

March 1, 2020 - Mark Minnella

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Preacher: Mark Minnella

- [0 : 0 0] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church. Knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. So, how many people have asked somebody for advice?
- Come on, we all have asked people for advice, right? Of course we have. No one can know everything. I know there's some people that I've met in my life that think they do, but, you know, we'll not spend a lot of time on those folks, will we?
- So, I always have considered myself to be a lifetime learner. I always say I'll never know everything, and it's a good day if you can learn something. And so, I hopefully will be wiser than I used to be.
- The scriptures, it says, were written to make us wise, and so hopefully we're in the Word. I found that over the years, one of the easiest ways to learn about something is to ask somebody who's already an expert.
- And you don't have to learn it all yourself. Hopefully that person is someone that you trust. An example would be that recently, my wife and I were considering remodeling a house. So, Kevin's not here today.
- [1 : 0 3] I was going to point to Kevin. But imagine Kevin and Jill are right there where they usually sit. So, I called Kevin. Now, Kevin's done remodeling for, what, 35 years probably?
- And I called Kevin, and I asked his advice. And guess what? I learned a few things. I did. I learned a few things. I know a little bit about finance.
- I've read some books. I've watched some TV shows. And I've even studied charts and mutual funds and stocks and bonds. And I say I know enough to be dangerous. But, you know, my cousin Mark, who's not here this morning either, he's an expert in things, money and financial.
- And that's what he does for a living. And so, when I have questions about finances, I call Mark. And I trust him to manage my finances because he's an expert. Many years ago, we took a trip.
- And we went to Virginia. Dave Wynn and I think Mark and John. And I borrowed a motor home from where I work. And we drove to the coast of Virginia.
- [2 : 0 6] Wasn't that a great trip? We got to go on an aircraft carrier. That was the coolest thing. And so, I drove there most of the way. And we commandeered John to drive back so we could play cards.
- It was pretty fun. And I kept track of the gas mileage in this motor home. And on the way out, I got 7.85. And on the way back, John got almost 10.
- John's a professional driver. So, he did a lot better. There was a time years ago where I was at a crossroads in my life. Denise and I had come home from being missionaries.
- I was still dealing with culture shock. And I didn't know which way to go job-wise. And so, a person said, well, you should get into real estate.
- And I thought about that. And there was a little bit of attraction there. And I reached out to my old principal. His name is Dr. Amen. And I called Dr. Amen.

[3 : 10] And I said, hey, I'd like to meet with you and ask you some questions. He had retired from education. He was a wise little guy. And he had become a stockbroker.

And his wife was this real successful real estate lady. And so, I had breakfast with Dr. Amen several times. And he gave me some good advice.

He said, you know, you're young. You're going to have a family probably. And you go into real estate and you don't get your weekends. That's what you don't get. I listened to him and I didn't go into real estate.

I took his advice. Our passage this morning is Joshua chapter 9, verses 1 through 27. A lot of verses. So, we'll dig right in here. Now, when all the kings west of the Jordan heard about these things, those in the hill country and the western foothills and along the entire coast of the Great Sea, as far as Lebanon, the kings of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, electric lights, on and on, they came together to make war against Joshua and Israel.

However, when the people of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, they resorted to a ruse. They went as a delegation whose donkeys were loaded with worn out sacks and old wineskins cracked and mended.

[4 : 34] The men put worn and patched sandals on their feet and wore old clothes. All of the bread in their food supply was dry and moldy. Then they went to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal.

And they said to him, Men of Israel, We have come from a far distance, a distant country. Make a treaty with us. The men of Israel said to the Hittites, But perhaps you live near us.

How then can we make a treaty with you? We are your servants, they said to Joshua. But Joshua asked, Who are you and where do you come from? They answered, Your servants have come from a very distant country.

