



A MODEL OF OBEDIENCE • DO NOT BE DECEIVED •

JOSHUA 9:1-27, EXODUS 23:20-30 • 03/18/2018

---

## MAIN POINT

Doing God's will requires actively seeking His counsel and trusting in His grace.

---

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Share about a time when you were deceived by an advertisement. Why were you inclined to believe the false ad?**

**How good are you at determining whether others are telling the truth? Is there anything we can do to become more adept at discerning truth from lies?**

Jesus warned His disciples that imposters (Luke 21:8) and false prophets (Matt. 7:15-20) would come so that they would not be deceived by them. This, along with the many false advertisements and messages around us, tells us that we live in a culture of deception. The fact that Jesus had to give these warnings indicates that we are far too easily deceived. If we want to start living obediently to God's will, we must be able to discern the truth from lies. Today as we look at how the Israelites were deceived by their enemies, we will be challenged to stop looking to ourselves for wisdom and renew our commitment to trust the Lord and seek His counsel.

---

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE VOLUNTEERS READ JOSHUA 9:1-2 AND EXODUS 23:20-30.

**For what purpose had the various nations living in Canaan gathered together (Joshua 9:1-2)?**

**The nations mentioned in verse 1 had a long history of warring against each other. What does this tell us about how they felt toward God's people? What does this tell us about their faith in their own gods?**

These nations that had been enemies of one another "gathered together to fight against Joshua and Israel." They, like inhabitants of Gibeon, had likely heard of Joshua's impressive victories over Jericho and Ai and feared that they could not stand against Israel on their own. The fact that each of these nations felt incapable of overcoming the Israelites on their own demonstrates their lack of confidence in their gods to deliver them.

**What do we learn about the people of these nations from Exodus 23?  
What had God promised to do to these nations? Why?**

The Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites, and Jebusites were pagan people whose worship posed a threat to the Israelites' exclusive devotion to God (Ex. 23:24-25, 33). Some of these people's religious practices included lewd sexual acts with cult prostitutes and even child sacrifice. God charged the Israelites to conquer the land of Canaan both as an act of judgment on their vile idolatry and as a means of preserving and protecting His people. While this was a daunting task, God promised to drive Israel's enemies out of the Promised Land and establish the Israelites there.

**What had God done for the Israelites in the past? Why might God's past acts be important to remember as we set out to do His will in the present?**

God had not only delivered Israel out of slavery in Egypt with wonders and miracles, but had continued to provide for, lead, and bless them. Furthermore, God had very recently given Israel victory over two of its biggest enemies, Jericho and Ai. God's past faithfulness should give us confidence to trust Him in the present. Just as God had fulfilled His every promise to His people in the past, surely He would keep His promise to drive out these pagan nations and establish God's people in the Promised Land.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOSHUA 9:3-15.**

**The Gibeonites took a different approach than the other Canaanite nations in their relationship with Israel. What motivated them to do this (v. 3, see also vv. 9-10)?**

**How did the Gibeonites seek to deceive Joshua and the Israelites (vv. 4-13)? What did they hope to accomplish in doing so?**

**Why were Joshua and the people of Israel deceived (v. 14)? What can we learn from their example that might help us to discern truth from lies?**

Joshua and the Israelites were deceived by the Gibeonites because they "did not seek the Lord's counsel" (v. 14). If we hope to grow in being able to tell truth from lies, we must recognize our need for God's wisdom. Trusting in our own understanding will always fail us because it is the Lord who gives wisdom (Proverbs 2:6). Therefore, Christians should refuse to rely on their own understanding and instead, trust in the Lord in all their ways (Proverbs 3:5-6).

**Why didn't Joshua attack the Gibeonites when he learned of their deception? What does that tell us about Him?**

**How do you tend to respond when you discover that you have been deceived? How did the people of Israel respond to Joshua's decision not to attack Gibeon (v. 18)?**

**Why do you think God spared the Gibeonites even though they had acted deceitfully? What does that tell us about Him?**

The Israelites grumbled against Joshua and the leaders of Israel, upset the Gibeonites were allowed to live among them despite deceptive dealings. Despite the complaints of the people, Joshua honored the covenant he had made with the Gibeonites and spared them. By keeping this covenant, Joshua demonstrated both his integrity and his faith by refusing to give into the temptation to take matters in to his own hands. Joshua trusted the Lord to do what is right. While the Gibeonites were cursed with a life of servitude, they were nonetheless spared, and the positions of service they were given were honorable in the "house of God." The grace God demonstrated toward the Gibeonites looks forward to Christ who, "while we were still sinners . . . died for us!" (Rom. 5:8).

