

## Digging Deeper Joshua Week 6

We have been on quite a journey with the Israelites so far. They are now in the Promised Land. They have successfully conquered Jericho. They were successful on their second attack on Ai after dealing with Achan's sin and seeking the Lord. This week we see once again that the people of Canaan had heard about the Israelites and their military success.

I have been thinking about what others might hear about us. What might people say about who we are and what the Lord has done in and through us – what He has done for us. As followers of Jesus we are blessed with His Holy Spirit living within us to lead, guide and empower us to do what the Lord calls us to do. So, what do you think people have heard about you and your relationship with the Lord? If you are brave enough, ask a few people and record what they tell you.

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The Canaanite kings were fearful because they had heard what the Lord had done for and with the Israelites. It was the Lord's involvement in the lives of the Israelites and what He did through them that had people talking. Do you know someone who you have been amazed by how the Lord has worked in their life? Are there people who have been an inspiration to your spiritual walk? How have they inspired you? Take some time this week to tell them how they have inspired you.

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While the five kings were fearful and decided to form an alliance to fight against the Israelites, the Gibeonites took a different approach. The Gibeonites decided to deceive the Israelites in order to get them to make a covenant of peace.

*Joshua 9:3-5 But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and to Ai, <sup>4</sup> 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, <sup>5</sup> with worn-out, patched sandals on their feet, and worn-out clothes. And all their provisions were dry and crumbly.*

In the teaching, I talked about how this cunning was similar to what the enemy does. The Gibeonites were purposefully deceptive. They chose to act cunning and try to deceive the Israelites that they were from a country far away. Satan uses his cunning to deceive us. Let's look at how this played out in the garden of Eden.

*Genesis 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You<sup>l</sup> shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'"*

The first way that the enemy tried deceiving Eve was to distort or twist what the Lord said. , "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of ANY tree in the garden?'" Do you see how there was a slight

distortion of what the Lord said? The Lord did say they couldn't eat from two trees in the garden, not that they couldn't eat from ANY tree.

Have you ever found yourself believing a distorted version of the truth? Has the enemy ever distorted things for you and you bought it hook line and sinker only to realize later that what you believed was distorted?

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Then we see Eve being drawn into the deception and adding to it on her own.

*Genesis 3:2-3 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, <sup>3</sup> but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'"*

Eve added to what the Lord had said.

*Genesis 2:16-17 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, <sup>17</sup> but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."*

The Lord said if they ate from the tree of knowledge they would die. He didn't say anything about touching it causing them to die. Do you see how Eve got caught up in the distortion that the snake had begun? Why do you think Eve also distorted what the Lord had said?

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The final ploy by the serpent was to tell Eve that she would be like God.

*Genesis 3:4 <sup>4</sup> But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. <sup>5</sup> For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*

It might seem like a big stretch to tell Eve that she would be like God if she ate the fruit. This is where the real struggle comes in for all of us – we struggle with submitting to God. Instead of submitting, we rebel. We don't want to be dependent upon anyone, including God. We live in a society that promotes independence. We want to be our own boss – being like God. In what areas of your life do you struggle to submit to the Lord? How dependent upon the Lord are you?

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The cunning and deception of the Gibeonites is similar to the way the enemy works in our lives. Let's look at a few verses that look at his cunning and deception.

*2 Corinthians 11:3 But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.*

One way that the enemy wants to distract us from our devotion to Christ is when we sit down for quiet time or prayer. How have you experienced your thoughts being led astray?

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*John 8:44 You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*

Satan is the father of lies and he wants us to believe his lies. He will distort the truth or deceive us in any way that will prevent us from living the life God has for us. In what ways has the enemy convinced you of a lie?

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We are not helpless against the enemy – we do not have to fall prey to his plots and ploys. The Lord is stronger and more powerful than the enemy and His Spirit dwelling within us is stronger and more powerful if we will submit to Him. So how do we combat the lure of the enemy?

*James 4:7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

James says you must submit to God AND resist the devil. Submitting yourself to God means to be subject to Him and obedient to Him. How can we submit to the Lord if we don't seek Him? How can we submit ourselves to Him if we don't know what He has to say? We MUST read His Word and spend time in prayer listening to what He has to say. How well do you submit to the Lord?

