

The Gibeonites Trick Joshua

Joshua 9

## MEMORY VERSE

PROVERBS 19:21

“There are many plans in a man’s heart, nevertheless the LORD’S counsel - that will stand.”

## WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

A container of clean rocks and small prizes (stickers, pencils, erasers, etc.) for all of the children in your class.

Thin paper plates, a stoneware plate, and some heavy items to carry on the plates.

Plastic cups and string.

## ATTENTION GRABBER!

### Prize Time?

Bring a container of clean rocks to pass out.

Tell the children that it is prize time. Be real excited. Ask if anyone would like a prize. Tell the children to close their eyes and hold out their hands for the prize. Next, pass out the rocks. Have them open their eyes. Ask them how it feels to be tricked. Trade the rocks for a real prize.

Matthew 7:9-11 says, “If a son asks for bread from his father, will the father give him a stone?” Even more, God will give us good things when we ask Him. **God gives wisdom to those who ask.**

## LESSON TIME!

How important it is to seek God's counsel in every situation. In today's lesson, we will see what happens when Joshua and the leaders of Israel make a decision in haste without God's counsel.

### JOSHUA 9:1,2

And it came to pass when all the kings who were on this side of the Jordan, in the hills and in the lowland and in all the coasts of the Great Sea toward Lebanon; the Hittite, the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite; heard about it,

that they gathered together to fight with Joshua and Israel with one accord.

The army of Israel had defeated Ai. In response, the kings of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and the Jebusites met together and formed an alliance to fight Joshua and the children of Israel.

These kings, who were very different from one another and spent a lot of time fighting each other, united against God's people. These armies, though great in number, were not fighting just the children of Israel. They were fighting the almighty God.

The Israelites had the promise of God: If they kept His law, God would give them the land and deliver the people of the land into their hands.

As Christians, we also have God's promise to deliver us. The Bible says in Romans 8:31, "If God be for us who can be against us?" Though the whole world unites against us, we can always know that God is on our side.

## JOSHUA 9:3-15

But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai,

they worked craftily, and went and pretended to be ambassadors. And they took old sacks on their donkeys, old wineskins torn and mended,

old and patched sandals on their feet, and old garments on themselves; and all the bread of their provision was dry and moldy.

And they went to Joshua, to the camp at Gilgal, and said to him and to the men of Israel, "We have come from a far country; now therefore, make a covenant with us."

Then the men of Israel said to the Hivites, "Perhaps you dwell among us; so how can we make a covenant with you?"

But they said to Joshua, "We are your servants." And Joshua said to them, "Who are you, and where do you come from?"

So they said to him: "From a very far country your servants have come, because of the name of the LORD your God; for we have heard of His fame, and all that He did in Egypt,

"and all that He did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan; to Sihon king of Heshbon, and Og king of Bashan, who was at Ashtaroth.

"Therefore our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spoke to us, saying, 'Take provisions with you for the journey, and go to meet them, and say to them, "We are your servants; now therefore, make a covenant with us."'

"This bread of ours we took hot for our provision from our houses on the day we departed to come to you. But now look, it is dry and moldy.

"And these wineskins which we filled were new, and see, they are torn; and these our garments and our sandals have become old because of the very long journey."

Then the men of Israel took some of their provisions; but they did not ask counsel of the LORD.

So Joshua made peace with them, and made a covenant with them to let them live; and the rulers of the congregation swore to them.

Not all of Israel's enemies wanted to fight. The Gibeonites were convinced they could not defeat the children of Israel. They had heard God's mighty works in delivering His people out of Egypt. They had probably also heard about the crossing of the Jordan River, the victory of Jericho, and the victory over the people of Ai. Perhaps, seeing the mighty works of the God of Israel convinced them He was indeed the one true God. Perhaps, they knew about the provisions in the Law of Moses permitting Israel to make peace with cities that were distant from them, but requiring them to wipe out completely the cities of the seven nearby Canaanite nations (see Deuteronomy 20:10-18 and 7:1-2).

The Gibeonites conceived an ingenious plan. They picked two ambassadors and dressed them in old clothing. They gave them bread that was dry and moldy and wine in old wine skins, all to give the appearance that they had been on a far journey from a far land and had come to make peace treaty with the Israelites. The ambassadors came to Joshua and the people while they were camped in Gilgal. They told their fabricated tale--that they had come from a far country--and asked Joshua to make a treaty with them. The Gibeonites, aware of the Mosaic Law, put a special emphasis on being from a far land,

At first, Joshua and his staff were hesitant, not convinced of their story. Joshua and the people said to them, "but what if you live near us?" Joshua asked question after question, but the Gibeonites held to their story of how they came from a great distance to show respect for Israel's powerful God and to be able to live at peace as Israel's servants. Word had reached them of how God had delivered them from the land of Egypt and the victory over the kings of Heshbon and Bashan.

Note, they did not mention the victory over Ai or Jericho; for if they had come on a long journey, they would not know about those recent victories. Tricky indeed! They showed Joshua their sandals, clothes, food, and wine skins. They told them that it was all new when they had left home. Joshua and the people bought their story and agreed to a formal treaty with them.

