

God in our Decisions

Joshua 9

Key Points:

- We face decisions every moment of every day. Sometimes these are small and seemingly insignificant, and other times they are massive and life-defining. But have you ever stopped to think *how* you're making these decisions? There are three decisions made in Joshua 9, each exhibiting a different method for decision-making.
- Decisions influenced by fear (v.1-6). The Gibeonites feared for their lives after hearing what happened in Jericho and Ai, and decided to create an elaborate deception to save themselves. We can make decisions out of fear too - fear of change, fear of rejection, fear of failure, fear of not having enough, fear of missing out etc. But the difference is that they only knew *of* God, whereas we know God - and we don't have to be influenced by fear.
- Decisions in the dark (v.7-15). The Israelites *do* know God, but choose to ignore Him as they decide whether or not to believe the Gibeonites. The Gibeonites were convincing, but consulting God would have revealed the truth of the situation. Obvious decisions aren't always right, and often we fall into the trap of asking God to bless the decisions we've already made.
- Decisions in the light (v.16-26). Finally, the Israelites uncover the truth and have a third decision to make now - what to do next? They've made a binding covenant before God not to harm the Gibeonites, but the people aren't happy. This time they consult God, through His Law (Deuteronomy 29.11), and realise that there is an option - cutting wood and fetching water.

Questions:

1. How easy/hard do you find it to make decisions? What's your decisions-making process for big decisions?
2. Can we excuse the Gibeonites' behaviour? [c.f. their fear of getting destroyed by the Israelites causing them to resort to deception] What is God's reaction to it? Read 2 Samuel 21.1-14 to find out what happens!
3. Are any of your decisions influenced by fear? What fears are particularly influential for you?
4. According to Romans 8.15, we are adopted children of God and have received the Holy Spirit rather than a spirit of fear to which we are enslaved. Take some time to pray for each other that we would no longer be 'slaves to fear' and that fear would no longer be influential in our decision making because we are children of God.
5. Why was it such a bad thing for the Israelites to make a covenant with the Gibeonites (c.f. Deuteronomy 7.2)? How would the story have panned out differently if the Israelites had consulted with God?
6. Have you ever made a decision that seemed obvious at the time but turned out to be wrong? Share with the group! Might it have turned out differently if you'd consulted God?
7. There are five practical ways that we can consult God in our decision-making. The Bible, The Holy Spirit, The Church, Circumstantial Signs, and Prayer. Which of these do you find easy/hard? What could you do differently next time you face a big decision?
8. If you, or anyone in the group, has a big decision on the horizon, why not spend some time consulting God together?