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Submit and resist. We have to submit to the Lord and resist the enemy – this means not giving into temptation, this means not allowing his distortions in our relationships and our circumstances to become our perception which becomes our reality. Both submitting and resisting are active not passive. Submit to God's will and resist any distraction that the enemy puts in our path. What steps can you make to resist the enemy?

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The Israelites were a little suspicious of the Gibeonites. Look at how they respond to them in Joshua 9:7.

*Joshua 9:7 But the men of Israel said to the Hivites, "Perhaps you live among us; then how can we make a covenant with you?"*

Their initial instinct was to doubt that the Gibeonites were telling them the truth. Can you share a time when you had an instinct about something and then you doubted what your initial instinct was?

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There are times when the Holy Spirit gives you great insight in an instant and immediately the enemy has you doubting. It is important for us to seek the Lord when we feel like we have been given insight by the Holy Spirit. If the Israelites had checked in with the Lord, they may not have been deceived. Can you share an example when you sought the Lord about the instinct you were feeling?

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*Joshua 9:14 So the men took some of their provisions, but did not ask counsel from the Lord.*

The Israelites were willing to inspect their provisions to see if they really came from a long way off but they were not willing to seek the counsel of the Lord. We have looked at previously our desire to move forward with our plans without seeking the Lord at times. For the Israelites, this meant they would be making a covenant under deception. For us it may mean going in a direction that the Lord doesn't want us to go. Is there a situation where when you look back you realize that you did not seek the Lord and it didn't go well for you?

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*Joshua 9:18 But the people of Israel did not attack them, because the leaders of the congregation had sworn to them by the Lord, the God of Israel. Then all the congregation murmured against the leaders.*

Even after finding out that they had been deceived, the Israelites do not attack the Gibeonites. The reason for this is because they had sworn to them in the name of the Lord. The covenant might have been formed in deception but it was a covenant that they must keep nonetheless. The word of the people made in the name of the Lord must be honored. The people, however, let the leaders know how they felt about it by murmuring against them. Basically they were complaining. They were obedient but complained. Does that sound familiar? Is your obedience preceded by complaining? Do we sometimes act like teenagers when asked to do something – we will do it but we will complain about it? Is that what your obedience to the Lord looks like at times?

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9:22-24 *Joshua summoned them, and he said to them, “Why did you deceive us, saying, ‘We are very far from you,’ when you dwell among us?”<sup>23</sup> Now therefore you are cursed, and some of you shall never be anything but servants, cutters of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God.”<sup>24</sup> They answered Joshua, “Because it was told to your servants for a certainty that the Lord your God had commanded his servant Moses to give you all the land and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you—so we feared greatly for our lives because of you and did this thing.*

Joshua confronted the Gibeonites on their deception. Their explanation is that they lied because they were fearful. We looked at the impact fear can have on us more last week – it can paralyze us, make us overreact or isolate and now we see that fear can lead to deception. We see this play out in small children when they are confronted with doing something, They often deny doing it even when it is clear they did it or they put the blame on others. Have you ever responded this way when confronted by something because you were fearful to take responsibility?

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Joshua and the Israelites make a covenant of peace with the Gibeonites but there is a price to pay for the Gibeonites being deceptive.

*Joshua 9:25-27 And now, behold, we are in your hand. Whatever seems good and right in your sight to do to us, do it.”<sup>26</sup> So he did this to them and delivered them out of the hand of the people of Israel, and they did not kill them.<sup>27</sup> But Joshua made them that day cutters of wood and drawers of water for the congregation and for the altar of the Lord, to this day, in the place that he should choose.*

The Gibeonites SUBMIT to Joshua – they are willing to accept whatever ‘seems good and right’ to Joshua to do to them. It may seem like a given that they would submit, but they could have argued, they could have rationalized or justified their position more. When we have sinned, are we willing to submit ourselves to His discipline or do we rationalize and justify? How do you usually respond?

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The Gibeonites would be cutting wood and drawing water for the congregation and the altar of the Lord? They would be integral in the worship of the Lord in the tabernacle. The Lord would turn something bad – the deception of the Gibeonites into something good down the road.

