

# LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION

- 1 What makes a decision good or bad? How can looking back on past choices help you make better decisions in the future?
- 2 Can you remember a time when you felt sorry about a choice you made? What did you learn from that?
- 3 Recall a time when God was involved in your decision-making. What difference did it make when you followed God's voice instead of your own?

## WE DO LIFE TOGETHER!



SCAN QR

If you haven't been involved in a LIFE Group yet, send us a message us thru Fb, and we will get you connected to a small group.

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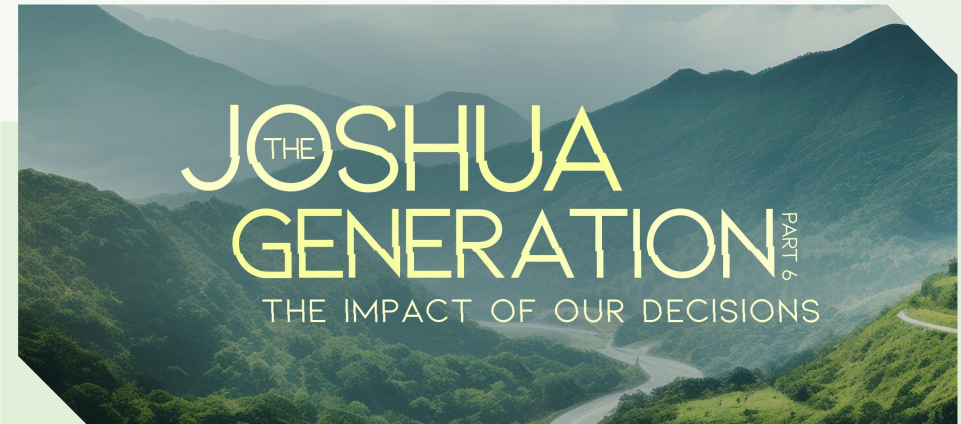
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# SUNDAY WORD

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Have you ever felt like this in your life? Like everything is going against you? Maybe even today, it feels like everywhere you look, there's competition, big challenges, obstacles blocking your path, or people who seem to be against you.

Joshua Chapter 9 tells us how the Israelites finally reached the Promised Land. But when they got there, they faced a major problem: other people were already living there. The Promised Land was actually occupied by groups of people, from the hills to the lowlands. God's command to the Israelites was clear: drive out these inhabitants and claim the land. And this is where it gets complicated. There are so many of them, that they've all joined forces to fight against Joshua and Israel. Let's read Joshua 9:1-2.

Joshua 9:1-2 - "1 As soon as all the kings who were beyond the Jordan in the hill country and in the lowland all along the coast of the Great Sea toward Lebanon, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, heard of this, 2 they gathered together as one to fight against Joshua and Israel." (ESV)

The Israelites knew that God had done many amazing things. He performed miracle after miracle to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and into the Promised Land. He showed His faithfulness by keeping His promises. However, despite this, the Israelites decided to take matters into their own hands. When the Gibeonites deceived them into thinking they were travelers from a distant land to avoid being destroyed, the Israelites believed them without consulting God first.

Joshua 9:3-6 - "3 But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and to Ai, 4 they on their part acted with cunning and went and made ready provisions and took worn-out sacks for their donkeys, and wineskins, worn-out and torn and mended, 5 with worn-out, patched sandals on their feet, and worn-out clothes. And all their provisions were dry and crumbly. 6 And they went to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal and said to him and to the men of Israel, "We have come from a distant country, so now make a covenant with us." (ESV)

Joshua 9:14-15 - "14 So the men took some of their provisions, but did not ask counsel from the Lord. 15 And Joshua made peace with them and made a covenant with them, to let them live, and the leaders of the congregation swore to them." (ESV)

This is a huge mistake. A really big one. Maybe, like them, you've faced an overwhelming battle in front of you, and maybe you, too, have been fooled. In times like these, it's easy to forget the power of God when we face difficult situations. We tend to rely on our own strength and make decisions based on our limited understanding, instead of seeking God's guidance. Even when we've seen God's power proven in the past, we often press forward on our own strength, taking matters into our own hands instead of seeking the Lord. Then, we end up living with the consequences of our decisions.

### THE DECEPTION

The Gibeonites understood they couldn't win. But instead of fighting, they chose to make peace with the Israelites. It's understandable why the Gibeonites did this. They knew they didn't stand a chance. They knew enough to understand that behind Joshua stood the God of the universe. The Gibeonites had a simple plan: to make a deal with the Israelites. So, what did they do? They came up with a clever strategy: disguise and flattery. First, they pretended to be from a distant land, dressing in old clothes and bringing stale bread and cracked wine bottles to create the impression of a long journey. Second, they flattered the Israelites, praising how God helped them escape Egypt and win battles against kings east of the Jordan River. It was a smart move because it was true and made the Israelites feel proud.

