

Joshua's Rash Decision

(Joshua 9)

Introduction

What kinds of decisions do you make? (What to wear to school. What book to read. What to eat for lunch. Whether or not to play at a friend's house. Whether or not to tell a lie.) The decisions we make have consequences. What would happen if you chose to eat only doughnuts? What would the consequences of going barefoot in a blizzard be?

How do you make your mind up? How do you usually decide? Who are some of the people in your life that can help you make wise decisions? (God. Parents. Friends. Police officer. Teacher.)

Sometimes it's not easy to know what decision we should make. Listen to today's story to find what happened to the children of Israel when they made a bad decision.

Opening Prayer

Father, we are presented with decisions to make every day. We want to learn how to make wise choices in life. Please teach us how important it is to ask You for wisdom and for the courage to do what You tell us to do. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

I am praying to you because I know you will answer, O God. Bend down and listen as I pray. (Psalm 17:6 NLT)

Lesson

God had given the children of Israel victory in both Jericho and Ai. He wanted the Israelites to wipe out all the people who were occupying the Promised Land because they worshiped false gods and did many

horrible things. God didn't want the Israelites to make friends with those people or have anything to do with them. God had told the Israelites to take over the whole land for His people.

The news of the Israelites' victories over Jericho and Ai spread through out the land. The people knew that the God of the Israelites was much more powerful than the false gods they worshiped. So the people were getting nervous. Actually, they were much more than nervous, they were terrified! All the kings who lived in the land met to decide what to do about the Israelites.

Joshua 9:1

Now all the kings west of the Jordan River heard about what had happened. These were the kings of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, who lived in the hill country, in the western foothills, and along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea as far north as the Lebanon mountains.

One group of people did not want to go to war against the Israelites; they knew they would be wiped out. These people lived in the towns around Gibeon. They knew that the one true God was helping the Israelites. And they knew that all the armies of the land together could not win a fight against people who had God on their side. So the people of Gibeon figured out a way to save their lives. They came up with a plan to trick Joshua and the Israelites.

Joshua 9:3-5

But 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.

A few of the Gibeonite men packed up some dried-out, moldy bread in some old, cracked leather bags. They dressed up in clothes that were worn-out, dirty and dusty. They put on old shoes with holes in the bottoms. Then they traveled to where Joshua and the Israelites were camped.

Joshua 9:6

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."

A covenant is an agreement or a treaty – it's a promise of peace and protection between countries or people that cannot be broken.

The Gibeonites lied about where they were from because they wanted the Israelites to make a treaty with them. The Israelites were still not really convinced so the Gibeonites told Joshua and the others some more lies.

Joshua 9:12-13

"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."

Joshua and the Israelite leaders looked at the visitor's torn clothes and dusty shoes. They saw the old, moldy bread. It looked like they had walked a long, long way.

Joshua 9:14

So the Israelites examined their food, but they did not consult the LORD.

This was a big mistake!!! They should have asked God about this important decision.

Joshua 9:15

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.

Joshua and the other Israelite leaders decided the Gibeonites must be telling the truth. The Gibeonites' trick had worked! They would be safe! Making a treaty and promising to be their friends seemed like

such a good decision that Joshua didn't stop to ask God what to do. Joshua told the Gibeonites that the children of Israel would treat them as friends and would not attack them.

But they soon found out the truth...

Joshua 9:16

Three days after making the treaty, they learned that these people actually lived nearby!

The Gibeonites were actually some of the very people God had told the Israelites not to have anything to do with! But now, even though they had tricked the Israelites into making a treaty with them, Joshua knew that he had to keep his agreement with the Gibeonites.

Joshua 9:19

But the leaders replied, "Since we have sworn an oath in the presence of the LORD, the God of Israel, we cannot touch them."

Joshua knew that he had to keep the promise he had made because he had told God he would. He didn't want the children of Israel to get into trouble with God! He remembered what happened when Achan sinned and knew that God was serious about keeping promises. But Joshua did give the Gibeonites some consequences for lying to him.