*2 Chronicles 1:3 And Solomon, and all the assembly with him, went to the high place that was at Gibeon, for the tent of meeting of God, which Moses the servant of the LORD had made in the wilderness, was there.*

The tent of meeting is where the Lord met with His people it is also called the tabernacle or the temple. The Lord’s meeting place was at Gibeon during the time of Solomon. How cool is that?

Another positive that came out of the Gibeonite deception and the covenant that Joshua and the Israelites made with them is their assistance in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem after the Israelites are allowed to leave their captivity in Babylon.

*Nehemiah 3:7 And next to them repaired Melatiah the Gibeonite and Jadon the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon and of Mizpah, the seat of the governor of the province Beyond the River.*

God's amazing grace can turn a sinful beginning into an amazing blessing as He did with the Gibeonites. The Gibeonites hosted the tent of meeting which housed the very presence of God and is where the Israelites went to meet with the Lord and He used the Gibeonites to help rebuild the city that He chose for His presence to dwell. What example can you share of how something that started out bad – from a sinful beginning – ended up being good. What can you share about how God's grace triumphed over your sinfulness or the sinfulness of someone else?

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Five kings from the southern Canaanite cities form an alliance and attack Gibeon out of fear so Gibeon reaches out to Joshua for help. Joshua seeks the Lord.

*Joshua 10:7-8 So Joshua went up from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valor. <sup>8</sup> And the Lord said to Joshua, "Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands. Not a man of them shall stand before you."*

Joshua received reassurance from the Lord that he need not fear because the Lord has given them into Joshua's hands. What a blessing this news must have been for Joshua. How have you received reassurance from the Lord?

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*Joshua 10:9-11 So Joshua came upon them suddenly, having marched up all night from Gilgal. <sup>10</sup> And the Lord threw them into a panic before Israel, who struck them with a great blow at Gibeon and chased them by the way of the ascent of Beth-horon and struck them as far as Azekah and Makkedah. <sup>11</sup> And as they fled before Israel, while they were going down the ascent of Beth-horon, the Lord threw down large stones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died. There were more who died because of the hailstones than the sons of Israel killed with the sword.*

We see in this how the Lord intervened on behalf of the Israelites. He caused panic so the Israelites were able to strike some of them down, and even though they were fleeing from the Israelites, the Lord did not let up. He sent large hailstones. In fact more died from the hailstones than anything else. Why do you think that is the case? What would this have reinforced for the Israelites?

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Look at the bold miracle Joshua asks the Lord to do for him and the Israelites.

Joshua 10:12-13a *At that time Joshua spoke to the Lord in the day when the Lord gave the Amorites over to the sons of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel,*  
*“Sun, stand still at Gibeon,*  
*and moon, in the Valley of Aijalon.”*  
<sup>13</sup>*And the sun stood still, and the moon stopped,*  
*until the nation took vengeance on their enemies.*

What faith Joshua must have had in the Lord that he would ask for a miracle like the sun standing still. How about you – how much faith do you have in the Lord? Are you asking for miracles like the sun standing still? I think our prayers are often ‘smaller’ than Joshua’s because we don’t have the faith he had to ask for that kind of miracle? Do you ask the Lord for that kind of miracle?

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Joshua 10:13b-14 *Is this not written in the Book of Jashar? The sun stopped in the midst of heaven and did not hurry to set for about a whole day. <sup>14</sup> There has been no day like it before or since, when the Lord heeded the voice of a man, for the Lord fought for Israel.*

How awesome for the Lord to give Joshua and the Israelites more time to conquer their enemies. Our God is a God of miracles – He fights for His people and He does amazing things. Have you ever experienced a miracle from the Lord? We often call them God moments – times when we just know that it was the Lord who intervened or moved in our circumstances.

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Imagine what people heard about the Israelites after this victory against these five kings! What does the Lord want you to share with someone today?

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Lord, give us faith like Joshua – a boldness to know that you are a God of miracles and a boldness to ask you for miracles in our lives so others can come to know You. Use us this week to encourage others with what you are teaching us and how you are moving in our lives. Let others hear about our faith and want to know more about you. Amen.