Because of the fame of the Lord your God, for we have heard reports of him, all that he did in Egypt, and all that he did to the kings of the Amorites, east of the Jordan, Sihon, king of Heshbon, and Ag, king of Bashan, who reigned in Ashtaroth, and our elders, and those living in our country said to us, Take provisions for your journey.

Go and meet them and say, We are your servants. Make a treaty with us. This bread of ours was warm when we packed it, when we left to see you. But now see how dry and moldy it is.

[5 : 43] And these wineskins were filled, they were new, but see how cracked they are. And our clothes and sandals are worn out by this very long journey. The men of Israel sampled their provisions, but did not inquire of the Lord.

Then Joshua made a treaty of peace with them, and let them live. And the leaders of the assembly ratified it by oath. Three days after they made the treaty with the Gibeonites, the Israelites heard that they were neighbors living near them.

So the Israelites set out, and on the third day came to their cities, Gibeon, Kirish, spirit, da-da-da-da. But the Israelites did not attack them, because the leaders of the assembly had sworn an oath to them by the Lord God of Israel.

The whole assembly grumbled against the leaders, but the leaders answered them, We have given them our oath by the Lord, the God of Israel. We cannot touch them now. This is what we will do to them. We will let them live, so that wrath will not fall on us for breaking our oath, we swore to them.

They continued, Let them live, but let them be woodcutters and water carriers for the entire assembly. So the leaders' promise to them was kept. Then Joshua summoned the Gibeonites and said, Why did you deceive us by saying we live a long way from you while actually you live near us?

[6 : 59] You are now under a curse. You will never cease to serve as woodcutters and water carriers for the house of my God. They answered Joshua, Your servants were clearly told how the Lord your God had commanded his servant Moses to give you the whole land and to wipe out all of its inhabitants from before you.

So we feared for our lives because of you, and that is why we did this. We are now in your hands. Do to us whatever seems good and right to you. So Joshua saved them from the Israelites, and they did not kill them.

That day he made the Gibeonites woodcutters and water carriers for the community and for the altar of the Lord at a place the Lord would choose, and that is what they are to this day. Father, thank you for this passage.

Thank you for your word. Thank you that it's able to make us wise. And I pray that in these next few minutes, Lord, you would give us what you would have for us and that we would take it and use it for your glory.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. So, in all of those stories I gave you, I left out something. I didn't mention God.

[8 : 08] But I want to tell you that in each and every case where there was a decision for my wife and I to make, we were praying. Denisha and I were seeking the Lord, and we asked Him for wisdom.

And so that brings us to our story today. The nation of Israel had just come from a big victory, really two big victories, right? One at Jericho and one at Ai. And they learned, or they should have learned, that if they do things God's way, they follow the Lord, then everything will turn out the way He said.

We see that after they won the battle at Ai, the Lord let them keep the spoils this time. And now, at the end of chapter 8, we saw that they go to this great place between two mountains.

There's Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, and this is like a big natural amphitheater. You know there was quite a number of these Israelites at that time. At the end of numbers it says there were 600,000 men, probably a couple million people.

So they gather in this vast place, and it says they made an altar, and they sacrificed to the Lord, and they put the law on these large stones, and then Joshua read the law, that's the scriptures, to them, and they all responded, Amen.

[9 : 23] Amen. So the people, they were on an emotional and spiritual high. What could possibly go wrong?

Their reputation had spread. The people, the kings, and the armies, they were all afraid. It says, Now when all the kings west of the Jordan heard about these things, those in the hill country, in the western foothills, and along the entire coast of the great sea, those as far as Lebanon, the kings of the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, the Stoplights, the Highlights, and the Lowlights, everybody heard, and they were all afraid.

Lesson number one. Lesson number one. If we're moving forward in the power and will of the Lord, we can, and we will accomplish His purposes.

If we're moving forward in the power and the will of the Lord, we can and will accomplish His purposes. But we have an enemy. 1 Peter 5.8 says, Be alert, and of sober mind.

Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a ruler, a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. James 4.7, Submit yourselves then to God, resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

[10 : 38] 2 Timothy 4.7, But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me. This is Paul speaking, and he says, So that through me, the message would be proclaimed, and the Gentiles would hear it.

So I was delivered from the mouth of the lion. Revelation 12.10, And I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, Now have come salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ.

For the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down. He who accuses them day and night before our God. Many times, when things are going well, and if you're like me, a situation comes up, and you think, I got this one.

And we don't inquire of the Lord. We don't ask the Lord. In fact, sometimes we don't even consult anybody else. Things are going great. I got it. I don't know. Maybe you're not like that.

But I am. I also know that the enemy is right there. Right there. It just seems. When things are going really well, boom. He's right there.

[11 : 44] And this is what happens to these guys. So here's what the Israelites were supposed to do. If we would turn to chapter 20 of Deuteronomy, here's what they were supposed to do. This is what it says.

Beginning in verse 10, in 20 Deuteronomy, when you approach a city to fight against it, you shall offer it terms of peace. If it agrees to make peace with you and opens to you, then all the people who are found in it shall become your forced labor and shall serve you.

However, if it does not make peace with you but makes war against you, you shall besiege it. The Lord your God gives it into your hand. You shall strike all the men in it with the edge of the sword, only the women and the children and the animals and all that is in the city, all that spoil, you shall take as booty for yourself and you shall use the spoil of your enemies which the Lord God gives you.

Thus you shall do to all of the cities, here's the key part, that are very far from you, which are not the cities of those nations nearby.

Only in the cities of these peoples that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, you shall not leave anything alive that breathes, but you shall utterly destroy them.

[12 : 58] The Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, the Jebusite, the Lord your God has commanded you so that, here's the reason, God doesn't just tell you what to do, He gives you the reason to do it, so that they may not teach you to do according to all of their detestable things which they have done for their gods so that you would sin against the Lord your God.

These people had different gods. Okay, so here's what it says, really. In the land that God gave them, they're supposed to go in there and wipe everything out and leave nothing.

If somebody is from a far land way over here and decides to make war against them, okay, the Lord's going to deliver them. But if they don't want to fight against them, they can make a peace treaty with them. These guys knew that, these guys in Gibeon, they're right in the center of things, right in the center of the land the Lord gave them and they know that and so they go and they pretend that they're from a far away place and they get the guys to make them a treaty and now they can't go back on their word.

Lesson number two, if we move forward in our own power and understanding, we might have a really bad outcome. If we move forward in our own power and understanding, we might have a bad outcome.

Starting in verse three, we have the account of the plan of the people of Gibeon to fool the Israelites. You know, it's not uncommon for evil people to try to take advantage of the righteous. Our enemy seems to attack when we're on a spiritual high.

[14 : 35] We always see kids come back from camp, right? Hey, everything's great. I had a wonderful time at camp and then, wham, something happens in their lives. You talk to them the next week and, oh my goodness. These guys were clever.

You know, they didn't mention the two recent victories on the other side of the Jordan at Jericho and Ai. They didn't mention those, even though it was in their backyard. They mentioned the previous ones all the way back to Egypt.

Okay? We're from over here, you see. And the other thing I noticed is they're very clever. They used the Lord. The Lord.

No, they said, the Lord your God, not our God. But you ever notice that? There's a lot of deceptive people today that use the name of the Lord for their own glory, right? For their own gain. We won't talk about those people, but it happens.

Verse 9. Because of the fame of the Lord your God and all that he did in Egypt and all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan. They don't mention those recent victories at Jericho and Ai on the other side of the Jordan.

[15 : 41] So here comes the trickery in verse 13 and 14. And these wineskins that we fill were new. See how cracked they are. And our clothes and our sandals are worn out by this very long journey.

The men of Israel sampled their provisions. But what? What? They did not inquire of the Lord. This is the key to the whole passage right here.