2 Corinthians 11:14 says that Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. He comes to us like a friend, but in the end, he turns out to be a serpent. This should make us remember that things are often not what they seem. The devil is deceptive and will use anything to convince God's people to compromise. He sneaks up on believers and tries to lead them away from God. He uses tricky methods to make us forget about God's ways. Christians should remember that the devil won't necessarily make us deny the whole Bible. He's more likely to make us give in to small temptations. He tries to make us keep a part of our lives just for ourselves.

### THE OATH

This time, the Israelites faced a major decision. Although they had suspicions, they lacked concrete evidence. What should they do in that situation? They sampled the provisions the Gibeonites brought with them, which means they checked out the bread and found it old and moldy. They said, "Well, it seems legit. Let's make a deal." So they made a peace treaty with the Gibeonites, thinking all was well. Joshua 9:15 - "And Joshua made peace with them and made a covenant with them, to let them live, and the leaders of the congregation swore to them." (ESV)

To make an oath meant they promised before God not to harm the Gibeonites. You can't make a promise in God's name and then break it. Remember what Psalm 15:4 says in answer to the question, "Who may dwell in your sacred tent?" David said: (He) "...who keeps an oath even when it hurts." God takes our promises seriously, even when we don't.

That's why Ecclesiastes 5:4-5 says: "4 When you make a vow to God, do not delay to fulfill it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow. 5 It is better not to make a vow than to make one and not fulfill it." A deal is a deal. Don't make promises and break them later. Don't swear an oath you don't intend to keep. Don't say, "It doesn't matter," because it does. God expects his people to be truthful.

So, when the Gibeonites made a deal with the Israelites, it was a done deal. The Gibeonites are safe. Joshua and his leaders didn't realize they made one mistake, but it was a big one. The Israelites sampled their provisions but did not ask the Lord.

They ate the food but forgot their God. The same thing happens any time we get too busy to talk to the Lord. We all know how it happens. Life gets busy, you have a full agenda, something comes up, and you have to make a decision right away. Even if you don't mean to leave God out, unless you intentionally include Him, He'll always be left out.

It's easy to leave God out of your life. It's far better to say, "Lord, I don't know what to do in this situation." Better always to be like Jehoshaphat, who when facing an overwhelming enemy cried out to the Lord, "We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you" (2 Chronicles 20:12).

Remember that this happened to Joshua—God's appointed leader. It happened after the miracle at the Jordan, after the conquest of Jericho, after the shameful episode with Achan, and after the defeat of Ai. After all those miracles of deliverance and after Achan's deceit, Joshua still forgot to pray about it. He was a good man who trusted in his gut instincts when he should have asked the Lord for help. Let's be clear about this. We will never get to the place where we don't need the Lord. The moment we think, "I've got this, Lord," we're in big trouble.

### THE RIGHT RESPONSE

So, after the deal, everything went fine for three days. Then word got out about the deception. It's not clear how they found out. But, it's hard to keep a secret like that. Joshua 9:19-20 - "19 But all the leaders said to all the congregation, "We have sworn to them by the Lord, the God of Israel, and now we may not touch them. 20 This we will do to them: let them live, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath that we swore to them."

The leaders couldn't go back on their word because they made an oath to God. So they spared the Gibeonites. Instead, they made them servants, working as woodcutters and water carriers forever. Remember, honesty is the best policy! When Joshua asked the Gibeonites why they lied, they told the truth. Joshua 9:24-25 - "24...we feared for our lives because of you, and that is why we did this. 25 We are now in your hands. Do to us whatever seems good and right to you." (NIV)

Give them the credit. The Gibeonites made no excuses. They lied to save their lives, which does not justify the lie, but it led them to find mercy. The final verses give us a glimpse of the grace of God at work: Joshua 9:26-27 - "26 So Joshua saved them from the Israelites, and they did not kill them. 27 That day he made the Gibeonites woodcutters and water carriers for the assembly, to provide for the needs of the altar of the Lord at the place the Lord would choose. And that is what they are to this day." (NIV)

### FROM CURSE TO BLESSING

The Gibeonites' story is a story of turning a curse into a blessing. What does this mean? First, the Israelites kept their promise for a thousand years, even after Joshua was gone. Second, the Gibeonites became part of Israel's life, some even holding important roles. Third, it seems they learned about the true God and how to worship Him through sacrifice. The Gibeonites became part of God's people, and even hundreds of years later, they were still there. Did all the Gibeonites become believers? Only God knows. But they were the only pagan nation spared, and they were the only ones to join God's people.

Did you notice the little word "fled"? Hebrews 6:18 "18 Therefore, we who have fled to him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us." (NLT) That's what Rahab did. That's what the Gibeonites did. They turned to the one true source of hope. That's what we did when we chose to follow Christ. We turned away from Satan and the world to hold onto the one true anchor for our soul, the Lord Jesus Christ. So, let's put aside all pride and boasting and thank God, because if He can save a prostitute and a group of liars, He can save us too.