

## The Gibeonite Deception

Lesson 06 in the series, "Strong and Courageous"

### I. The Gibeonites chose to deceive the Israelites rather than fight them.

"...when the people of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, they resorted to deception to save themselves. They sent ambassadors to Joshua, loading their donkeys with weathered saddlebags and old, patched wineskins. They put on worn-out, patched sandals and ragged clothes. And the bread they took with them was dry and moldy. When they arrived at the camp of Israel at Gilgal, they told Joshua and the men of Israel, 'We have come from a distant land to ask you to make a peace treaty with us.' The Israelites replied to these Hivites, 'How do we know you don't live nearby? For if you do, we cannot make a treaty with you.'" Joshua 9:3-7 (NLT)

*Note:* God had forbidden treaties with people living in the promised land for the Israelites' own good. "Make no treaties with them or their gods. They must not live in your land, or they will cause you to sin against me. If you serve their gods, you will be caught in the trap of idolatry." Exodus 23:32-33 (NLT)

*Life Application:* Tolerating sin in our lives always leads us away from God.

"Be careful then, dear brothers and sisters. Make sure that your own hearts are not evil and unbelieving, turning you away from the living God. You must warn each other every day, while it is still 'today,' so that none of you will be deceived by sin and hardened against God." Hebrews 3:12-13 (NLT)

"But who are you?" Joshua demanded. "Where do you come from?" They answered, "Your servants have come from a very distant country. We have heard of the might of the LORD your God and of all he did in Egypt. We have also heard what he did to the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan River—King Sihon of Heshbon and King Og of Bashan (who lived in Ashtaroth). So our elders and all our people instructed us, 'Take supplies for a long journey. Go meet with the people of Israel and tell them, "We are your servants; please make a treaty with us."' "This bread was hot from the ovens when we left our homes. But now, as you can see, it is dry and moldy. These wineskins were new when we filled them, but now they are old and split open. And our clothing and sandals are worn out from our very long journey." So the Israelites examined their food, but they did not consult the LORD. Joshua 9:8-14 (NLT)

*Note:* We will all face deceptions from the devil, others, and ourselves.

"But I am not surprised! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no wonder that his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. In the end they will get the punishment their wicked deeds deserve." 2 Corinthians 11:14-15 (NLT)

"If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself... Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life."  
Galatians 6:3, 7-8 (NIV)

*Life Application:* We must seek and trust the Lord's direction more than our own wisdom.

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take. Don't be impressed with your own wisdom. Instead, fear the LORD and turn away from evil." Proverbs 3:5-7 (NLT)

"When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth." John 16:13 (NLT)

### II. The Israelites chose to honor their treaty with the Gibeonites rather than break their vow.

"Then Joshua made a peace treaty with them and guaranteed their safety, and the leaders of the community ratified their agreement with a binding oath. Three days after making the treaty, they learned that these people actually lived nearby! The Israelites set out at once to investigate and reached their towns in three days. The names of these towns were Gibeon, Kephirah, Beeroth, and Kiriath-jearim. But the Israelites did not attack the towns, for the Israelite leaders had made a vow to them in the name of the LORD, the God of Israel. The people of Israel grumbled against their leaders because of the treaty. But the leaders replied, 'Since we have sworn an oath in the presence of the LORD, the God of Israel, we cannot touch them. This is what we must do. We must let them live, for divine anger would come upon us if we broke our oath. Let them live.' So they made them woodcutters and water carriers for the entire community, as the Israelite leaders directed." Joshua 9:15-21 (NLT)

*Note:* The leaders of the Israelites were right to fear breaking their oath. (See 2 Samuel 21:1-2.)

*Life Application:* Two “wrongs” don’t make a “right.”

“See that no one pays back evil for evil, but always try to do good to each other and to all people.”

1 Thessalonians 5:15 (NLT)

“Who may worship in your sanctuary, LORD? Who may enter your presence on your holy hill? ... Those who... keep their promises even when it hurts.” Psalm 15:1, 4 (NLT)

So King Adoni-zedek of Jerusalem sent messengers to several other kings... “Come and help me destroy Gibeon,” he urged them, “for they have made peace with Joshua and the people of Israel.” So these five Amorite kings combined their armies for a united attack. They moved all their troops into place and attacked Gibeon. The men of Gibeon quickly sent messengers to Joshua at his camp in Gilgal. “Don’t abandon your servants now!” they pleaded. “Come at once! Save us! Help us! For all the Amorite kings who live in the hill country have joined forces to attack us.” So Joshua and his entire army, including his best warriors, left Gilgal and set out for Gibeon. “Do not be afraid of them,” the LORD said to Joshua, “for I have given you victory over them. Not a single one of them will be able to stand up to you.” Joshua traveled all night from Gilgal and took the Amorite armies by surprise. The LORD threw them into a panic, and the Israelites slaughtered great numbers of them at Gibeon... As the Amorites retreated down the road from Beth-horon, the LORD destroyed them with a terrible hailstorm from heaven that continued until they reached Azekah. The hail killed more of the enemy than the Israelites killed with the sword. On the day the LORD gave the Israelites victory over the Amorites, Joshua prayed to the LORD in front of all the people of Israel. He said, “Let the sun stand still over Gibeon, and the moon over the valley of Aijalon.” So the sun stood still and the moon stayed in place until the nation of Israel had defeated its enemies... The sun stayed in the middle of the sky, and it did not set as on a normal day. There has never been a day like this one before or since, when the LORD answered such a prayer. Surely the LORD fought for Israel that day!

Joshua 10:3-14 (NLT)

*Life Application:* God can use ALL things for our good.

“And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.” Romans 8:28 (NLT)

### III. The Gibeonites shrewdly took action when they realized that God’s judgment was coming soon!

Joshua called together the Gibeonites and said, “Why did you lie to us? Why did you say that you live in a distant land when you live right here among us? May you be cursed! From now on you will always be servants who cut wood and carry water for the house of my God.” They replied, “We did it because we—your servants—were clearly told that the LORD your God commanded his servant Moses to give you this entire land and to destroy all the people living in it. So we feared greatly for our lives because of you. That is why we have done this.” Joshua 9:22-24 (NLT)

*Life Application:* We need to make decisions today with eternity in mind.

“The rich man had to admire the dishonest rascal for being so shrewd. And it is true that the children of this world are more shrewd in dealing with the world around them than are the children of the light. Here’s the lesson: Use your worldly resources to benefit others and make friends. Then, when your earthly possessions are gone, they will welcome you to an eternal home.” Luke 16:8-9 (NLT)

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#### Connect Group questions:

1. Share a time in your life when you were tricked by someone. What happened? Why did they deceive you? When and how did you find out that you had been tricked?
2. Read Joshua 9:1-21. With whom can you identify most in this story? Why?
3. Why do you think the Israelite leaders failed to seek God’s counsel before making a treaty? Why don’t we pray more about the decisions we make?
4. Read Genesis 3:1-6 and 2 Corinthians 11:14-15. How does the devil deceive us?
5. Read Jeremiah 17:9 and Galatians 6:1-8. How do we deceive ourselves?
6. How do we avoid being deceived? (See Proverbs 3:5-7.)

7. Share a big decision you are facing right now. Spend some time as a group praying for each other asking God to give you wisdom and to guide you into all truth.
8. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:15. Do two “wrongs” make a “right”? Why or why not?
9. Read Luke 16:1-9. Why do you think Jesus told this story to His disciples?