The Bible says that our enemy, Satan is a deceiver. He will try to trick us whenever he has an opportunity, and rob us of God's blessing. We must be careful and test everything that we hear by God's Word.

Note, the scriptures say, “they did not ask counsel of the LORD.” How foolish it was for Joshua and the Israelites to agree to a treaty without seeking the counsel of the Lord. Their hasty decision was based on their limited knowledge—they judged only what appeared on the surface. How much wiser it would have been to rely on God’s counsel—knowing He fully understands our situations and circumstances. **God gives wisdom to those who ask.**

God fully sees and understands all of our circumstances. May we learn the wisdom of seeking His counsel in every situation—small and large. We read in James 1:5, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.” May we learn not to lean on our own understanding (Proverbs 3:5), judging people or circumstances by the outward appearance. As children of God, we have the creator of the universe ready to help us in making decisions.

## **Proverbs 19:21**

Use thin paper plates for a test. Let the kids try to carry some heavy items across the room on a paper plate. Stack the paper plate up high (overloading it), so it will collapse under the weight as it is carried. Now, give them a real stoneware plate to try to carry the same amount of items. Ask the children which plate they would prefer to carry all of those items.

Draw a comparison. The stoneware plate is like God’s wisdom and the paper plate is like man’s wisdom. Man’s wisdom will never hold up to the test and will always fail us. Proverbs 19:21 - “There are many plans in a man’s heart, nevertheless the LORD’S counsel—that will stand.” **God gives wisdom to those who ask.**

## JOSHUA 9:16-27

And it happened at the end of three days, after they had made a covenant with them, that they heard that they were their neighbors who dwelt near them.

Then the children of Israel journeyed and came to their cities on the third day. Now their cities were Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kirjath Jearim.

But the children of Israel did not attack them, because the rulers of the congregation had sworn to them by the LORD God of Israel. And all the congregation complained against the rulers.

Then all the rulers said to all the congregation, "We have sworn to them by the LORD God of Israel; now therefore, we may not touch them.

"This we will do to them: We will let them live, lest wrath be upon us because of the oath which we swore to them."

And the rulers said to them, "Let them live, but let them be woodcutters and water carriers for all the congregation, as the rulers had promised them."

Then Joshua called for them, and he spoke to them, saying, "Why have you deceived us, saying, 'We are very far from you,' when you dwell near us?"

"Now therefore, you are cursed, and none of you shall be freed from being slaves; woodcutters and water carriers for the house of my God."



So they answered Joshua and said, "Because your servants were clearly told that the LORD your God commanded His servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you; therefore we were very much afraid for our lives because of you, and have done this thing.

"And now, here we are, in your hands; do with us as it seems good and right to do to us."

So he did to them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, so that they did not kill them.

And that day Joshua made them woodcutters and water carriers for the congregation and for the altar of the LORD, in the place which He would choose, even to this day.

Three days after the treaty was made, the Israelites found out that the Gibeonites were their neighbors; and they knew they had been tricked. A group of the Israelites went and confirmed the fraud by discovering Gibeon and its three dependent cities.

The children of Israel were outraged with the lie and wanted to disregard the treaty and destroy the Gibeonites. But Joshua and the leaders stopped the Israelites, for the deception did not nullify their treaty. They could not go back on the treaty because they had sworn an oath by the Lord God of Israel; to break that would be to bring down the wrath of God on Israel.

Joshua and the leaders were men of integrity. They kept their word even though they had been deceived. Integrity is a quality we must possess as Christians, and it is essential to good leadership. We represent God to other people; when we do not keep our word, we are misrepresenting our God for He keeps all of His promises.

Since the people could not kill the Gibeonites, Joshua made them servants to Israel. Joshua made them water carriers and woodcutters. Later, we see that God, in His grace, turned the curse on the Gibeonites to a blessing. Such is the grace of God. In Joshua 10:10-14, God worked a miracle while the Israelites were defending Gibeon. Later, the tabernacle was pitched at Gibeon. And later yet, some Gibeonites helped Nehemiah rebuild Jerusalem's walls. Our God loves to forgive.

However, sin has consequences; and because of the Israelites failure to seek the counsel of God, they would never *fully* possess the land God promised them.

Let us not be guilty, as Joshua and the leaders of Israel, of failing to seek the counsel of the Lord in every situation. It is God's desire to bless His children--**God gives wisdom to those who ask.**

## Plastic Cup Phones

Make phones out of plastic cups. Punch a hole in the bottom of two cups. Put a long string between the cups and tie the strings in knots on both ends. Be sure pull it tight so the sound will carry.

Have someone demonstrate that if you talk you can be heard through the phone. But what happens if you do not talk? No one can hear you! God wants us to talk to Him through prayer. He desires to give us wisdom to make important decisions. **God gives wisdom to those who ask.**

## **PRAYER**

Lead the children in a prayer of petition to the Lord for wisdom.

If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity to do so.