

# Desire | Priestly Purity

*Judges 11:1-10, 29-35*

Ps Johanan Justin

Even with all our knowledge and theology about work, we still struggle to be a priest at work. This is because many times, Jesus is not quite our love at our workplace. Underlying our struggles and difficulties at work is a question of desire.

## Jephthah: A Life Defined by Desire

### **1. The Broken Backstory**

Jephthah was a judge that God raised up to deliver His people. Being a son of a prostitute, he was despised by his family. Despite becoming a mighty warrior, Jephthah was driven out by his brothers (vv. 1-3). It was Jephthah's longing and desire for acceptance that saw him flee instead of fight. Jephthah's backstory tells how his desire was nurtured and would grow to control every decision he would make in the future.

### **2. The Unexpected Opportunity**

War had broken out against the Ammonites and the leaders of Gilead were afraid; they called upon Jephthah to help fight for them and lead in battle (vv. 5b-6). While Jephthah was capable of executing revenge, he responded instead with vulnerability (v7). The elders leveraged Jephthah's desire to their advantage by offering Jephthah the position of tribe-head. Jephthah's response revealed he was a man of faith, and that he was being driven by his desire for acceptance (v9). Jephthah seized the opportunity to fulfill his desire.

### **3. The God-given Victory**

Right before Jephthah went into battle, he made a vow to offer a human sacrifice

to the Lord in order to be granted victory in battle (vv.30-31). This vow was unnecessary as the Spirit of the Lord was already upon him for victory. Jephthah's unnecessary vow is a reflection of his desire and how badly he wanted to win the war, return home, be accepted, and finally belong. His desire is so strong that he is willing to offer a human life for it. Jephthah is given a great victory over the Ammonites (v33).

### **4. The Tragic Aftermath**

The first person that greeted Jephthah when he came home was his only daughter. Jephthah responded in grief and blame towards his daughter (v35b). Jephthah was blind to his own fault for the reckless and unnecessary vow because his daughter had gotten in the way of his desire. Instead of finding a way around, Jephthah was convinced that he needed to sacrifice his daughter. The reason for his stubbornness was his fear that if he did not keep his end of the vow, God wouldn't as well (Jephthah's desire for acceptance). At the same time, Jephthah did not want to look like an incompetent and indecisive leader. He craved the approval of the Gileadeans so much, he would rather let his daughter burn (v39b). Desire had controlled and compelled Jephthah's decisions and responses. Desires are powerful. They can either drive our lives, or derail it.

## 3 Applications Towards Priestly Purity

### **#1 Train the theologian in you**

Jephthah's theology was a "rojak" of Bible verses, stories, and cultural superstitions.

If Jephthah's theology was firmly rooted in the Bible, he would have known that child sacrifice is an abomination to the Lord. And that there is a way back from rash oaths (Lev. 5:4-6). Similarly, our responses are a reflection of our theology. Is our theology a "rojak" as well? We are all theologians! So get deep into God's Word!

## **#2 Dissect the Deep Desires of your heart**

We are all driven by desires. It is good to ask what motivates the desires in our heart and recall what sacrifices and price we paid to fulfill them. True wisdom is not just about knowing God, it is knowing how to apply those truths in our lives. We need to recognise the deep dark desires and sinfulness of our hearts and neediness for Christ in our lives.

## **#3 Let the Gospel make you whole**

While none of us would be made whole on this side of heaven, the gospel makes us increasingly whole. The cross turns our focus from ourselves (our performance and emptiness) onto Jesus, the lover of our souls. The gospel redirects our desires to Jesus, the God incarnate that can truly satisfy us. Nothing less than His unconditional love proven on the cross will drive us to fulfill our priestly calling.