They looked at the evidence, but they did not inquire of the Lord. So two mistakes, really. First was they sampled the goods and accepted this very questionable story.

But secondly, and more importantly, they failed as leaders. They failed as leaders because they did not inquire of the Lord. James 4, 13 to 15 says, Now listen, you who say, today or tomorrow, we'll go to this or that city, we'll spend a year there, we'll carry on business, we'll make money.

Why do you even know what will happen tomorrow? What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then it vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, if it's the Lord's will, we will live and we will do this or that.

[16 : 53] Proverbs 3, 5 through 7, Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways, submit to Him and He will make your paths straight.

Do not be wise in your own eyes. Fear the Lord and shun evil. So the Israelites, they made a treaty with these guys and only three days later, they find out their mistake.

There it is. They discovered that Gibeon was only 25 miles from where they were camped. The whole assembly grumbled against the leaders, it says in verse 19. They were mad.

You guys made a treaty with these guys and they're right here. The leaders should have done a better job. They should have asked the Lord. And now the people want to go back on the treaty and attack these people for being so deceitful.

We just need to go in and wipe them out. By the way, they had the numbers on their side. But the leaders hold their ground. They say, we have given them our oath by the Lord and we cannot touch them now.

[17 : 56] And so it was decided that they would basically make them slaves and they would make them do the manual labor of carrying the wood and the water. Here's a question. What do you think would have happened if the people had overruled the leaders and went up and attacked anyway?

What about us? How many times do we go forward and we do things without asking the Lord? Or even consulting the scriptures? Or even worse, going against what we know the scriptures say or against better spiritual advice?

Sad to say, many. One cool thing. One cool thing I noticed here. God can show grace even in spite of our failures.

God can show us grace even in spite of our failures. The people of Gibeon, they would be slaves. Yes, they would for generations. But they would also be exposed to the truth. These guys are carrying wooden water to the temple.

I've got to believe some of them would say, what are you doing here? They got to be exposed to the truth, the reality of the one true God. God let them live because of a mistake, but they got exposed.

[19 : 26] If you look at a time in the future, I think maybe some of them figured it out. Some of them maybe came to the truth. 2 Chronicles 1.3. And Solomon and the whole assembly went to the high place at Gibeon.

That's where it is. For God's tent of meeting was there which Moses, the Lord's servant, had made in the wilderness. God gave these deceitful pagans a chance to hear the truth and believe, and I think some of them did.

In fact, if you go at a time when Nehemiah's building the wall, some of these Gibeonites were helping. I don't know. Romans 5.20 says this, but where sin increased, grace increased all the more.

Amen? Lesson three, we plan and pray and we work and pray until he comes.

See, the Israelite army under Joshua, they were good fighters. They were. They were tough guys and they had a plan. They had a really good plan. In fact, if I could put a map up here, you would see that this was a great strategic military plan.

[20 : 35] Really. Military strategists would love this plan. Here's this big area they got to conquer. All these different little kings and kingdoms and groups of people and they went right in the middle and split them in half so they couldn't all unite and march against them at once.

If you look at the map, Jericho and Ai are right in the middle so they cut these guys in half and then what they're going to do, you'll see in chapter 10, they're going to go to the south and deal with the guys in the south first. So it was a great military plan.

So look, we plan. We're not just aimless. We plan but we pray and we ask God, okay, this is what we're thinking. You direct our paths, right?

We're the ship. We got an engine but we need a rudder. They planned and they had good strategy and they trained just like we do but we pray and we work hard.

We're not lazy. We do things but we pray and he gives us directions. We're also going to see in all of these wars and battles that when they follow the plan of the Lord, guess what?

[21 : 45] It goes pretty good and when they don't, it doesn't go so good. Where I work, we're under construction.

The whole back lot is all tore up and so this past week it finally stopped raining long enough that they got to do some work and I saw this big, tall machine out there and if I asked about it, my friend Dean, who's very inquisitive and likes to learn about things, explained to me what they were doing.