Joshua 9:20-21

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 couldn't let them get away with their lies. So, for the rest of their lives they became slaves to the Israelites, chopping wood and carrying water to God's house where the children of Israel worshipped Him. What are some consequences you face for making wrong decisions? [Teacher, lead the children in a discussion about the consequences of some of their actions.]

The Gibeonites gladly agreed. They would have to work for the Israelites, but at least they'd be safe.

Because Joshua did not ask God what to do, he was tricked into making a bad decision. He knew that trouble would probably come from this friendship with the Gibeonites – the people who had lied to them. It was a hard way to learn an important lesson: Always ask God for wisdom before you make a decision. It's always worth our while to present every choice, whether of small or great consequence, to our loving, all-wise Father!

It can be hard to make wise decisions! It seems that everyone has different ideas about what is good to do. But we should always ask God for wisdom when we have to make an important decision. We can talk to God at any time and any place. And we can trust Him to help us because He loves us. God is always there to hear you call out to Him; He always hears and answers our prayers. His ways are always the very best.

Closing Prayer

Father, we have to make many decisions every day. We have to choose what movies to watch, whether to be friends with certain people, and whether we mind our parents when they ask us to do something. Thank You that You always listen when we call upon You for advice. Thank You that You give us the power to say, "No!" to sin. Please help us to always make wise choices as we go through our day. We want to live our lives in a way that is pleasing to You. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Game Center

Memory Verse Relay

Materials: Bibles, large sheets of paper, markers, tape

Preparation: Print "Psalm 17:6" at the top of a large sheet of paper making one paper for each team. Tape papers to the wall on one side of the room. Place a marker and a Bible open to Psalm 17:6 next to each paper. (Put a sticky note in the Bible, in case someone closes it.)

Procedure:

1. Divide class into two teams. Teams line up on the side of the room opposite from the papers. At your signal, the first student in each line runs to the paper, reads the verse from Bible and writes the first word of the verse on the paper. The Student then leaves the Bible open, lays down marker and returns to tag the next person in line. Second student then runs to find and write the second word of the verse. Play continues until all teams complete the entire verse.
2. Read Psalm 17:6 aloud together, and ask the following questions:
 - Why does the writer of this Psalm say he will pray to God? (He knows God will answer His prayer.)
 - What happened in today's story when Joshua forgot to pray to God and ask Him about the Gibeonites?
 - When are some times you need to pray to God and ask for His help?

Or, use the following review questions in a discussion or game of your choice.

1. What did Joshua do before he made the decision to trust the Gibeonites? Why do you think he made the decision he did? What happened as a result of Joshua's decision?
2. When are some times children your age have to make decisions? (When other kids want to copy their homework. When parents ask them to do chores without complaining. When playing with friends.)
3. What are some good things to do when you have to make a decision? (Ask God for help. Read the Bible and look for God's guidelines. Talk to an adult about the decision. Think about what will happen after you make the decision.) What are some unwise ways to make a decision? (Only think about what you want. Do whatever is easiest. Make a decision without thinking or praying about it.)
4. How does talking to God help someone make a wise decision? (Talking to God reminds us that we want to love and obey Him.)
5. Why do you think it is a good idea to talk to God about the decisions you make? (He helps us choose wisely.)

Sword Drills

1. Read **Psalm 17:6**. What does this verse ask God to do? What is a decision you want to talk to God about?
2. Read **Proverbs 2:6**. Where do wisdom, knowledge and understanding come from? Where can we read many words God has spoken? How can the Bible help you make good decisions?

3. Read **John 14:13**. What does Jesus promise in this verse? What are some good things to pray and ask Jesus for? Name some situations in which your family needs Jesus' help.
4. Read **Philippians 4:6-7**. Why don't people who trust in God need to worry? How does verse 6 tell us to pray? When will we have peace? Why?

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