



Discover in Jephthah a man for whom God wiped away the past and gave a vision for the future.

A. The Past

The story of Jephthah has a lot to say to our society today; it says a lot of things about the nature of who we are and what we can become. We have heard a lot in the last few years of how our past can effect us. That can be bad news for a lot of people.

**Q. What is the greatest influence in our lives?
the past? Family? what?**

Marxism said it was our environment; therefore change that and you get good people.

What effect can a troubled past/childhood have on us today ? It influences us certainly; but do we have any say ?

B.F.Skinner, a psychologist, in “Beyond Dignity & Freedom”, quotes Aristotle who observed that a rock falls because it gets a lot of pleasure from the experience ! Skinner said “Rubbish; forces outside the rock caused the fall.” He concluded that humans also are determined by external forces.

A non-Christian Counsellor will sometimes try to find what a person is by looking into the past. This is where

we are different as Christians; we see things with a future perspective.



B. The Future

Heb.12:2 ..who for the joy set before him endured..

Isa.40:31..those who hope in the Lord shall renew their strength.

Heb.11:1..Faith is being sure of what we hope for...

Rom.4:18..against all hope Abraham believed...

2 Cor.5:6-10..we live by faith not by sight.

Phil.3:12-14..Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead.

Heb.11...great cloud of Witnesses chapter...**vs.8-10** Abraham; **vs.13** All these; **vs.24-26** Moses: **vs.32-34** Jephthah.

JEPHTAH is a classic example of how, for the man/woman of God, our future goal/vision is so much more important than our past !

Look at his background Judges 11:1&2

His response is to run away vs.3

He is given a vision from vs.4

(without a vision, people perish, Pr.29:18)

He responds with a “YES” vs.11

He won a tremendous victory vs.33

Jephthah was a man who made a choice to allow future vision rather than past problems/failures dictate the direction of his life. May God help us today to do likewise !

C. Our Vision

What is your dream ?

If you cannot see anything, you cannot have anything. Many people drift through life and with each passing year, they feel that nothing ever changes. How did they get to where they are now? Well...it just happened. Have they ever considered doing anything different? Well.. No, not really. Life just drifts from one moment to the next taking in a few crises along the way. The Scripture says that without a vision, people perish. (*‘para’* = to loosen.. avoid, go back, make naked, set at naught, perish, refuse, NIV says Casts off restraint.)

Therefore 2 things can happen where there is no vision.

- ❖ people get numbed to everything around them and drift through life

- ❖ people have no sense of God's chains on their life so they become like drifting ships, usually with an over-active fog horn causing endless damage to everything around them.

Acts 2 says...In the last days, I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh.....your young men will see visions and your old men will dream dreams.... WHY ?

So that ...everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved!

Visions, dreams, prophecies are God's way of revealing his plans and purposes to his people. They do away with the need to fly all over the place to see how others are doing it. They do away with the need of hours & hours of counselling to tell us what God wants us to do.

⇒ **Helen Adams Keller**, born in Alabama[1880-1968], US author and campaigner for the blind. She became blind and deaf after an illness when she was only 19 months old, but the teaching of Anne Sullivan, her lifelong companion, enabled her to learn the names of objects and eventually to speak. Keller graduated with honours from Radcliffe College 1904; published several books, including *The Story of My Life* 1902; and toured the world, lecturing to raise money for the blind. She was asked one day what could be worse than being blind, She replied, "**...to have sight but no vision !**"

Acts 26:17-20 **Paul** had a dream - to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles. And he said before the mighty King Agrippa, "I was not disobedient to the Heavenly Vision!" **Joseph** had a dream, and it took a long time to work it all out. It caused his brothers to despise him, so a dream will not necessarily make you a popular person. He ended up sold as a slave, in prison because of his dream. But God worked it all out.

Gideon was given his instructions from an angel of the Lord. But in 7:13, a dream from one of the enemy was an encouragement to him. 7:15 When Gideon heard the dream and its interpretation, he worshipped God.

Samson's mum had a visit from the angel of the Lord as well. His instructions for life came via his parents. He lost his vision literally when the Philistines eventually gouged out his eyes. His task was to (13:5) begin the deliverance of the Israelites from the Philistines.

Jepthah had a vision set before him by his brothers in a time of need.

⇒ We must have vision, something that we believe God wants us to do. Otherwise we'll become the kickarounds of other people.

⇒ Visions will cost us everything. Visions cannot be bought on the Market Stall or in Bargain Basements or in Jumble Sales. There are no short cuts to the call of God - It's simply You & him. Visions and dreams can come in an instant but are never fulfilled in an instant. They can come suddenly and take the rest of your lifetime to work it out.

⇒ A person with no vision, when faced with a Goliath sized problem will say, “He’s so big, I couldn’t possibly hit him!” - A person with vision, when faced with a Goliath sized problem will say, “He’s so big, I couldn’t possibly miss !”

You can help God along with your dreams. I read of a



lady who wrote.....

“I wanted to get married and left it in God’s hands but I must tell you that every night I hung a pair of men’s trousers on my bed and knelt down to pray this prayer:”

“Father in Heaven, hear my prayer, and grant it if you can; I’ve hung a pair of trousers here, Please fill them with a man”.

Maybe God spoke to some of you in the past, but the dream today lies on the shelf. God hasn’t changed, His call hasn’t changed. Maybe you traded it off somewhere when discouragement set in and the going got tough.

To conclude this session, just a couple of anecdotes to encourage you!

In the Swiss Alps, there are places where the one day climbers can go and try the art of mountaineering. On one such mountain, there is a half way house which the climbers reach around lunch time. But the smells of the log fire and the food lure them into enjoying where they are so much that they sell out their dream and tell their friends to go on. They party on until about 4pm when the rest of the party reach the summit. The atmosphere inside the halfway house changes to one of a party to that of a funeral. They sit quietly, waiting for their friends to return having settled for a lesser dream.

Nearly 50 years ago, outside Nashville, Tennessee, a girl was born crippled. A Christian Family. Her parents took her to therapy, but little hope. She asked her parents if she would ever run and play like other children. Her parents said to her, “Honey, You only have to believe, if you believe, God will make it happen.” She took it to heart and she believed that God could make her walk without braces and she practised walking round without braces with her brothers and sisters when her parents weren’t looking. And on her 12th birthday, she surprised her parents when she walked around the Doctor’s surgery without any assistance. The Doctor couldn’t believe it but she never wore the braces again. She wanted to play basketball and she exercised her underdeveloped legs. She went to the coach of the school basketball team. Her sister had already been selected for the team and she also wanted to play. The coach told her that she wasn’t good enough. Her father went to the coach and said, “My daughters come in pairs; if you want the good one, this one comes as well!” So they found her some outdated kit and she was added very reluctantly to the group to train with the others. One day she went to the coach and said to him, “Sir, if you will give me an extra 10 minutes every day, I will give you a world class athlete.” He laughed but realised that she was serious and he half-heartedly agreed to give her some extra time. So she played and showed tremendous athletic skill and courage and soon she was one of the team’s best players. The team went on to the State Basketball Championships and one of the referees at the tournament noticed that she had exceptional ability and speed and asked her if she had ever run track events and she hadn’t. The referee was also the coach of the internationally famous ‘Tiger Belles’ track club. She trained and started winning races and at the age of 16, she was one of the top runners in the USA. She qualified for the Olympics in Australia and she won a bronze medal as anchor leg for the 400m relay. She wasn’t happy with that and she worked hard for the next 4 years and in 1960, at the Olympics in Rome, Wilma Rudolf won the 100m, the 200m and the 400m Relay and every event was won in world record time.

So....dream on!!