They made pilings in there. So apparently, the ground in the back of the lot is okay for a parking lot but it's not okay to put a big building on it because it would sink. So they had to put all these pilings, these piers, all the way around so I asked the owner, I said, boy, it looks like they're doing a lot of work back there.

How many of those things do you need? He goes, well, Mark, I think there's 120 of them. Every one of them had to be drilled and piled and pushed and they had this thing that was a big hydraulic thing.

I think they said it was 56 tons of pressure. It was quite fascinating to watch this whole thing go on. So that it doesn't sink when they put the building on there.

[23 : 01] Matthew 7, 24. Therefore, everyone who hears those words of mine and acts on them may be compared to a wise man who builds his house on the rock.

And the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and slammed against that house and yet it did not fall for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them would be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand.

The rain fell, the floods came, the winds blew and slammed against the house and it fell. Great was the fall.

the question today would be this for you. Who are you trusting in? Your works or God? You see, here's what I would say.

A lot of people I know, they're giving up meat for land, they're doing these good works and all this stuff and you're dressing up the house.

[24 : 03] You're putting new curtains on the house and you're painting the house and the house looks really nice. But if it's not built on the foundation of Jesus Christ, when you die, the house is going to fall.

You're going to be separated from the God who created you and loves you forever in a place called the Lake of Fire. It doesn't matter how good the house looks if it's not on a good foundation. And so, I learned a little bit about the peering thing because no matter how good the building is, they said, if we put it out there and the building goes this way and it cracks, well, that's a big deal now.

It's harder to do afterwards. And so, what about us? Is our life built on the rock that's Jesus Christ? The Bible says he is a solid rock.

Jesus said when he was here, I'm the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me. God created us to enjoy a perfect relationship with him. We sinned, we're separated from God.

We don't have that relationship and we need to be born again, the Bible says. We need to do that by faith alone and Christ alone and what he's done on the cross for us. And I hope and pray that everybody here could say for sure, hey, my house might not look so good sometimes, but the foundation, it's on Jesus.

[25 : 22] It's not going anywhere. Yeah. I'm not a good decorator. My wife will tell you I have no taste at all. I let her do all of that. So, I probably don't have the best looking house, right?

I don't dress very well. I don't, you know, I changed my hair recently. I don't know if it's better or worse. My wife thinks it's better, so I did that for her. My story is I was in Florida and my wife's friend said, oh, I'm a hairdresser, Mark, I'll cut your hair.

And my wife took Pat aside and they conspired against me and changed my hairdo. But, I kind of think it's lipstick on a pig at my age, but, you know, it is what it is.

So, now it's back instead of forward. So, anyway, as we close, I would like to say that we have a lot of direction from the Lord today.

We do. We have the completed scriptures. We were talking earlier about people that don't have that. My son Daniel works with the Sama people and while we were there, they have the New Testament in their language and while we were there, one of the pastors came out with this, papers like this stapled together and he said, this is the, this is the book of Daniel translated into my language.

[26 : 43] It's the 10th Old Testament book that they translated into Sama. And, and this guy, he's 60 years old. You should have seen the joy on his face. I can read, he can't read any other language so I can read the book of Daniel.

So, they gave him a typed copy. It's not yet in the Bible, of course. That was pretty neat. We have the whole scriptures. These guys on our story, they didn't.

They maybe had the first five books. I'm not sure about that. So, if we're moving forward in the power and the will of the Lord, we can and will accomplish his purposes.

If we move forward in our own power and understanding, we're probably going to have a bad outcome. And so, we plan and we pray. And we work and we pray.

Father God, thank you so much for your word. Thank you for the direction that provides in our lives. And God, I pray most of all for each of us here that we would know for sure that we have that solid rock underneath our feet and more than that, Lord, that those of us who know you, that we would follow you, that we would not just, not just say we believe you, but we would follow you in everything we do and everything you say.

[28 : 04] We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you.