person, gently ask whether the story has been confirmed.

2. At work or church this week, if someone is recognised or given an opportunity ahead of you, make a point of saying, "Well done" or "Thank you for what you've done", even if your feelings have not caught up yet.

Choose one of these actions to put into practice, then share what happened at your next gathering.

### Prayer Points

- Pray that we will honestly bring before the Lord the sense of spiritual entitlement and unease hidden within us.
- Pray that God will help us pause before passing on unconfirmed stories and set a guard over our lips.
- Pray that we will humbly recognise and take part in God's work of raising others up.

### Closing Prayer

Lord, have mercy on us, for our words can either build a community up or tear it apart. When You raise someone else up and I feel uneasy, help me not to hide my spiritual pride, but to bring it honestly before You. You have shown us how easily careless words can touch another person's deepest wound and shake an entire community. Please set a guard over my lips this week. Stop me whenever I am tempted to pass on something that has not been confirmed, and help me respond with humility when You raise someone else up. Fill our mouths with Your Word, so that our communities may flourish and we may walk in the way that leads to life. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.