---

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**How might spiritual disciplines like prayer and Bible study help us discern truth from error?**

**What is your process for making difficult or important decisions? What steps could you take to improve your discernment skills in that process?**

**How could you follow Joshua's example in keeping your word this week? In showing grace to your enemies?**

---

## PRAY

Thank God for sending Jesus to die for our sins while we were still sinners. Ask Him to help us look to Him for wisdom and guidance in all that we do.

---

## COMMENTARY

### JOSHUA 9:1-27

9:1-2 The phrase “when all the kings heard” is identical to that in 5:1. There the kings heard about God’s drying up the Jordan River, and it struck fear in their hearts. In 9:1 the text does not specify what the kings heard, but their reaction is different. Instead of fearing Israel, they formed a unified alliance to fight against the nation. What caused this change? It was the defeat of Israel at Ai that gave the Canaanites hope that they could defeat the people of God. The sin of Achan had far-reaching effects just as all sin does (Rom 5:12-14; 8:9-20). If Achan had not sinned, perhaps Israel’s advance into the promised land would have been much easier and far less violent.

9:3 The inhabitants of Gibeon reacted differently, however. They did not seek to destroy Israel but to join it.

9:4-5 Because Israel had been commanded to destroy all peoples in Canaan (Dt 20:16-18), Gibeon wanted it to look like they did not live nearby.

9:6 Gilgal here may be different from the Gilgal of 4:19-20; and 5:9-10. It was probably located in the hill country, perhaps near Mount Ebal. Gibeon was a city north of

Jerusalem in the territory of the tribe of Benjamin, a few hours journey by foot. The word for “treaty” is the same as that for “covenant;” it recalls the experience of Joshua and the Israelites at Mount Ebal (8:30-35).

9:7 The connection of Gibeon with the Hivites implies that this group may have been a recent addition to the region, coming originally from north of Palestine in Syria.

9:8 The self-designation by the Gibeonites as Israel’s servants implies that they accepted a relationship of a vassal nation to the people of God.

9:9-10 The confession of the Gibeonites most closely resembles that of Rahab in 2:9-11. Their expression of faith in God was based on God’s historic acts of redemption toward His people. The Gibeonites mentioned the same acts of redemption as Rahab did—the work of God in Egypt and against Sihon and Og.

9:11 The governance of Gibeon by elders rather than a king implies a different form of rule than what was common in Canaan at the time, which may have been part of the deception.

9:14 The note that Israel did not seek the Lord’s counsel, as well as absence of any mention of Joshua in the initial negotiations, all spell trouble.

9:15 That Joshua established peace with the Gibeonites demonstrates his own complicity in the actions. The reference to peace and the swearing of an oath by the leaders of the community bound Israel into a treaty relationship with the Gibeonites that could not be broken.

9:16 The phrase “three days” may suggest a literal three days such as seems to occur in 1:11; 2:16,22, or it may imply an indeterminate period of more than a second day.

9:17 Having discovered the ruse of the Gibeonites, the Israelites set out on the third day and reached the Gibeonite cities on that same day. Like Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kiriath-jearim lie a few miles north of Jerusalem and close by one another in the territory that would later be assigned to the tribe of Benjamin.

9:18-19 The two references to the oath that the leaders had made surround the statement that the whole community grumbled against the leaders. The verb “grumble”

refers elsewhere almost exclusively to the complaints of the Israelites against Moses' leadership and against God. Its appearance here may suggest the same negative attitude of Israel as that in the wilderness generation. However, this grumbling against the leaders had a point because the present leadership did not seek God's counsel, and they thereby foolishly bound Israel to a treaty with a Canaanite people group.

9:20 The leaders were unwilling to violate their oath and thereby compound their wrongdoing with a second sin.

9:21 Deuteronomy 29:11 implied that aliens living in the land of Israel should fulfill the roles of woodcutters and water carriers.

9:22-23 Joshua pronounced a curse against the Gibeonites for causing Israel to disobey God's command to destroy all the inhabitants of Canaan who did not leave the land.

9:27 The deliverance of a people such as the Gibeonites is not unique to Joshua. In the ancient world, many peoples offered themselves as slaves rather than face extinction at the hands of a superior army. The establishment of the Lord's altar at the place He would choose duplicates Dt 12:5 and the command that Israel should worship God only at the place where He directed they should build an altar.

---

## READING ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

Joshua 10:16-43; Joshua 11:1-23